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THE HUNCHAKIAN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY AND THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS AGAINST PATRIARCH KHOREN ASHEKIAN AND MAKSUDZADE SIMON BEY IN 1894

Abstract

The spring of 1894 was an important period for Constantinople's Armenian community. Two assassination attempts targeted the Armenian patriarch Khoren Ashegian, and the chairperson of the Armenian Political Assembly Maksudzade Simon Bey, respectively. In both cases, the assailants were partisans of the Hunchakian Party, an Armenian revolutionary organization established in 1887. Analyzing the reasons behind these two attacks, and the imperial context in which they took place, this article challenges aspects of mainstream Armenian and Turkish historiography on the Hamidian period. It argues that a critical look at these two attacks through a socio-economic paradigm rather than an ethno-political one provides a viable analytical framework for deconstructing the notion of the "Armenian millet" as an undifferentiated community. More generally, the article explores the role of violence in shaping intracommunal relationships in the early 1890s.

Keywords: Armenians; community; Ottoman Empire; socio-economics; violence

In March 1894, Archbishop Khoren Ashegian, the Armenian patriarch in Constantinople, was sitting in the garden of the Patriarchate in the Kum Kapu district when an assailant from the Hunchakian Party, a revolutionary organization established in Geneva in 1887, unsuccessfully tried to assassinate him. Almost two months later, on 10 May 1894, two members from the same party attacked Maksudzade Simon Bey, the chairman of the Armenian Political Assembly, as he was on his way to his office in Galata, and heavily wounded him. Why were these two Armenian officials attacked in succession?

This article examines these two attempts as a window onto the period from the late 1880s through the 1890s known in the scholarship on Ottoman-Armenian history as the era of the Armenian revolutionary movements. The institutional articulation of this revolutionary moment, namely, Armenian political parties, emerged at the end of the 19th century with the aim of providing new direction to the Armenian community of the Ottoman Empire.¹ The history of these parties has been among the most polarizing themes within the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire. It has produced two, often-irreconcilable scholarships. Armenian and Turkish historians have been unable

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to imagine a history that accounts for the complexities that the Ottoman state and the Armenian revolutionary parties each faced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.² Both historiographies often fail to encapsulate the intricacies of the Ottoman socio-economic context and to provide a viable analytical framework capable of explaining the dynamics of violence that intensified in the early 1890s in the eastern provinces—the geography roughly south of the Black Sea Coast, north of the Levant, and east of the center of the Anatolian plateau, extending to the border with Russia and Iran—and the capital of the empire.³

Mainstream Turkish historiography describes the parties as “nationalist” and “separatist/secessionist,” thereby legitimizing the Ottoman state’s violence against the revolutionaries and rendering them alien to and enemies of the empire, even as Armenian political parties were active agents in Ottoman social and political life.⁴ Armenian mainstream historiography, on the other hand, portrays this period of Ottoman history as the heroic attempt of the few to thwart the destruction of the Armenian community within the empire.⁵ It often describes the history of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries as a series of clashes between idealistic Armenian freedom lovers and oppressive Turkish/Kurdish overlords. In other words, the history of the Armenian revolutionary movement has been depicted as a struggle between the “good Armenian” and the “bad Turk,” with ethnicity often serving as the sole axis of analysis.

I argue that critically viewing the assassination attempts on Patriarch Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon through a socio-economic rather than a purely ethno-political paradigm provides a viable framework for deconstructing the notion of the “Armenian millet” as a monolithic community. Thus, I analyze the logic of violence in shaping intracommunal relationships in the early 1890s. Not only did the deteriorating security of the Ottoman eastern provinces in the late 19th century lead to ubiquitous violence, it also changed the communal mechanisms that hitherto had defined intra-Armenian relations in Constantinople.

In the second half of the 19th century, increasingly influential state reforms throughout the empire and the emergence of nationalism created new ideological, economic, and political fissures in urban society. These became manifest in new forms of violent mobilization driven by political, social, and economic motives.⁶ As I will show in the case of the two assassination attempts, rather than reaping the benefits of modernity by demanding equal rights on behalf of the community, Armenians in the empire in general and in the capital in particular became increasingly polarized and fragmented by the late 19th century. By analyzing the socio-economic fabric underlying intra-Armenian relations in the late Ottoman Empire, we can begin to sketch new answers to questions such as: How did violence in the eastern provinces impact intracommunal developments in Constantinople? How did the Hunchakian Party criminalize the two targets? Who were the assailants, and what does their background tell us about stratification within the Armenian community? Although socio-economic interpretations of late Ottoman history need not replace ethno-political ones, this work challenges the exclusively ethnic interpretation of violence so common in the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire. Integrating categories such as class into our analysis complicates simplistic ethnic binaries and sheds light on the multiplicity of factors that shaped the complex web of inter- and intracommunal relations.

Using the two assassination attempts as a window onto the larger world of late Ottoman-Armenian politics and socio-economic realities, this article engages with and contributes to the growing scholarship on nationalism and urban violence in the Middle East during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Seeing violence as a form of political communication, a theoretical framework I adopt from the works of Rasmus Christian Elling and Florian Riedler, the two cases analyzed here help us to rethink violence and its connection to nationalist movements in late Ottoman history.⁷ As Nelida Fuccaro argues, violent acts are not only the preserve of power holders, but are also deployed as a strategy of resistance.⁸ This observation provides context for the emergence of new political actors who challenged the millet establishment of the Ottoman capital. Moreover, it renders possible the analysis of both the organization and the social basis of a given party, two of the three determinants in historical analysis of political parties according to Marius Deeb.⁹

A closer look at the assailants and their socio-economic background also helps us to reconsider the nature of violence in the urban environment of late Ottoman Istanbul. It shows how the capital was a node connecting the center and periphery through revolutionary networks and spatial transformations, such as the Patriarchate becoming a site of an assassination attempt. Not only were the assailants natives of the eastern provinces (Sivas and Diyarbakır, respectively), but their attack was seen as revenge for the deteriorating situation of Armenians in the empire's periphery, where the first armed Hunchakian groups emerged in the early 1890s.

Much work has been done on the ideological principles expressed in the programs of the Armenian revolutionary parties, Deeb's first determinant in the historical analysis of political organizations.¹⁰ Yet the literature has often ignored the average revolutionary who operated within the fissures of the Ottoman political system. Through an interpretation of violence in the late Ottoman urban space, and in intra-Armenian relations in particular, this article aims to fill this historiographical lacuna. It sheds light on the revolutionaries' daily interactions with the urban landscape of late Ottoman Istanbul and on violence as a form of political communication.

As Noemi Levy-Aksu has shown in her work on public order in Constantinople, far from separating revolutionaries from one another, violence created intimate, albeit uncomfortable, bonds and forms of association between them that defined everyday encounters in the city. In other words, violence can help to build a community—in the present case, one of revolutionaries.¹¹ The assassination attempts serve as an analytical gateway through which we can arrive at a broader understanding of revolutionary tactics, strategies, and rhetoric in the context of late Ottoman Constantinople; the two cases demonstrate how violence operated within two distinct, yet interconnected layers, and had two primary addressees, namely, the Armenian establishment of the capital and the Hamidian state.

THE ARMENIANS AND THE HUNCHAKIAN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN THE EARLY 1890S

During the second half of the 19th century, economic transformations including the monetization of taxation and the wholesale destruction of home industries due to a rise in imports from Europe, led to increased and often-wanton lawlessness in the eastern

provinces.¹² Moreover, conflict over resources such as land, pasture, and livestock intensified, impacting interethnic relations among the Kurds, Armenians, Turks, and Circassians who were resettled in Eastern Anatolia in the second half of the 19th century. The presence of revolutionary groups often exacerbated the situation. Ottoman forces intervened to suppress clandestine activities, generating new cycles of violence. After the Congress of Berlin in 1878 the protection of the Armenians came to be known as the empire's Armenian Question.

