

BEING AN ARMENIAN IN ANATOLIA:
NARRATIVES OF LOSS AND RECUPERATION

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2014

BEING AN ARMENIAN IN ANATOLIA:
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Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

by

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2014

Thesis Abstract

Can Özden, “Being an Armenian in Anatolia: Narratives of Loss and Recuperation”

This thesis, which is based on an oral history research with Armenians who have migrated from Anatolia to Istanbul in the last few decades, investigates the formation of Armenian identity in the present. As there are no official records about Armenians living in Anatolia and those who had converted to Islam after the genocide and as recent studies are very limited in number, the most important document becomes oral history narratives. Analyzing Armenians’ lived experiences, memories and postmemories in narratives, this thesis argues that the Armenian identity is associated with resistance against the state and societal norms. Yet this resistance takes multiple meanings and forms. It is indeed subjects’ gender, social class and local identity that largely determine how they tell their stories of resistance and against whom they should resist. Conversion, marriage and migration emerge as main strategies of Armenians in Anatolia to survive and protect their identity. Furthermore, this thesis shows that the 1915 stands as the origin of familial histories and personal life stories as due to the genocide many Armenians today cannot trace their genealogy in the pre-1915 era and as they start telling their life stories with the 1915. This thesis, therefore, argues that the 1915 is not simply a date that points to a specific time in history but an era in which Armenians still live. Accordingly this thesis looks at how some major events that occurred after the genocide such as confiscation of Armenian properties, the Democrat Party’s election victory, September 6-7, the emergence of ASALA and assassination of Hrant Dink are experienced and narrated by Armenians.

Tez Özeti

Can Özden, “Anadolu’da Ermeni Olmak: Kayıp ve Telafi Anlatıları”

Geçtiğimiz yıllarda, Anadolu’dan İstanbul’a göç etmiş Ermenilerle yapılan sözlü tarih araştırmasına dayanan bu çalışma günümüzde Ermeni kimliğinin nasıl oluştuğunu incelemektedir. Soykırımdan sonra Anadolu’da yaşamaya devam eden ve Müslümanlaşan Ermenilerle ilgili resmi kayıt olmadığı ve bu konuda yakın zamanda yapılmış araştırma eksikliği sebebiyle sözlü tarih anlatıları en önemli kaynak oluyor. Bu tez, bu anlatılardaki Ermenilerin deneyimlerini, hafızalarını ve postbelleklerini analiz ederek, Ermeni kimliğinin devlete ve toplumsal normlara karşı direniş ile bağdaştırıldığını iddia ediyor. Bu direniş birçok anlam ve biçim alıyor. Aslında kişilerin toplumsal cinsiyeti, sınıfı ve yerel kimliği, onların nasıl direndiğini belirliyor. Din deęiştirme, evlilik ve göç Anadolu’daki Ermenilerin hayatta kalabilmek ve kimliklerini koruyabilmek için kullandıkları temel stratejiler olarak ortaya çıkıyor. Ayrıca bu tez Ermenilerin soykırım sebebiyle 1915 öncesi soyağaçlarını bilmemeleri ve hayat hikâyelerini 1915 ile başlatmaları sebebiyle 1915’in tüm aile ve kişisel hikâyelerin başlangıç noktası olarak görüldüğünü gösteriyor. Dolayısıyla bu tez, 1915’in sadece tarihsel bir zamana deęil, Ermenilerin hala içinde oldukları bir döneme işaret ettiğini iddia ediyor. Aynı şekilde, soykırım sonrası yaşanan Ermeni varlıklarına el konulması, Demokrat Parti’nin seçim zaferi, 6-7 Eylül, ASALA’nın ortaya çıkması ve Hrant Dink’in öldürülmesi gibi olayları Ermenilerin nasıl deneyimlediğini ve anlattığını inceliyor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Professor Arzu Öztürkmen for the guidance and support she provided me during the writing process of this thesis. I also thank Meltem Ahıska and Evangelos Kechriotis for reading my thesis and making precious comments for its betterment. I also present my thanks to Sarkis Arik, Vartkes Hergel and Mari for sparing the time to introduce me to people who helped me for this thesis.