The Armenian National Constitution of 1863 limited and regulated the powers of the patriarch vis-à-vis the National Assembly (*Azkayin Joghov*) while handing responsibility for managing secular affairs such as education, finances, and property to the Political Assembly, as the executive body in the community administration.¹³ Although the 1863 Constitution and the Political Assembly were real reforms of the *Tanzimat* era, their main beneficiaries were the Armenian bourgeoisie and clergy of the capital. The lot of the Armenian peasantry, who were based mostly in the eastern provinces, continued to worsen.¹⁴ From the point of view of the Constantinople elites who controlled the community institutions, the problems faced by Armenians in the provinces were inconveniences at best and threatening to their well-being at worst.¹⁵ The founders of the Hunchakian Party sought to overturn the self-image of the provincial Armenian, commonly identified as the docile "*reaya*" now threatened by social and economic deterioration.¹⁶

The Hunchakians were the first to introduce socialism into the Armenian Question. While their minimum program called for achieving democracy and political freedom through revolutionary action, their maximum program denounced the exploitation of man by man and established socialism as the future objective of Armenians.¹⁷ Introducing the concept of class struggle to the discourse on the Armenian situation, the Hunchakian founders provided an avenue for the newly defined Armenian *reaya*—the majority of the Hunchakian partisans—to reach out to not only the Ottoman state, but also the political institutions that had hitherto governed the Armenian millet, namely, the Patriarchate and the Political Assembly.¹⁸ Exploiting the social and regional rifts within the Constantinople Armenian community, the founders articulated a socialist perspective in which the peasantry and the marginalized poor were at the forefront of revolutionary struggle. It is not a coincidence that the growing number of Hunchakian constituents were largely recruited from among the poor labor migrants of Constantinople who had arrived from Eastern Anatolia and were living in wretched conditions in the capital.¹⁹

The period from 1892 to 1894 witnessed the proliferation of Hunchakian cells in the central and eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. It also marked an interlude of serious political upheaval for the party and for the Ottoman state. In 1892 and 1893, in what came to be called the *Yafta Olayları* (Placards Incident), the Hunchakians distributed flyers in Central Anatolia calling for resistance against Hamidian rule, provoking large-scale arrests, clashes on the mountains of Sasun in Bitlis, and disturbances in Yozgat. The events resulted in serious human, logistical, and structural damage to the party, and widened the already existing gap between the Armenian notables, most of whom were based in Constantinople, and Armenians in the provinces.²⁰

Unlike the Armenian reformist movements of the 1870s and 1880s, which took the Ottoman political order, including the authority of the Armenian Patriarchate, for granted,

the Hunchakian Party sought to alter the status quo not through evolution—i.e., gradual cultural and educational empowerment of the Armenians—but rather through revolution—a radical approach using violence.²¹ The central organ of the party, *Hunchak* (Bell), which was founded in 1887 and published in Athens until November 1894 when it moved to London, engaged in an active process of “criminalizing” Ashekian and Maksudzade, attesting to the significance of the assassination attempts of 1894. The word “criminalizing” is used here to signify an elaborate rhetoric that portrayed these two Armenian officials as “traitors” to the Armenian community and “enemies” of the “liberating” efforts of the Hunchakian Party. Described by Elling as “the semantics of demonization,” this process reduced a complex social conflict to a simple binary between “loyalists” and “traitors.”²² As analyzed below, *Hunchak* was drawing the new boundaries of belonging around the Armenian millet through propaganda and violence.

The polemic against Patriarch Khoren Ashekian began in 1890 in the aftermath of the Kum Kapu demonstration, a rally organized by the Hunchakian Party in the capital to submit a petition to Sultan Abdülhamid II voicing Armenian concerns over deteriorating economic and security conditions, and continued until 1894, preparing the ideological, political, and even practical groundwork for the assassination attempt that eventually followed.²³ The attacks on Patriarch Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon not only challenged the Patriarchate-led millet structure of Armenians in the empire, but also called into question the role of the Church as the sole representative of the community.²⁴ However, the attack on the Armenian patriarch was not an expression of enmity against the Church as a cultural and social institution per se; instead, it was an expression of dissatisfaction with the Church’s efficacy in representing the Armenian millet. Some clergymen established intimate connections with the revolutionaries, attesting to the kind of local nuances to which one must attend when discussing the role of the Armenian Church in the center (Constantinople) and periphery (the provinces).²⁵ Even in the capital itself, there is evidence that a few clergymen, a certain Khatr and another Manuk Narliyan, maintained connections with the revolutionaries and particularly with the Hunchakians in the early 1890s despite their involvement in the ecclesiastical and administrative apparatus of the Patriarchate.²⁶ Although by the late 1890s, and particularly after the Istanbul massacres of 1896, it became much more difficult to maintain a working relationship with the “two sides”—the revolutionaries, on the one hand, and the community’s central administration, on the other—some clergymen succeeded in doing so. Understanding such internal dynamics is crucial to shedding light on the complex and multifaceted nature of late Ottoman Armenian society, and to properly contextualizing the two assassination attempts of 1894.

The six founders of the Hunchakian Party, all students based in Europe and supported by their bourgeois Armenian families in the Caucasus and Imperial Russia, believed that the traditional means of petitioning Constantinople (the sultan or the Patriarchate) for reforms were ineffective.²⁷ As one report from Merzifon published in *Hunchak* stated, the Hunchakian partisans felt that petitioning Constantinople was tantamount to being “slave minded.” The anonymous writer of this report criticized the wealthy *hadji aghas* of Merzifon, arguing that they were wasting their time petitioning the various officials in Istanbul when they could be contributing to the “real” revolutionary effort.²⁸ The editor of *Hunchak* argued in the same issue that the Hunchakian Party did not endorse the act of petitioning because it could not resolve the problems encountered by Armenian

peasants in the provinces.²⁹ In the Hunchakian founders' view, the only way to break the silence of the provinces and give voice to provincial Armenians was to implement a radical innovation characterized by brute force.³⁰ This position parallels a similar case described by Nora Lafi on Ottoman Tunis. Lafi describes how the flagrant violation of the Ottoman *pax urbana* of 1857 and the situation of fear it engendered, was rooted in the demise of traditional institutions of social and legal mediation, most notably petitions.³¹ Such local reports shed light on the revolutionaries' new understanding of what it meant to serve the millet.

THE 1890 MEMORANDUM

In a memorandum dated 29 November 1890 and addressed to Sultan Abdülhamid, the notables of the Armenian millet—all Istanbulites—reiterated their loyalty to the Ottoman state and articulated their gratitude for the freedom of religion and language that they enjoyed under Ottoman sovereignty.³² The notables claimed that the revolutionaries, whom they described as “public manipulators,” had no right to represent the Armenian community, and that authority was vested in the sultan's “servants” (a reference to themselves), who were grateful for the sultan's protection.³³

At first glance, one may wonder what led to this memorandum. The signatories, which included Nuryan Effendi, a member of the State Council (*Şura-i Devlet*), Karabet Effendi, a member of the *Mahkeme-i Temyiz* (Court of Cassation), and Dadyan Artin, a counselor at the Foreign Ministry (*Hariciye Nezareti*), were already affiliated with various departments of the palace and the state bureaucracy.³⁴ Political events before November 1890 shed light on this question. In June and July 1890, the Hunchakian Party had organized two demonstrations in Erzurum and Constantinople, respectively. Both occurred in churches, and thus held immediate relevance to the political institution that formally represented the Armenian community before the Ottoman government.³⁵ It is plausible that this memorandum was drafted as a reaction to these activities. If so, the notables' reiteration of loyalty to the sultan may be interpreted as a serious attempt to maintain their respective interests and positions vis-à-vis the state bureaucracy and more importantly the Armenian millet hierarchy at a time when new political players were emerging in the public arena.³⁶ Having rid themselves of the dangerous specter of too much involvement in the political affairs of the Ottoman state, the wealthy Armenian notables of Constantinople embraced the label “faithful,” a euphemism for subservience to the sultan.³⁷ The variety of bureaucratic departments with which the signatories were affiliated implied that they shared both a uniform view of themselves as the rightful leaders of the community and an implicit class consciousness whose interests aligned with those of the Ottoman state.

This memorandum not only delegitimized the Hunchakian Party and the people it claimed to represent, but it also implicitly stated that Armenians who were involved in such surreptitious activities were excluded from the Armenian millet as defined by the memorandum's authors. Given that any confrontation with the state was tantamount to an attack on their personal position, the signatories eschewed violence and were adamant in preserving the status quo within the community. The memorandum's wording clearly reflected existing social cleavages among the Armenian millet, and further alienated its disenfranchised echelons. As Noemi Levy-Aksu argues, conflict in late Ottoman

Constantinople was managed in a way that served the political and social agendas of the different actors involved. Some of these mechanisms included stigmatization and criminalization by the state and notables of the marginal lower classes, alliance between the two in attempt to maintain order, and communication to minimize the scale of violent events and to praise the role of the state and millet elites.³⁸ As will be discussed shortly, this configuration was clearly reflected in the two assassination attempts of 1894.

MAKSUDZADE SIMON BEY

It is no coincidence that a few years after the submission of this memorandum, Maksudzade Simon, among all Armenian officials, was chosen by the Hunchakian partisans as an assassination target.³⁹ This selection was deliberate as it intended to reverse the social order in such a way that Maksudzade Simon himself would be excluded from the millet, the political nucleus of which, according to the party's founders, would henceforth be formed primarily by provincial Armenians. Having proclaimed the welfare of the people as the goal of the movement, the founders argued that their participation was integral to the process of bringing about change and worked toward making grassroots participation part of this transformation.⁴⁰

That Simon Bey enjoyed enormous prestige within the Armenian millet, and more importantly within the state bureaucracy, is confirmed by the way his Armenian surname was written. In an Ottoman setting, the Persian ending *zāde* (e.g., Kemalpaşazade, Celalzade, etc.) signified descent from a prominent family, and was extremely rare among Armenians. Among the other Armenian notables, only one (besides Simon's brother, Sebu, a banker and former deputy in the first Ottoman parliament), in Aleppo, carried the family name Maksudian.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the existence of Simon Bey's surname in the form of Maksudzade rather than Maksudian may well be indicative of his intimate connection to the palace and the sultan. Along with his brother Maksudzade Sebu, Simon Bey, the chief translator of the palace, a wealthy banker, and contractor for Ottoman ministries, challenges some of the premises of mainstream Armenian historiography on the Hamidian period, and the narrative of the victimized Armenian millet.⁴² This historiography often fails to address the intracommunal stratification that existed among the Armenians and that was often instrumental in shaping the scale and targets of violence. Some Armenian notables *were indeed part of the state and the bureaucratic apparatus* of Abdülhamid, enjoying the sultan's support and the social immunity associated with it.

What made Simon Bey's position significant from a Hunchakian perspective was his role as chairman of the Political Assembly, and thus his direct responsibility over the Armenian millet. The second part of the Hunchakian manifesto stated: "[Here] was set forth the exploitation of the Armenians by the government, the aristocracy, and the capitalists through high taxes, land seizure, and the deprivation of the fruits of labor."⁴³ Although there was no polemic against Maksudzade Simon in *Hunchak* until after the assassination attempt of May 1894, his intimate connections with the palace and with Abdülhamid himself, the arch-enemy of the party, made him an undesirable element in the new communal order that the Hunchakian founders were envisioning in the party's program.⁴⁴

Ideologically, the selection of the target conformed to the principles that the Hunchakian Party program embodied. From a Marxist-socialist perspective,

Maksudzade represented the perfect bourgeois, typified by the *şarrāf* (banker), the dominant image of the Armenian notable of Constantinople.⁴⁵ For the Hunchakian leadership, the Armenian Question, with its universal, national, economic, and individual dimensions, was part of a larger struggle for human and national progress.⁴⁶ The founders argued that people like Simon Bey who accumulated the community's wealth in their hands impeded the Armenian millet's path of progress through an alliance with the "supreme suppressor and exploiter," namely, Sultan Abdülhamid. On a more mundane level, for provincial Armenians Simon Bey's inability or even unwillingness to resolve their socio-economic grievances, articulated mainly through petitions sent to the Political Assembly, de facto rendered him unworthy of his position. In this respect, for the Hunchakian partisans his removal would have been a great service to both the disenfranchised sections of the community in general and to the Hunchakian Party in particular.

Although the Hunchakian manifesto contained an internationalist agenda, there is no evidence that it advocated for equity at the expense of the Ottoman millet system. In fact, the program implicitly presumed the preservation of the Armenians as a socio-political entity in any future order. In other words, the party did not seek to destroy the millet-based configuration of the empire. Given this context, it is easy to see why the Armenian Maksudzade Simon Bey, rather than a Greek, Muslim, or Jewish notable, was of particular interest to the party. With the appointment/election of Armenian officials to the Political Assembly confined to a small Istanbul elite at the expense of the majority of Armenians, the removal of such notables and wresting control over the assembly could only be realized through violent means.

THE IMTIYAZ ORDERS OF 1893 AND THE PROCESS OF "CRIMINALIZATION"

By May 1893 Maksudzade Simon's position vis-à-vis the Armenian Question had weakened. On 1 April 1893, Sultan Abdülhamid signed an official document that bestowed to Maksudzade Simon the honorary *imtiyāz* medallion (Order of High Distinction), an insignia the sultan created in the late 1880s to confer privilege.⁴⁷ The medallion's recipients were deemed to be true contributors to the prosperity of the empire and loyal servants of the sultan. As Edhem Eldem observes, the Order of High Distinction, though usually reserved for kings and emperors, was used parsimoniously as an award for extraordinary servants of the sultan.⁴⁸ Moreover, as Selim Deringil notes, Hamidian policy had worked its way through the Ottoman system, rendering medals and orders integral to how bureaucrats and officers perceived their place and role in the empire.⁴⁹ Therefore, in a period when imperial symbolism had reached a certain maturity and stability, Maksudzade Simon's reception of this prestigious order was further testament to his inclusion in the inner circle of Abdülhamid's apparatus.⁵⁰ Ironically, this bestowment turned out to be more than a political investment by Abdülhamid aimed at fostering the goodwill of the recipient. In an age when "loyalty" and "treason" were gauged through one's position vis-à-vis the "National Question," it was also a move that further deepened intra-Armenian communal cleavages.

The Armenians were "lucky" enough to have yet another official receive the *imtiyāz* on that same day. This official was none other than the Armenian patriarch, Khoren Ashekian.⁵¹ The sultan's bestowal of this award on two Armenians coincided with

clashes in 1893 that occurred between Armenian villagers and Kurdish tribesmen of the Sasun region over control of the pastures. Although we lack evidence to prove it, Abdülhamid was likely seeking to reward these two officials for their service at a time when the eastern provinces were in upheaval. As Ethem Eldem argues, the real co-optation seems to have occurred at the level of the recruitment and promotion of individuals. Decorations were simply a symbolic confirmation of that co-optation.⁵²

Analyzed through the lens of an editorial published in *Hunchak* in February 1893, the bestowal of the *imtiyāz* orders on Patriarch Ashekian and Simon Bey turns out to be the exact political scenario that the Hunchakian leadership was struggling against since 1887. Likely penned by one of the party's founders and its main ideologue, Avedis Nazarbekian, the editorial argued that in a situation where the progress of the "nation" (*azk*) was hindered by the oppressive rule of the sovereign regime, it was imperative for that nation's various constituents to ignore their class conflict, unite, and destroy the existing oppressive political order.⁵³ As a Caucasian Armenian (citizen of Imperial Russia) who had never been to the Ottoman territories, Nazarbekian failed to understand that it was *by virtue* of their service to the "oppressive regime" that many of the wealthy Armenians of Constantinople, whom he imagined would unite with the lower classes, maintained their status, position, and interests vis-à-vis the community. In other words, what the Hunchakian leadership based in Europe failed to see was that the socio-economic order they intended to change was consciously protected by a small group of elite Armenians who not only saw themselves as the natural leaders of the community, but also strongly identified with the Ottoman state.