My dear friend Haydar Darıcı has been a continuous support in almost every stage of this research. Without his motivation and academic and spiritual support, this work could not have been completed. I am also thankful to my friends Duygu Şendağ, Meltem Şendağ, Selim Özgen, Neşe Kaya and Emine Kaçar for the help and support during the course of this thesis.

I acknowledge my gratitude to *Agos*, *Belge Publishers* and *Aras Publishers* since their publications enabled me to have an insight about my thesis topic.

I am also thankful to Aylin Yılmaz for correcting the format of this thesis.

Lastly I would like to thank my parents Nazire Özden and İmam Özden for always being there for me and supporting me in everything I do. It is to them I dedicate this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Until I started my university education, my mother had not told me that she is a granddaughter of a convert Armenian woman who lost all her family in 1915 and had to marry a Muslim man (who was my mother's grandfather) and convert to Islam. Before she told her grandmother's story, I had no knowledge about Armenian converts in both my father's and mother's families except for some photographs I saw on our family photo album. On the photo album, there were three photographs in which there were modern looking families in front of suburb houses in the United States. We were told that they were our relatives who migrated abroad. Women were without headscarf, their clothes were very different and they had totally different appearances from the rest of relatives in the album who appeared in traditional clothes in different parts of Adiyaman. When I learned my mother's grandmother's story, whose name was Agavni but changed to Fatma, I wanted to reach those people but my cousins who went to the US for their language education said that they could not find them although they tried a lot.

Still, before Hrant Dink's assassination, I did not have any interest on the history of Armenians and did not feel any belonging to the Armenian community. Though I still do not identify myself as Armenian, Hrant Dink's assassination triggered me to research on convert Armenians and their lives in different parts of Anatolia after the establishment of the Turkish Republic.

In this thesis, I will analyze how Armenians who came to Istanbul from different parts of Turkey tell their life histories in relation to their gender,

local identity, class and present perspectives on the politics and history of the modern Turkey. Through narrative analysis of the life histories that I collected, I will look at how their own Armenian subjectivities are constructed and how they narrate their stories as a continuation of the 1915.¹ I will also try to understand how local identity, gender, class and political orientation shape those narratives and create both similarities and differences at the same time. Lastly, I will try to explain narrators' understanding and periodization of the Republic of Turkey. As seen in the discussion about memory and oral history later in this chapter, my purpose in this thesis is not writing an alternative history on the basis of experience and memory. This is because life stories do not give us direct access to experience but rather they give us some clues about how subjects interpret and make sense of their own experiences. What my thesis does, therefore, is to open up a space for and interpret this form of interpretation.

Until recently, the Armenians living in Turkey, had not been a subject of historical inquiries. Nearly all researches have dealt with the "events of 1915". History, culture, literature and also Armenians' current problems and demands as citizens were ignored. While the silence on the Armenians was another aspect of the forgetting 1915, it has continued even after the

¹ According to the article 2 of the 1948 United Nations Conventions on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, "genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a. Killing members of the group;
- b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c. Deliberately inflicting on the group's conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group"

However, as the majority of informants used '1915' to refer to the Genocide, I will also use the same word.

emergence of public debates about the genocide in the 1990s. Before reviewing the literature on Armenians which started to flourish during the last decades, I will try to analyze the silence on 1915 in the Turkish historiography that turned into a remembering after 1970s and 1980s as a result of the political conjuncture at the time. What is interesting is that this silence continued until the 2000s when it comes to the issue of the Armenians who survived and continued to live in Anatolia.