The Hunchakian partisans reporting from the Ottoman provinces were more astute in assessing the situation. In a report sent to *Hunchak* on 18 April 1893, an anonymous Hunchakian strongly criticized the patriarch for having accepted a "bribe" of 400 Ottoman liras as well as the Order of the High Distinction, which he viewed as acknowledging the goodwill of Sultan Abdülhamid.⁵⁴ Continuing his opprobrium against the patriarch, the author claimed that Ashekian had been dismissing the petitions from Armenians in the provinces as lies and deceitful fabrications.⁵⁵ The anonymous writer ended his report by stating that the "people" (*joghovurd*), probably referring to the lower classes within the community, hated and opposed the patriarch. In fact, a similar criticism had been published in 1891. A letter from an anonymous reporter in Bulanik, dated 15 November 1891, claimed that while the clergymen of the provinces were being imprisoned on false charges, Patriarch Ashekian continued to boast about his authority as the legitimate representative of the Armenian millet.⁵⁶ Later, in February 1892, another report in *Hunchak* mocked the patriarch for his praise of the sultan's "goodwill."⁵⁷ A general reading of issues of *Hunchak* published between 1891 and 1894 shows that whereas the Hunchakian partisans were active in targeting anyone they saw as an obstacle to the improvement of the community's socio-economic condition, the highest officials within Armenian political institutions in the capital reasserted their loyalty to Abdülhamid, articulated through the institutionalization of symbolic decorations.⁵⁸

Although such reports on the highest Armenian authority figure are suggestive of the general resentment and popular anger toward the patriarch, their publication in a revolutionary organ is significant. In a period when press censorship was strong, such provincial reports were instrumental in disseminating knowledge and mobilizing public opinion by "criminalizing" Ashekian, the most prominent member of the community. This campaign

can be seen as a deliberate attempt by the Hunchakian leadership in Europe to convince the marginalized sections of the millet that people such as Ashekian and Simon Bey were a liability to the community rather than its true servants.⁵⁹

Whereas the discourse around other assassinations had a local character and thus a limited impact, the “criminalization” of Maksudzade Simon Bey and Patriarch Ashekian had transregional importance, affecting the entire Armenian millet. Given Ashekian’s and Maksudzade’s inability (or, according to the Hunchakians, unwillingness) to address issues pertinent to Armenians in the provinces, such polemics against them implied that in an era when new ways of articulating grievances were being sought, identification with the state no longer carried legitimacy. The party was redrawing the boundaries of communal belonging.

ATTACKING COMMUNITY LEADERS IN 1893–94

The years 1893 and 1894 were particularly important for the Hunchakian Party.⁶⁰ The Ankara Tribunals of the Hunchakian partisans who had been arrested in the aftermath of the *Yafta Olayları* came to an end in July of 1893, resulting in a guilty verdict and the hanging of prominent Hunchakian partisans.⁶¹ In September 1893, Parsegh Zakarian, another Hunchakian leader, was killed during a skirmish with Ottoman forces.⁶² Furthermore, in December 1893, Jirayr Boyadjian, the prominent Hunchakian organizer and guerilla fighter, was arrested after clashes in Yozgat.⁶³ Despite the abundance of reports from the period describing an increasing number of political prisoners, continued insecurity in the provinces, and corruption among provincial officials and tax collectors, none made reference to any effort by Ashekian or Maksudzade Simon to alleviate the situation. Such ambivalence towards Armenians in the provinces in general and Hunchakian members in particular only further alienated the two men.⁶⁴

Matters came to a head in March 1894. On the 24th of that month Ottoman authorities sentenced Jirayr Boyadjian to death and hanged him. One day later, an assassination attempt occurred against Patriarch Ashekian while he was in the garden of the patriarchate in Kum Kapu.⁶⁵ Although there is no evidence to assert that the attack was an immediate reaction to Jirayr’s execution, the proximity of the two events is suggestive. In the April issue of 1894, *Hunchak* reported on the incident in an anonymous article titled “Audacious Attack against Patriarch Khoren.”⁶⁶ According to the article, a young man named Hagop Mazlumian had attacked the patriarch intending to kill him, but when he tried to shoot him the revolver malfunctioned.⁶⁷ The police arrived shortly thereafter, arrested Mazlumian, and conducted an on-the-spot investigation. When the police chief questioned Mazlumian and tried to understand his motive, he reportedly stated that the patriarch was a traitor and had damaged the interests of “his [Mazlumian’s] nation.”⁶⁸

According to a second report published in the same issue of *Hunchak*, Mazlumian had lied to the police during the investigation, stating to be a Cypriot when he was originally from Diyarbakır. While in prison, where he eventually died as a result of torture, he reportedly claimed to be a Hunchakian partisan.⁶⁹ However, according to the Armenian Revolutionary Federation’s (ARF) organ *Droshak* (Banner), Mazlumian was not a Hunchakian partisan and had acted independently with several other men.⁷⁰ Assassins and their partisan affiliation became a bone of contention between the ARF and the Hunchakian Party. In the June 1895 issue of *Hunchak*, the Hunchakian Central

Committee of Istanbul claimed that the physician Megerditch Tutundjian, a likely informant and a “traitor,” had been assassinated by a Hunchakian militant. However, a letter subsequently sent by the ARF Central Committee of Constantinople to *Hunchak* voiced the ARF’s objection, claiming that *Hunchak*’s statement was wrong. It argued that Tutundjian was assassinated by an ARF member at the order of the party.⁷¹

The case of Undjuyan Apik Efendi, the bread and flour supplier to Yıldız Palace, is similar to that of Simon Bey. Apik Efendi had signed the 1890 memorandum discussed earlier as Undjuzade (Uncuzade) and was assassinated in 1896.⁷² As Elling argues, although violence is disruptive of dominant structures, as marginalized collectives break through history in a spectacular manner, it is also constitutive, creative, and performative. Each retelling of a violent event communicates a message.⁷³ A headline in *Hunchak* in bold letters announcing the attack on Simon Bey ought to be seen in this context.

It is highly unlikely that a seventeen-year-old boy from Diyarbakır understood his actions in the exact same terms as the Hunchakian leadership did in Europe. For Avedis Nazarbekian, the person who, according to an Ottoman report, instructed and “indoctrinated” (*telkin edip*) Mazlumian, the patriarch’s assassination may have been meaningful in terms of the Marxist theories he elaborated and supported.⁷⁴ For Mazlumian, who was probably an Armenian seasonal worker in Constantinople, the attack on the patriarch may have been nothing more than revenge for the patriarch’s ineffective policies.

Moreover, in contrast to the Ottoman report, it is highly unlikely that Nazarbekian, then based in London, had been in direct contact with Mazlumian. The assassination attempt was most probably organized by the Hunchakian Central Committee in Constantinople, the body responsible for the party’s revolutionary activities inside the empire.⁷⁵ Thus describing Mazlumian, as a Hunchakian partisan does not necessarily imply he was a staunch believer in Marxism or a true nationalist for that matter. Instead, it is useful to think of him as a low-ranking member who was affiliated with the party insofar as he may have received the mission and probably the revolver from the Central Committee in Constantinople. Analyzing the attack in terms of socio-economic interests among the different strata of the Armenian millet sheds clearer light on how and why the attempt occurred, rendering the question of whether the attack was a “Marxist,” “socialist,” or “nationalist” manifestation of revolutionary violence irrelevant and even misleading.

Although the assassination attempt was unsuccessful, according to *Hunchak* it did send the patriarch into a state of deep shock that caused him to see the doctors in his residence.⁷⁶ On 26 March 1894, Ashekian sent a letter of gratitude to the chief of the gendarmerie, thanking him for his services in capturing the assailant and urging him to reveal who else was involved in the plot.⁷⁷ According to *Hunchak* and Ottoman police reports, several people were arrested in the days following the attack. Among them was an Armenian man, Iranos, who apparently confessed to his complicity during the investigation in April,⁷⁸ as well as an Armenian named Hagop Karabetian.⁷⁹ Although the patriarch would remain the center of attention and debate in the summer of 1894, especially after his resignation in late June, the investigation was not completed until November 1894, when the collected reports and documents were submitted to the Ministry of Justice.⁸⁰

The attempt on the patriarch's life was an individual assault, but the rhetoric that had preceded it made it a direct challenge to the status of the Patriarchate as a political institution and the man who had hitherto led the community. That Mazlumian adopted such a radical approach tells us that petitions had become obsolete, and that provincial Armenians, whom Mazlumian indirectly represented, were redefining their role within the community in a way that prioritized action over prestige. Subsequent developments in May 1894 would only confirm this intracommunal reconfiguration.

On 10 May 1894, while on his way to his office in Galata, Maksudzade Simon Bey was attacked and severely wounded.⁸¹ As with the attempt on Ashekian's life, the timing of the incident is suggestive. Mihran Manisadjian, a Hunchakian guerilla leader, had been killed in a skirmish with Ottoman forces earlier that month.⁸² In contrast to the eastern provinces where the Hunchakians had small groups that often clashed with the Ottoman army, in Constantinople the party resorted to a different strategy of challenging the Patriarchate, namely, pressuring the clergy in the capital. With the assassination of the patriarch having failed, the party now sought to delegitimize his tenure by demanding from the Armenian bishops in Constantinople that they stop mentioning Ashekian's name during sermons. In a *tehditname* (ultimatum) sent to the Armenian churches and bearing the seal of the Hunchakian Central Committee of Constantinople, the party professed that the patriarch was an informer (*gammaz*) and thus unworthy of holding the Armenian patriarchal seat.⁸³ Similar threats poured into Armenian churches through June 1894, suggesting that Ashekian's name continued to be uttered during mass.⁸⁴ Seen in this context, the assassination attempt against Maksudzade Simon can be understood as an extension of the Hunchakian strategy to eliminate people who supposedly "damaged" the community's interests.

In the May 1984 issue of *Hunchak*, a big headline in bold letters celebrated the assassination attempt against Maksudzade Simon. The centrality of the headline on the front page of the party's organ demonstrates the extent to which the act was important for its leadership in Europe. According to details provided by *Hunchak*, two men armed with a revolver and a knife attacked Maksudzade Simon and wounded him in the chest. The two assailants were arrested shortly thereafter, but, according to the paper, the attack had left a deep impression on the Armenian community of the capital.⁸⁵

Subsequent events confirmed Maksudzade's prestige and connections with the imperial bureaucracy. Immediately after the attack, prominent officials of the Sublime Porte, including the minister of police Nazim Pasha and the minister of the navy, visited Simon Bey to check in on him.⁸⁶ A thorough investigation was launched. An Ottoman report dated 23 May 1894 and addressed to the Ministry of Gendarmerie claimed that the assailants were from the common folk (*eşhās-ı 'ādiyye*) and that further effort was required to reveal the plot's true instigators (*muharrik*).⁸⁷ This report shows that the representatives of the Ottoman state had failed to perceive why such "common folk" would commit such an attack. As Ilkay Yılmaz has argued, this was a period when the Ottoman state was developing a special terminology for describing poor seasonal workers of Istanbul who were seen as susceptible to "anarchist" ideas and potential troublemakers.⁸⁸ The feeling of insecurity and the threat perception of the Ottoman elite in the final decade of the 19th century compelled the state to adopt and create new mechanisms of control, management, and coordination that rendered the population of Constantinople more legible.⁸⁹ Another Ottoman document identified the two arrested men as Takavor, a baker from

Sivas, and his friend Stepan.⁹⁰ A report prepared for Sultan Abdülhamid in 1896 stated that Takavor and Stepan, both reportedly Hunchakian partisans, were sentenced to death, but this is contradicted by *Hunchak*, whose reporter from Constantinople claimed that they were sentenced to 101 years in prison.⁹¹ The *Hunchak* reporter also mentioned the name of another Hunchakian partisan, a certain Levon-Zareh coming from Athens, who he said organized the attack on Maksudzade Simon.⁹²

Failing to comprehend such acts in terms of the socio-economic grievances of provincial seasonal workers, the Ottoman authorities made every effort to uncover a foreign—Russian or British—instigator. In other words, rather than seeing such attempts as a serious quest for change grounded in the special socio-economic dynamics of the empire, the Ottoman State described them as manifestations of anarchism.⁹³ As Noemi Levy-Aksu argues, during the Hamidian period criticism of the violence of urban masses continued to be made on social grounds, with stigmatization of the perpetrators of violent acts contrasting with praise for “honest” citizens within the members of the urban lower classes.⁹⁴

Such bifurcation—“honest” servants and stigmatized lower classes—of the community occurred during the Armenian massacres of 1896 in Constantinople, in which most of the massacre’s victims were not the urban notables, but rather the Armenian seasonal workers and porters of the capital.⁹⁵ The Ottoman government had recently installed an acting patriarch—Partoghimeos Tchamitchian—despite opposition to this appointment from within the Armenian community, and particularly from the revolutionary parties, after Patriarch Matheos Izmirlian, Ashekian’s successor, had resigned in early August of 1896. Because the authorities did not want to undermine their candidate, no attacks occurred against the Patriarchate during the 1896 massacres.⁹⁶ A few days into the carnage in late August, an imperial order demanded that Tchamitchian and the Patriarchate had been and were to be protected in every possible way, implying that he had enjoyed a high level of security.⁹⁷ On 27 August 1896, the day when the massacres began in Constantinople, Tchamitchian strongly condemned the ARF revolutionaries who had taken over the Ottoman Bank the prior day and prompted the violent retaliation, and beseeched the Ottoman State to punish such “wrongdoers.”⁹⁸ The central government’s protection of some targets and not others sheds further light on how the Patriarchate was saved from the bloodshed, as well as on the economic motives behind the massacres.

Although both attacks failed, the Hunchakian party considered them successes because they removed Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon from the political arena. Indeed, shortly after the assassination attempts, and likely as a result of them, both figures resigned from their positions. As for Abdülhamid, the party leadership claimed that the sultan’s inability to arrest more than four people and his eventual consent to Ashekian’s resignation demonstrated the Hunchakian party’s strength.⁹⁹ The party leadership interpreted this as a triumph for socialism, because the oppressive bourgeoisie had been removed from the path to progress, and for nationalism, because those deemed as alien to the “nation” were no longer part of it. As far as provincial Armenians were concerned, they were the ones who actually perpetrated the attack and thus saw the matter as particularly relevant to the improvement of their socio-economic situation.

As the investigation progressed, many other Armenians were arrested on suspicion of complicity, including a coffee house worker named Hampartsum and a goldsmith named Stepan, who were eventually tried.¹⁰⁰ An Ottoman document dated 30 May 1894

described the legal processes during which papers that had been found on the detainees and deemed dangerous (*muzır*) were translated.¹⁰¹ Although the document does not specify the nature or content of these papers, it can be speculated that they were either internal party correspondence or issues of *Hunchak*. Another report dated 31 June 1894 describes the investigative processes that led to the arrest and charge of Lutfik, an Armenian from Sivas, for alleged complicity in the attack against Maksudzade Simon Bey.¹⁰² The hasty trials of these men concluded on 31 May 1894, though reports pertinent to this case continued to pour into the various departments of the Sublime Porte until late June. Stepan and Takavor were sentenced to death based on Article 54 of the Ottoman Penal Code, while Hampartsum and the other Stepan were sentenced to imprisonment for six and eight years respectively.¹⁰³

Hunchak also reported on the publication of a letter drafted by the Hunchakian Central Committee in Constantinople.¹⁰⁴ Using a language reminiscent of the opprobrium previously directed at Ashekian, this memorandum justified both attacks. It argued that the patriarch and Maksudzade Simon were the “moral disease” of the Armenian “nation” (*azk*), and that they had condemned Armenian political institutions to death with their treacherous behavior.¹⁰⁵ The memorandum concluded that because both Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon were the worst enemies of the Armenian revolution, “worse than the Sultan!” in the words of *Hunchak*, the committee decided to have them killed.¹⁰⁶

CONCLUSION

This article contributes to our understanding of late Ottoman history in general and Armenian history in particular. Recasting the historiography and history of the Hunchakian Party in light of socio-economic cleavages among the Armenian millet, it provides a viable and historically grounded alternative to the “freedom lovers vs. evil oppressor” paradigm among mainstream historians. I have argued that violence was used by Armenian revolutionaries to create new individual, communal, and institutional boundaries of belonging to the Armenian millet, formed on the basis of each person’s status and position vis-à-vis the Armenian Question rather than the state.

Although the Hunchakian party’s rhetoric portrayed figures such as Maksudzade Simon Bey as “Armenian traitors,” intra-Armenian stratification compels us to think in more complicated terms. The Hunchakian Party provided certain provincial Armenians with a political platform through which they could more actively participate in community politics. This, in turn, created a new political language that eventually came to supplant an older language for addressing the Patriarchate and the Political Assembly. In this respect, the Hunchakian Party diversified the range of political options for a section of the community that hitherto had been marginalized or disenfranchised in the management of the millet’s affairs.

Turkish mainstream historiography portrays the attack on Ashekian and Simon Bey as acts of Armenian aggression against fellow nationals.¹⁰⁷ Such an approach proceeds from a linear understanding of the Armenian millet, whereby the ethno-religious identity of an Ottoman subject overshadows other features such as class, social hierarchy, and prestige. Moreover, it tends to understand the “Armenian millet” as monolithic, unchangeable throughout time and space, and undifferentiated internally. As this article has demonstrated, in a period when social prestige and financial clout accounted for one’s place

within the Ottoman communal system and bureaucracy, ethnicity became relevant insofar as it determined one's belonging and responsibilities towards a particular group of people.