The Turkish History Writing and the Armenians

When history writing is in the service or under the influence of nationalism and nationalists, it only gives favorable accounts of a nation. That how those favorable accounts are produced is another issue. In order to understand how history is produced, Michel-Rolph Trouillot looks at the silences of the past and argues that the production of history is always influenced by the power holders. He asserts that what we know about the past is that “which is said to be happened.”² Thus, he suggests that we have to look at the actors who participate in the production of history.³ I would argue that as the nationalism was the main discourse that power holders used, the accounts that they produced are not immune from the nationalist discourses. Therefore, I agree with those scholars who emphasize the importance of forgetting and silencing in the production of history when the issue is an event that involves shameful acts of a nation. In the Turkish history writing, the same process of

² [Michel-Rolph](#) Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995), p. 2.

³ *ibid.*, p. 25.

silencing/forgetting the past determines the knowledge about the genocide and Armenians.

We can think of the exclusion of the 1915 from the Turkish history writing as a sign of the general continuity between the Young Turk policies of ethnic homogenization that started in 1913 and continued until the 1950s under the governance of new Kemalist state. Eric Jan Zürcher emphasizes that the members of the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) involved in the national resistance movement during the World War I though later they were eliminated by Mustafa Kemal who took over the movement and concentrated power in his own hands.⁴ Güngör extends this continuity until the 1950s and uses the concept of “demographical engineering” to describe the coerced policies of the empire and its successor republic in the process of nation-building.⁵ He includes the Genocide into a broad list of nationalist violence which continued until the 1955 pogrom against Greeks and Armenians in Istanbul. All these policies aimed at “Turkification” of economy, education, law and culture which excluded “non-Turkifiable” minorities through economic Turkification, isolation and expulsion.⁶ “The events of 1915” was part of this long and very violent process of the forced Turkification of Anatolia and the Turkish nation-building.⁷

⁴ Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish Nationalist Movement (1905-1926)*, (Leiden: Brill, 1984), p. 105.

⁵ Uğur Ümit Güngör, “Turkey for the Turks: Demographic Engineering in Eastern Anatolia, 1914-1945” 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, 287-305. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 289.

⁶ Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve “Türkleştirme” Politikaları*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), p. 101.

⁷ Taner Akçam, *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları 1995) p. 122-132.

What was the reflection of Turkification process on the Turkish history writing? Turkification of territory, economy and culture in the new republic also influenced the history writing and led it to ignore whole non-Muslims or blame them as enemy within and supporters of foreign powers. Göçek argues that Atatürk's *Speech* which glorified the feats of the Turkish nation and its struggle for a nationhood became the basis of this exclusion in the Turkish historiography.⁸ *Speech* commences the birth of the Turkish nation with 1919 thus removed 1915 from its history while it also excludes Kurds, Armenians, Jews and Greeks and regards Muslim Turks as the patriots.⁹ Using Duncan's concept of "collective myth", Göçek states that the past told by Mustafa Kemal in *Speech* was transformed into a "collective myth" which was "officially distributed and reproduced through the entire centralized Turkish mass education."¹⁰

Turkish nationalist history writing has started remembering Armenians after a long period of forgetting/silencing. Since the political conjuncture has changed during the twentieth century, the old strategy of forgetting 1915 could not be followed. The ASALA assassinations of diplomats in 1970s and 1980s, increasing relations between Turkey and the European Union, and the US policies that are influenced by the Armenian diaspora made it inevitable to leave the policy of silencing. After a long period of silence on the issue of

⁸ Fatma Müge Göçek, "Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on 1915" 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, 42-52. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 44.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 44.

the existence of Armenians in Anatolia and the genocide, remembering, depending on changing political atmosphere, replaced forgetting/silencing. However this remembering was based on denial and a selective use of past documentation that valorized the Turks.¹¹ Mainly retired diplomats developed a narrative of the “Armenian issue” through the 1970s and 1980s and claimed that what happened in 1915 was not a genocide but “mukatele” which means mutual slaughter.¹² The ASALA terror, the genocide issue and the Armenian atrocities against Turks in different parts of Anatolia were the main subjects.

Thus, the Turkish nationalist historiography is not based only on silencing, but also remembering through denial. The entire moral responsibility for Armenian deaths and massacres is assigned to the Western powers which intervened in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire and to the Armenians.¹³ Those publications also ignored Armenian culture and intellectual life in the Ottoman Empire and just focused on the 1915 and the ASALA terror.¹⁴ Since this kind of history writing has the power of authority, having a more fair reconstruction of the past and challenging such accounts have not been possible until recently.

For Gwynne Dyer, the almost unanimous Turkish reaction was trying to forget the whole history of the Armenians in Anatolia and the Turkish

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 44.

¹² Türkkaya Ataöv (ed.) *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2001).

¹³ Göçek, p. 47.

¹⁴ Arzu Öztürkmen, “Turkish Research on Armenian Culture and History,” (63-80) *Positive Examples of Coexistence of Armenian and Turkish People from the History*. (Yerevan: ACGRC Publications, 2012), p. 71.

history writing has followed the same path.¹⁵ However, as Dyer asserts, when forgetting becomes impossible, the main strategy turns into seeking a comprehensive justification for the genocide and accusing the Armenians of disloyalty, revolt and treason.¹⁶ Especially state elites and nationalist scholars started to have these justificatory arguments after the 1980s. *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period* is a product of this new strategy as it is also accepted by the editor in the cover note:

The preparation of this book has been undertaken with the aim of providing a fresh look at Ottoman Armenian relations in the period of the First World War and its immediate aftermath.

It is necessitated by virtue of the fact that today, close to a century after the events in question, Armenian organizations in a variety of nations are actively pressuring the legislatures of their adopted homelands to enact legislation proclaiming the Armenians to have been the victims of a war-time 'genocide' in the Ottoman Empire. This is a view, which the present study shows is unsustainable in the light of objective scholarship.

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey undertook the sponsorship of the publication of this book in an effort to introduce parliamentary colleagues around the world, the others interested in the issue, to a more balanced view of the relations between Turks and Armenians throughout history.¹⁷

Like Dyer, Göçek argues that because of the Turkish nation-state's policy that denies the "Armenian massacres of 1915", Turkish people are not able to

¹⁵ Gwynne Dyer, "Turkish 'Falsifiers' and Armenian 'Deceivers': Historiography and the Armenian Massacres" in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Jan. 1996, p. 99

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁷ Ataöv, (ed.) *The Armenians in the Late Ottoman Period*, (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2001).

understand the tragic end of Armenians in Anatolia.¹⁸ Moreover, we still do not have enough information about the existence of the Armenian survivors and their lives in Anatolia after 1915. Therefore, Göçek states that a new interpretation of history is necessary for Turkish historiography to get rid of the pressure of Turkish nation-state's hegemony and she is optimistic since we started to have the "post-nationalist critical narratives" of 1915 that are written by liberal Turkish intellectuals.

A New Approach in the Turkish History Writing

Therefore, as Arzu Öztürkmen argues "for a generation born into the 1970s, there was not much to hear and learn about Armenian cultural and intellectual history"¹⁹. Nevertheless, she states that this generation was also exposed to communication within their families and neighborhoods and heard memoirs on neighborly relations between Muslims and non-Muslim communities. According to Öztürkmen, this nostalgia "created a public curiosity for the Ottoman 'multi-cultural' heritage".²⁰ In such an environment, the 1980 coup transformed this curiosity into an eagerness to investigate non-Muslim communities' cultures in the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, according to Leyla Neyzi, after the coup of 12 September 1980, "under the impact of global trends, there was a turn to cultural and subjective

¹⁸ Fatma Müge Göçek, "Reconstructing the Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Massacres and Deaths of 1915" in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward : Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 210.

¹⁹ Öztürkmen, p. 70.