Whether we are considering the rural–urban or the religious–secular divide among the Armenian community, it is imperative to reconsider how we view people such as Maksudzade Simon Bey, who were integral components of the Hamidian apparatus rather than “treacherous” Armenians conspiring against the attempts to resolve the Armenian Question. It is here that I disagree with Feroz Ahmad's argument that the modern bourgeoisie which had come into existence among Armenians and Greeks by the late 19th century had no organic link with the Ottoman state and that this ethnic bourgeoisie had agendas of its own to the point its constituents often conflicted with each other.¹⁰⁸

Far from claiming that the political order was comprised of only two opposing camps, I have used the assassination attempts against Khoren Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon as a window onto the complex social configuration involving a multiplicity of actors, as well as various personal and political agendas in the larger world of Ottoman-Armenians in the fin de siècle; though set within a particular historical context, these two cases help us to understand the ways in which stratification within the Armenian millet first existed and was deliberately preserved by the Hamidian state as a way to exert more control over community affairs. Abdülhamid's co-optation of capital elites such as Patriarch Khoren Ashekian and Maksudzade Simon Bey, among others, further alienated the marginalized provincial Armenians who suffered greatly from the centralization and modernization projects of the time. High-ranking Armenian officials interpreted the activities of provincial Armenian peasants as a challenge to their position as the natural leaders of the community, as well as to their relationship to the Hamidian state. Other similar examples of attempts to preserve the order within the millet include Abdülhamid's effort to negotiate with the ARF in late 1896 through Armenian notable intermediaries such as Dadian Artin Pasha, who acted as a liaison between the Ottoman State and the ARF.¹⁰⁹ This overture towards the ARF came at a time when the latter emerged as the pioneer of the Armenian revolutionary movement, after much of the Hunchakians' social base in the provinces was destroyed during the massacres of 1894–96, and an internecine dispute had led to the party's split in the tumultuous summer of 1896.¹¹⁰

As Elke Hartmann has rightfully observed, history has to be re-examined with regard to the real political goals that Armenian revolutionary parties pursued concretely on the ground, beyond revolutionary rhetoric and utopia. It will be equally important to examine the differences between the projections of the predominantly Caucasian-Armenian leadership of the two revolutionary parties (the Hunchakian Party and the ARF) and the expectations of their Ottoman-Armenian members. It is also imperative to have a rough estimate of the size of the revolutionary movement so as to gain some notion of the percentage of the Ottoman Armenian population that it represented.¹¹¹ As far as violence and its relation to the Armenian millet is concerned, one important aspect that distinguished Hamidian rule from the Committee of Union and Progress's (CUP) genocidal plan in 1915 relates to the extent of interaction with the high-ranking Armenian officials of Constantinople. Whereas Abdülhamid was cautious to uphold the intracommunal fissures and social cleavages, the genocidal policy of the CUP was an equalizer that came to neutralize such divisions among the Armenian millet, perpetuating ethnicity as a primary feature of the violence. The murder of Krikor Zohrab and Vartkes Serengulian, two

Armenian deputies of the Ottoman parliament, in July 1915, and the closure of the Armenian Patriarchate during World War I, ought to be interpreted in this light. Integrating the socio-economic paradigm into the historiography on late Ottoman history and the Armenian revolutionary movement can pave the way for a new kind of research, one that eschews binaries and ossified categories such as Armenians vs. Turks, loyalists vs. separatists, and nationalists vs. socialists.

NOTES

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¹Gerard J. Libaridian, "What Was Revolutionary about Armenian Revolutionary Parties in the Ottoman Empire?," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman Naimark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 82.

²*Ibid.*, 83.

³Some have characterized this region as (Western) Armenia, others as (Northern) Kurdistan or Eastern Anatolia. On the Ottoman eastern provinces, see Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian, and Ali Sipahi, "Ottoman Historiography's Black Hole," in *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics*, ed. Yaşar Tolga Cora, Dzovinar Derderian, and Ali Sipahi (London: I.B.Tauris, 2016), 1–15.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵For examples, see Hrant Kankrouni, *Hay heghap'okhut'iwne' Osmanean brnatirut'ean dem* (Beirut: H. Kankrouni, 1973); and Hratch Dasnabedian, *Patmut'iwne Hay Heghapo'khakan sharzhman ew Hay Heghap'okhakan Dashnaks'ut'ean* (Beirut: Vahe Setian Press, 2009).

⁶Nelida Fuccaro, "Urban Life and Questions of Violence," in *Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East*, ed. Nelida Fuccaro (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2016), 13.

⁷Rasmus Christian Elling, "The Semantics of Violence and Space," in *Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East*, 24; Florian Riedler, "The City as a Stage for a Violent Spectacle: The Massacres of Armenians in Istanbul in 1895–1896," in *Urban Violence in the Middle East: Changing Cityscapes in the Transformation from Empire to Nation State*, ed. Ulrike Freitag, Nelida Fuccaro, Claudia Ghrawi, and Nora Lafi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 164.

⁸Fuccaro, *Urban Life*, 4.

⁹Marius Deeb, *Party Politics in Egypt: The Wafd and Its Rivals, 1919–1935* (London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Center, 1979), 3–6.

¹⁰Libaridian, *What Was Revolutionary*; Gerard J. Libaridian, "Revolution and Liberation in the 1892 and 1907 Programs of the Dashnaksutiun," in *Transcaucasia, Nationalism and Social Change: Essays in the History of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 187–99; Anahide Ter Minassian, *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement 1887–1912* (Cambridge: Zoryan Institute, 1984), 141–86.

¹¹Fuccaro, "Urban Life," 7; Noemi Levy-Aksu, "A Capital Challenge: Managing Violence and Disorder in Late Ottoman Istanbul," in *Urban Violence in the Middle East*, 52–70.

¹²Libaridian, *What Was Revolutionary*, 94.

¹³On the 1863 Constitution, see Vartan Artinian, *The Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1863: A Study of Its Historical Development* (Istanbul, 1988).

¹⁴Ter Minassian, *Nationalism*, 145.

¹⁵Libaridian, *What Was Revolutionary*, 94.

¹⁶Gerard Libaridian, *Modern Armenia: People, Nation, State* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 73; Gerard Libaridian, "The Changing Armenian Self-Image in the Ottoman Empire: Reyahs and Revolutionaries," in *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, ed. Richard Hovannissian (Malibu, Calif.: Undena Publications, 1981), 155–71.

¹⁷Ter Minassian, *Nationalism*, 150.

¹⁸Libaridian, *What Was Revolutionary*, 110. On the rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul, see Kevork Bardakjian, "The Rise of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 89–101. The word *reaya* was often used in a vague sense to refer to a "low-class" provincial but could also designate Muslim and Kurdish peasants. On the socio-economic terms used in Eastern Anatolia, see Aram S. Hamparian, "Sotsyalakan Derminern Arevmtyan Hayastanum I," *Padmabanasirakan Handes* 2–3 (1992): 127–38; and Hamparian, "Sotsyalakan Derminern Arevmtyan Hayastanum II," *Padmabanasirakan Handes* 1–2 (1993): 77–90.

¹⁹Riedler, *The City as a Stage*, 169. See also Florian Riedler, "Armenian Labour Migration to Istanbul and the Migration Crisis of the 1890s," in *Migrations and Urban Government in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann, Nora Lafı, and Florian Riedler (London: Routledge, 2011), 160–77.