²⁰ *ibid.* 70.

identities.”²¹ She argues that Turkish society started to be interested with recent past and debated national history while “contemporary issues are discussed in relation to the past and the past in relation to the present”.²² Nurdan Gürbilek also states that after the Marxist movement was dissolved by the coup, new topics emerged during the 1990s.²³ Those topics includes sexual preferences, feminism and identity politics. The Kurdish movement and its struggle triggered an interest on different ethnicities and identities within Turkish intelligentsia and leftist movement. Greek-Turkish rapprochement also led a public curiosity on Greek existence in Anatolia and inter community relations. Thus the recent historical events such as the Armenian genocide of 1915, the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1923, the massacre of the Alevi/Kurds of Dersim in the 1930s, events of 6-7 September 1955, the 1960, 1971, and 1980 military coups, and the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state became new subjects for researches and public debates.²⁴

Furthermore, during the last quarter century, there also emerged a new historical approach to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman archives were reorganized and opened for the historians, new universities and history departments were founded and young historians started to be equipped with

²¹ Leyla Neyzi. “Oral History and Memory Studies in Turkey” in *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, Philip Robins (eds.) (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 446.

²² *ibid.*, p. 446.

²³ Öztürkmen, p. 71.

²⁴ Neyzi, p. 446.

international standards in history.²⁵ As a result, new topics which had not been studied and discussed became subjects of researches.

For instance, Arzu Öztürkmen says that Bernard Lewis and Benjamin Braude's *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire* which was published in the early 1980s was an important collection since it focused on the non-Turkish elements and their cultures in the Ottoman society for the first time.

²⁶ Scholars such as Timur Taner, Edhem Eldem, Taner Akçam, Selim Deringil can be seen as the prominent historians who represent this new approach to the Ottoman Empire.

These scholars who can be defined as liberal and open minded do not try to defend a particular nationalist assumption or state policy. They reject to define Turkish society "as an imagined community of the nationalist compatriots of Turks."²⁷ Rather, they recognize other ethnic and religious minorities and critically analyze the historical context within which the "events of 1915" occurred.²⁸ While those historians started to analyze the 1915 and Armenian existence in the Ottoman Empire with a new critical approach, others looked at the republican discriminatory policies on religious minorities focusing on the 1934 Thracian events, the 1936 property declaration practices, the 1941 incident of the twenty classes, the wealth tax

²⁵ Oktay Özel, *Dün Sancısı: Türkiye'de Geçmiş Algısı ve Akademik Tarihçilik*. (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2009), pp. 66-67.

²⁶ Öztürkmen, p. 67.

²⁷ Göçek, p. 225.

²⁸ See for instance Taner Akçam, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and Armenian Genocide* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2004), *Belgeler, tanıklıklar ve Halil Berktaş, Taner Akçam, Stefanos Yerasimos'un Yorumlarıyla Büyük Felaket : 1915 Katliamı ve Ermeni sorunu* (İstanbul : Re Yayıncılık, 2005), Timur, Taner *Türkler ve Ermeniler: 1915 ve Sonrası* (Ankara: İmge Kitapevi, 2000).

of 1942, the events of 6-7 September 1955, and the confiscation of the properties of non-Muslim foundations.²⁹

Although those issues were started to be discussed by academicians, journalists, and politicians, their main focus was fixed on the genocide and its influence on Turkey's relations with Armenia and Armenian diaspora. They mainly concentrated on the events caused by state's discriminatory policies and ignored problems minority groups encountered in their daily lives after the establishment of the republic. Moreover, the main focus of such studies have been the non-Muslim communities living in Istanbul. They excluded both converts and non-Muslims living in rural areas in Turkey.