²⁰Flyers in Turkish were posted on the walls of Merzifon, Kayseri, and Yozgat. Hundreds of people were subsequently arrested and tried. These trials came to be known as the Ankara Tribunals of 1894. Hunchakian sources refer to this incident as "Islamic Declarations" because the flyers were all in Turkish. A booklet published by the party in 1894 suggests a link between the Hunchakians and another non-Armenian opposition movement based in Europe. Turkish mainstream historiography portrays the postings as a Hunchakian bluff to cover the real identity of the organizers. Nevertheless, the booklet comprising the minutes of the Hunchakian convicts in court, claimed that the Hunchakians collaborated with the "Islamic Society of Europe," which was then publishing the newspaper *La Turquie Libre* in London, and a preliminary faction of the Young Turk movement. *La Turquie Libre* published a number of declarations on behalf of the Comité Liberal Ottoman—the cover name used by Freemasons in their political endeavors in the empire. Between 1892 and 1894, "Young Turks" referred to the political wing of the Freemasons. Although more work is needed to unravel possible connections between the Hunchakians and the Young Turks in Europe, some remarks may be suggestive here. Given that the Hunchakian party had a relatively higher number of units throughout Central Anatolia and the eastern provinces, the "Yafta Olayları" may well have been a joint operation by the Hunchakians and the Young Turk factions in Europe. The latter may have effectively used the developing networks of the Hunchakians throughout Anatolia to spread its message among the population. For general discussions of the Yafta Olayları, see Ahmet Kolbaşı, *1892–1893 Ermeni Yafta Olayları* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2011); Toygun Altıntaş, "The Placard Affair and the Ankara Trial: The Hunchak Party and the Hamidian Regime in Central Anatolia, 1892–1893," *Journal of Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 4 (2017): 309–37; Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); 36–37; and Hanioglu, "Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons, 1875–1908," *Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1989): 186–97. For the booklet published by the Hunchakian party in 1894, see Hunchakian Party, *Brnut' ean Dem: Gaghatiyai datavarut' iwn* (Athens: Hunchak Press, 1894). For works on the cooperation between Armenian revolutionary parties and the Young Turks (particularly the Committee of Union and Progress) before 1908, see Arsen Avagyan and Gaidz F. Minassian, *Ermeniler ve İttihat ve Terakki: İşbirliğinden Çatışmaya* (Istanbul: Aras, 2013); and Garabet K. Moumdjian, "Struggling for a Constitutional Regime: Armenian–Young Turk Relations in the Era of Abdülhamid II, 1895–1909" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2012).

²¹Gerard J. Libaridian, "Ideology and Reality: Hunchakian Paradoxes at Birth" (unpublished paper). On the reformist movements of the 1870s and 1880s among Ottoman Armenians, see Libaridian, *Modern Armenia*, 51–73.

²²Elling, *The Semantics of Violence*, 28.

²³On the Kum Kapu Demonstration, see Arsen Kitur, *Patmut' iwn S.D. Hnch' akean Kusaks' ut' ean, 1887–1962* (Beirut: Shirak Press, 1962), 1:53–63; Social Democrat Hunchakian Party (SDHP), *Hisnameak, 1887–1937: Sots' . Demokratikan Hnch' akean Kusaks' ut' ean* (Providence, R.I., 1938), 48–51; Mihran Damadian, *Im Hushers* (Beirut: Ramgavar Liberal Party Club, 1986), 75–93; *Hunchak*, August 1890.

²⁴Libaridian, *What Was Revolutionary*, 87.

²⁵For examples, see Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1963), 61, 85. One Hunchakian partisan who had close connections with the Armenian Church was Kaloused Arkhanian; *Hunchak*, January/February 1906.

²⁶Ramazyan Erhan Güllü, *Ermeni Sorunu ve Istanbul Ermeni Patrikhanesi (1878–1923)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2005), 279.

²⁷On the Hunchakian founders' social and intellectual interactions in Europe, see Abel Manoukian, *Hah'reniqi azadakro'wt'ean panagin hamo'zo'wadz zino'wo'rneri* (Geneva: Araz Printing Press, 2014).

²⁸*Hunchak*, April 1893.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰In contrast to the 160 delegates from Constantinople, only sixty Armenians represented the provinces in the Armenian National Assembly. Petitioning was the standard way of expressing social and economic grievances and was not limited to Armenians. For petitions from Palestine to the Ottoman center in Istanbul, see Yuval Ben-Bassat, *Petitioning the Sultan: Protests and Justice in Late Ottoman Palestine* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2013).

³¹Fuccaro, "Urban Life," 19–20. See also Nora Lafi, "Challenging the Ottoman Pax Urbana: Intercommunal Clashes in 1857 Tunis," in *Violence and the City*, 95–109.

³²Yusuf Sarnay, ed., *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermenilerin Sevki ve İskanı (1870–1920)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2007), 16–17.

³³*Ibid.*, 17.

³⁴*Ibid.*; On the Ottoman bureaucracy from the early 19th century to 1876, see Stanford Shaw, "The Central Legislative Councils in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Reform Movement Before 1876," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 1 (1970): 51–84.

³⁵On the Erzurum demonstration, see Kitur, *Patmut'ıwn*, 1:51–53.

³⁶*Ibid.*; Yusuf Sarnay, ed., *Ermeni Komiteleri (1891–1895)* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2001), 15–17; *Hunchak*, October, November, December 1890.

³⁷Libaridian, *Modern Armenia*, 75. On Armenian notables in the provinces, see Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire 1860–1908* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977).

³⁸Levy-Aksu, *A Capital Challenge*, 53.

³⁹Maksudzade Sebuhi also received a death threat from the Hunchakian Party in February 1896; Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri (hereafter BOA), A.MKT.MHM 627/15 (23 February 1896); A.MKT.MHM 627/15 (26 February 1896).

⁴⁰Libaridian, *What Was Revolutionary*, 103.

⁴¹Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service*, 90.

⁴²Sarnay, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermenilerin Sevki*, 18. On Maksudzade Sebuhi, see Elke Hartmann, "The Loyal Nation and Its Deputies: The Armenians in the First Ottoman Parliament," in *The First Ottoman Experiment in Democracy*, ed. by Christoph Herzog and Malek Sharif (Würzburg, Germany: Ergon, 2010), 188–222.

⁴³Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 108–9.

⁴⁴A similar polemic can be found in the official correspondence of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and its official organ, *Droshak*. See Hratch Dasnabedian, ed., *Niwt'er H.H. Dashnaks'ut'ean Patmut'ean Hamar* (Beirut: Hamazkayin Vahe Setian Press, 1985), 1:143–47.

⁴⁵Parti social-démocrate Hentchakian, *Çragir Hnčakean kowsakčowiean: Handerj meknov'iwinnerov* (London: Hunchak Press, 1897); Libaridian, *Modern Armenia*, 74.

⁴⁶Libaridian, *What Was Revolutionary*, 88.

⁴⁷BEO 202/15114 (17 May 1893).

⁴⁸Ethem Eldem, *Pride and Privilege: A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals, and Decorations* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Center, 2004), 277.

⁴⁹Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1998), 35.

⁵⁰Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 285.

⁵¹Y.A.HUS 273/31 (24 April 1893).

⁵²Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 345.

⁵³*Hunchak*, February 1893.

⁵⁴*Hunchak*, April 1893. It is not clear whether the 400 Ottoman liras described as a bribe in the report were the monetary award associated with the *imtiyāz* order or another distinct financial reward.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶*Hunchak*, January 1892.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Eldem, *Pride and Privilege*, 357. One example of such an assassination is the case of Hagop Hadji Agha Krmlian, the chairman of the Merzifon town council. He was assassinated by the Hunchakian Committee of Merzifon on the grounds that he was an informant to local authorities; *Hunchak*, March 1893.

⁵⁹The Hunchakian headquarters in Europe was in Geneva until 1891 and then moved to Athens for a few years. London became the party center in 1894.

⁶⁰Yeghig Djeredjian, *Haverji Djampu Gerdtichneren* (Beirut: Social Democrat Hunchakian Party Press, 2014), 62; *Droshak*, March 1893; Kegham Hovhannisian, *Hnch'akean Kusaks'ut'ean Patmut'yun 1887–1915* (Yerevan: Institute of History, Yerevan, 2012), 78.

⁶¹One of the Hunchakian guerillas executed in the aftermath of these trials was Toros Dzarukian (Medz Tchello). According to Kegham Hovhannisian, he was hanged on 10 July 1893; Hovhannisian, *Hnch'akean*, 69. For a biography of Toros Dzarukian, see Sirvard, *T'oros Tsarukean: Mets' Ch'ello* (Providence, R.I.: Graphic Composition, 1960); *Hunchak*, August 1893.

⁶²*Hunchak*, October 1893.

⁶³For a biography of Jirayr Boyadjian, see SDHP, *Hisnameak*, 60–69; Sirvard, *Khorhrdawor heghap 'okhakan: anmahn Zhirayr, ir keank'n u gortsuneut' iwnē* (Paris: Imprimerie H. Turabian, 1953).