Proliferation of Different Genres on the Armenian Genocide and Armenians

On the other hand, it should be noted that publications on Armenian culture continued after the establishment of the republic.³⁰ Armenian researchers in Turkey such as Hrant Andreasyan, Kevork Pamukçiyanyan, Pars Tuğlacı published books on Armenian medieval texts, Armenian presence and social life in Istanbul, and Armenian literature between 1950s and 1990s.³¹

Though newspapers such as *Jamanak* and *Nor Marmara* have been published in Armenian, Nivart Taşçı, who works at *Aras Publishers*, said that as Armenians were speaking mainly in Turkish and there was a need for a

²⁹ See for instance Rifat N. Bali, *1934 Trakya Olayları* (İstanbul: Kitapevi 2008), Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve "Türkleştirme" Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları Bağlamında: 6-7 Eylül Olayları* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları 2005).

³⁰ Öztürkmen, p. 67.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 68.

newspaper and publisher to publish in Turkish during the 1990s.³² Thus, there emerged new publications about the Armenians in different genres such as biographies, autobiographies, short stories and newspapers. Established in 1993, *Aras Publishers* brought a new breath to the literature in Turkey. It has been publishing Armenian writers' works both in Armenian and Turkish on Armenian literature, history, culture and aims at enabling people who live together but have different cultures to know each other better.³³ Mıgırdıç Margosyan's storybooks *Gavur Mahallesi*, *Söyle Margos Nerelisin?*, *Biletimiz İstanbul'a Kesildi* and Hagop Mintzuri's *Atina, Tuzun Var mı?*, *Armıdan Fırat'ın Öte Yanı* and *Kapandı Kirve Kapıları* are the most well-known books that give a sense about the lives of Armenians in Anatolia. Especially, Margosyan's books on Armenian rural life attracted attention from media and public. He was praised in several columns though some nationalist newspapers such as *Ortadoğu* accused him of racism.³⁴ Nevertheless, Nıvart Taşçı claimed that *Gavur Mahallesi* received a positive reaction from the Turkish media and became a milestone for the *Aras Publishers*. *Belge Publishers* also published Yorgo Andriadis's *Tamama: Pontus'un Yitik Kızı* in 1993 and this demonstrates that in 1990s Turkish public came across to multi-cultural structures of the empire and its remnants in Anatolia. Both *Belge* and *Aras Publishers* published memoirs of non-Muslims in 1990s but had not started to publish books on the genocide and its influence on the Armenian presence in Anatolia until 2000s. Verjine Svazlian's *The Armenian Genocide and Social Memory* was published by

³² My personal interview with Nıvart Taşçı. June 10th 2014.

³³ <http://www.arasyayincilik.com/tr/hakkimizda>

³⁴ Hüseyin Mümtaz, "Azınlık Irkçılığı" *Ortadoğu*, November 20th 1997.

Belge Publishers in 2005 and *Aras Publishers* which mainly focused on Armenian culture and memoirs have just published four books on Armenian history during the 2000s.

However, some universities and NGOs started to organize conferences on different topics on Armenians. After Hrant Dink commenced to publish *Agos* newspaper in 1996, Armenians, who are still living in Turkey, their problems and demands became visible for the first time in the public. In 2005, the organization of a conference on “Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Scientific Responsibility and Issues of Democracy” by Boğaziçi University, Sabancı University and Bilgi University has led to a public debate on “the events of 1915” and its organizers and participants were exposed to many criticisms and attacks from the different segments of nationalists in Turkey. Etyen Mahçupyan’s book *İçimizdeki Öteki* was also published in 2005 and it explores how Armenian identity is constructed by the Armenian society and also “othering” policies of state.

On the other hand, recently, there emerged an interest on the stories of converted Armenians and their children and grandchildren’s experiences in Turkey. Fethiye Çetin’s *Anneannem*, İrfan Palalı’s *Tehcir Çocukları: Nenem bir Ermeniymiş* are the examples of this interest. In *Torunlar*, Ayşe Gül Altınay also criticizes the Armenian historians who had ignored converted Armenians and their experiences after 1915 and says that different destinies of the converted people wait to be researched.³⁵ This point is

³⁵ Ayşe Gül Altınay, Fethiye Çetin *Torunlar*. (İstanbul: Metis, 2009), p. 213.

especially important when questioning the silence of Turkish history writing about the Armenian survivors (especially women and children) who had to convert.