⁶⁴Many of the reports mention provincial clergymen who were imprisoned on real or false charges. However, one should bear in mind that *Hunchak* probably exaggerated some of the figures in order to galvanize European public opinion. The years 1892–94 were critical for the eastern provinces because the securitization of the region intensified, including vis-à-vis the creation of the Hamidiye Regiments. See Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁵An Ottoman report prepared exclusively for Abdülhamid in 1896 claimed that the first assassination attempt against Patriarch Ashekian had occurred on 28 July 1890, a day after the Kum Kapu protest. The document claims that the reason behind the attack was Ashekian's role in informing the Ottoman authorities about the Hunchakian organizers of the demonstration but expresses some hesitancy over whether the attack was deliberate or an accident. See Sarnay, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermenilerin Sevki*, 12–13; Recep Karacakaya, "Ermeni Terörün Farklı Bir Boyutu," *Stratejik Öngörü* 7 (2004): 104.

⁶⁶*Hunchak*, April 1894. One confidential letter sent by Avedis Nazarbekian from Athens to the Hunchakian Committee in Constantinople shows that the Hunchakian Central Committee in Constantinople had entertained the idea of assassinating Patriarch Khoren Ashekian in 1892. But Nazarbekian warned the addressees that such an act would have detrimental effects on the burgeoning Hunchakian organization in the capital and that its repercussions would be calamitous. He suggested that the Central Committee should focus instead on strengthening the organizational units in the capital; Kitur, *Patmut' iwn*, 1:74. Ramazan Erhan Güllü claims that the assailant was Hagop Karabetyan. He ascribes the family name Mazlumyan to another accomplice, Bedros, who had helped Hagop; Güllü, *Ermeni Sorunu*, 189, 192.

⁶⁷*Hunchak*, April 1894.

⁶⁸SDHP, *Hisnameak*, 268–75.

⁶⁹*Hunchak*, April 1894.

⁷⁰*Droshak*, May 1894

⁷¹*Hunchak*, June 1895; Dasnabedian, *Niwt'er*, 143, 147, 153.

⁷²Charles Vartanian, Leon Kirishdjian, and Ohannes Afaryan were arrested as suspects in Undjuyan's murder in the early 1900s; Erdoğan H. Cengiz, ed., *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amaçları ve İhtilal Hareketleri: (Meşrutiyet'in ilanından önce ve sonra)*, (Ankara: Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı, 2003), 24; Y.MTV 278/133 (23 November 1905); DH.MKT 1251/59 (31 May 1908). For a factual, yet deeply flawed analysis of the major assassinations carried out by the Armenian revolutionaries in the period 1890–96, see Recep Karacakaya, *Ermenilere Yönelik Ermeni Terörü* (Istanbul: 47 Numara Yayıncılık Araştırma Dizisi, 2006). Karacakaya's work is the example *par excellence* of Turkish nationalist and mainstream historiography in which the assassinations are decontextualized, without proper consideration of the Armenian community's inner dynamics and socio-economic factors.

⁷³Elling, *The Semantics of Violence*, 25.

⁷⁴Cengiz, *Ermeni Komiteleri*, 16.

⁷⁵On the organization of the Hunchakian Central Committee in Constantinople, see Nalbandian, *The Armenian*, 117; Kitur, *Patmut' iwn*, 2:120, 150; Hovhannisian, *Hnch'akean*, 27–37.

⁷⁶*Hunchak*, April 1894.

⁷⁷Y.A.HUS 292/82 (26 March 1894).

⁷⁸BEO 193/14429 (23 April 1893).

⁷⁹A.MKT.MHM 749/13 (26 March 1894).

⁸⁰*Hunchak*, July 1894; MV 81/35 (5 November 1894).

⁸¹*Hayrenik*, 12 May 1894. This may be in the old Armenian calendar, and would correspond to 22 May 1894 in the new one; Ramazan Güllü, *Ermeni Sorunu*, 194.

⁸²*Hunchak*, July 1894. For Mihran Manisadjian's biography, see *Hunchak*, August 1894.

⁸³Y.PRK.ZB 13/31 (21 May 1894).

⁸⁴Y.PRK.ZB 13/31 (17 June 1894); BEO 421/31515 (18 June 1894); Y.PRK.ZB 13/31 (24 June 1894); *Hunchak*, September 1894.

⁸⁵*Hunchak*, July 1894.

⁸⁶*Hayrenik* 12 May 1894.

⁸⁷BEO 407/30467 (23 May 1894).

⁸⁸İlkay Yılmaz, *Serseri, Anarşist ve Fesadın Peşinde: II. AbdülHamid Dönemi Güvenlik Politikaları Ekseninde Mürur Tezkereleri, Pasaportlar ve Otel Kayıtları* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2014), 139–64.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁰Cengiz, *Ermeni Komiteleri*, 16.

⁹¹*Hunchak*, August 1894.

⁹²*Ibid.* No other document corroborates this.

⁹³Cengiz, ed., *Ermeni Komiteleri*, 28.

⁹⁴Levy-Aksu, *A Capital Challenge*, 59.

⁹⁵Riedler, *The City as a Stage*, 173. On the social identity of the victims of the 1896 massacre, see Sinan Dinçer, "The Armenian Massacre in Istanbul 1896," in *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geschiedenis* 4 (2013): 20–45; and Maghakia Ormanian, *Azgapatum* (Istanbul: Nersesian Publishing House, 1932), 3: 2991.

⁹⁶Riedler, *The City as a Stage*, 173.

⁹⁷Y.PRK.ASK 114/66 (31 August 1896), cited in Güllü, *Ermeni Sorunu*, 290. Güllü's work exemplifies how Turkish nationalist mainstream historiography passes over the Constantinople massacres of 1896, depicting the violence as mere "incidents."

⁹⁸Edhem Eldem, "Banka Vakası ve 1896 İstanbul Katliamı," in *1915: Siyaset, Tehcir, Soykırım*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Oktay Özel (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015), 186.

⁹⁹Cengiz, *Ermeni Komiteleri*, 28.

¹⁰⁰BEO 407/30467 (30 May 1894).

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²Y.MTV 101/58 (31 July 1894).

¹⁰³Cengiz, *Ermeni Komiteleri*, 29.

¹⁰⁴An estimate of the number of Hunchakian partisans in Constantinople in 1894–95 can be garnered from the Hunchakian Party's auditing book preserved at the Charents Museum of Arts and Literature in Yerevan. The Hunchakian local organizations were based on groups of ten members that formed one unit in a given district. I was able to identify fifteen such units in Constantinople. Given such a count, we can induce that by 1894, the total number of Hunchakian partisans in Constantinople was no less than 150; Archives of the Charents Museum of Arts and Literature, Folder Arpiar Arpiarian, File 668 (p. 1).

¹⁰⁵*Hunchak*, August 1894.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷Karacakaya, *Ermeni Terörizminin*, 109.

¹⁰⁸Feroz Ahmad, "Some Thoughts on the Role of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in the Genesis and Development of Socialist Movement in Turkey: 1876–1923," in *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1923*, ed. Mete Tunçay and Erik Jan Zürcher (London: I.B.Tauris, 1994), 15.

¹⁰⁹Dasnabedian, *Patmut'ivn*, 124–26. For a complete account of the negotiations between Artin Pasha Dadian and the ARF, see also *Hayrenik*, no. 7, May 1938, 141–47, no. 8, June 1938, 157–160, no. 10, August 1939, 166–75, and no. 11, November 1939, 148–66, cited in Moundjian, *Struggling for a Constitutional Regime*, 106. After Ashikian's resignation in 1894, Archbishop Matheos Izmirlian became the new patriarch in 1895, but he was deemed by the sultan to be "too sympathetic" to the revolutionaries and was thus forced to step down in July of 1896. Thereafter, Malachia Ormanian assumed the Patriarchal seat. In 1896 Sultan Abdülhamid abrogated the Armenian National Assembly, and it was only reopened in 1908 after the Young Turk Revolution. Ormanian stepped down in 1908.

¹¹⁰During this same period Abdulhamid initiated negotiations with the exiled members of the Young Turks most of whom were based in Paris and Geneva. He sent Ahmed Celalettin Pasha to convince some of them to return to Constantinople. As a result, some staunch opponents of the Hamidian regime, such as Mizancı Murad, went back to the Ottoman capital and were recruited in the Hamidian bureaucracy. See François Georgeon, *Abdulhamid II: Le Sultan Calife* (Fayard, 2003), 339–42.

¹¹¹Hartmann, *The Loyal Nation*, 222.