During 2000s, a new generation of researchers who studied the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire emerged such as Melissa Bilal, Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, Belinda Mumcu, Rober Koptaş, Ohannes Kılıçdağı, Nora Tataryan, Maral Aktokmakyan, Kayuş Çalıkman, Nora Mildanoğlu and Selina Özuzun. Based mainly on the Ottoman Armenian intellectuals, their research interests range from Ottoman Armenian feminists to the Armenian political thinking.³⁶

Several NGOs also started to work on problems of non-Muslim populations of Turkey during the 2000s. After conducting 40 in-depth interviews with Armenians from different background, Kentel, Karakaşlı, Özdoğan and Üstel published a book named “Armenians in Turkey: Community-Individual-Citizen” with the support of TESEV (Turkey Economic and Social Studies Foundation). It included chapters on Armenian institutions, Armenian identity during the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic and their problems during the republic.³⁷

In 2007, Hrant Dink Foundation was established after the murder of Hrant Dink in order to “carry on Hrant’s dreams, Hrant’s struggles, Hrant’s language and Hrant’s heart”. Its major activities focus on “the development of a culture of dialogue, empathy and peace” and the foundation also started

³⁶ Arzu Öztürkmen, “Sonsöz: Diyarbakır’ın Sırları, Surları, Soruları” in *Sessizliğin Sesi II: Diyarbakırlı Ermeniler Konuşuyor* (Hrant Dink Vakfı Yayınları 2012), p. 195.

³⁷ Ferhat Kentel, *Türkiye’de Ermeniler: Cemaat-Birey-Yurttaş*. (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınları, 2009).

to publishing books. One of its publications, “The Sounds of Silence – Turkey’s Armenians Speak” was prepared in 2011 after an oral history project that contained stories told by Armenians. In the preface Ali Bayramoğlu says:

This work intends to find the traces of Armenians living in Turkey and of the political and cultural memory of Armenian society, to reveal the continuity of cultural existence and to realize how Armenians perceive themselves and the ‘other’ in order to reflect the ‘reality’ of the Armenians in terms of its political, cultural and historical dimensions.³⁸

After this project, the foundation published two more books which contained stories of Armenians who live/lived in Diyarbakır and Ankara (“The Sounds of Silence II – Diyarbakır’s Armenians Speak”, “The Sounds of Silence III – Ankara’s Armenians Speak”) in 2012 and 2013 respectively. Ali Bayramoğlu asserts in the preface “This study (“The Sounds of Silence II”) is also an attempt to reimagine, or reconstruct the cultural presence of Armenians in Diyarbakır.”³⁹ In the preface of the third book of this series, Ferda Balancar asserts that this series is not an oral history study, rather it is an attempt to create awareness in the public about experiences of Armenians and memories.⁴⁰ Keeping Balancar’s assertion in mind, we can argue that these books aim to give reader a sense of Armenians’ thoughts and emotions about different topics on politics and history.

³⁸ “*The Sounds of Silence II - Diyarbakır’s Armenians Speak*”. (Hrant Dink Vakfı Yayınları, 2013),

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ In these books, many stories are compiled by Balancar without comments or narrative analysis. The reader cannot read the interview questions and interviewer’s comments, thus reads an uninterrupted narratives which obscured the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. They are prepared as if stories were written by the interviewee as autobiographies.

In 2012, TESEV's Democratization Program finished another project in order to understand the problems of Armenian population and their opinions about the democratization process in Turkey. This project brought together several Armenian representatives from media, academia, civil society, and the Armenian Patriarchate⁴¹. In 2013, Hrant Dink Foundation organized a conference on a newly discussed topic to which Altınay had already drew attention, *Islamized Armenians*. In this conference, panels and workshops tried to amplify our understanding of Armenians who had to convert to Islam to survive during and after the genocide.

This confrontation with the past reflected also on cinema recently. Lusin Dink's movie, *Saroyan 'in Ülkesinde*, traces back to the travel of famous Armenian writer to Bitlis where his parents were born. Made in 2013, this film was shown in 32nd International Istanbul Film Festival and gives its audience how a diaspora Armenian feels in his first visit to Anatolia.

Nevertheless, I think, there is still missing points in our understanding of the Armenian population who had survived and continued living in Anatolia. I think collecting narratives about their experiences and strategies in order to continue living in Anatolia is very important to construct a more comprehensive history about experiences of Armenians and their survival strategies in Anatolia after the genocide. Furthermore, I think such an attempt can also help us understand current policies and its reflections on Armenian population in Turkey. Keeping in mind that the murders of Hrant Dink and

⁴¹http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/c6208a2d-ad0d-4ea3-9dd6-7b5262d9029a/12091engErmeniler17_05_12.pdf

Sevag Balıkçı have not been solved yet, there is also an urgent and vital aspect of this problem.

As we do not have any official records about Armenians living in Anatolia and those who had converted to Islam after the genocide and as recent studies are very limited in number, the most important document for a social scientist becomes oral history narratives. Below, I will try to explain why oral history as a genre and methodology seems to me as the most convenient way for such a study on the Armenians.

Oral History and Armenians

Arzu Öztürkmen states that oral history is an approach which tries to understand the past and interpret the present through life stories.⁴² I think such an attempt can enable us to understand the past from a different perspective which challenges the official history writing about the Armenians and their lives after the genocide in Anatolia. As Paul Thompson argues “all history depends ultimately upon its social purpose.”⁴³ While the purpose of the official Turkish history writing is to legitimize the 1915 and its aftermath, oral history "can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history."⁴⁴ Through oral history we can find new areas of inquiry and we can challenge the established accounts. Thus, Thompson argues that

⁴² Arzu Öztürkmen, “Sözlü Tarih Poetikası: Anlatı ve Gösterim in *Edebiyatın Omuzundaki Melek: Edebiyatın Tarihle İlişkisi Üzerine Yazılar*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), p. 53.

⁴³ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 1.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 2.

oral history can transform history into a more democratic form through enlarging and enriching its content. It also gives more importance to the otherwise ignored social groups and empower them since it gives voice to those groups.

Moreover, oral history is important not only because it leads us to understand the past from a different perspective but also, as Portelli argues, it “tells us less about events than about their meaning.”⁴⁵ Contemporary oral historians are increasingly aware of the fact that oral testimonies have their own limits as a source for the use of historical facts about the recent past. For example, Frisch opposes the attitude that oral memory is ‘history as it really was’ and argues that this is not the weakness but strength of oral history. According to him, oral history is a “powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Popular Memory Group draws attention to the political meanings of the testimonies and claims that “the past has this living active existence in the present that it matters so much politically.”⁴⁷ Therefore, by its nature, oral testimonies are not only instrumental for our understanding of the past with a new

⁴⁵ Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different” in *The Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), 32-42. (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 36.

⁴⁶ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), p. 188.

⁴⁷ Popular Memory Group, “Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method” in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson. 43-53 (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 46.

perspective but also very helpful to understand the current meaning of the past for the narrator and his/her subjectivity. Those testimonies also show us “unknown events or unknown aspects of known events; they always cast new light on unexplored areas of the daily life of the non-hegemonic classes.”⁴⁸

Influenced by trends in literary criticism, contemporary oral historians also emphasize the importance of narrative and the construction of texts.⁴⁹ Informed by this approach; I will do a narrative analysis of the stories that I collected which are personal, local and unofficial but also very rich in terms of the ongoing influence of the genocide on the lives of Armenians. I will try to explore the ways Armenians tell their life histories in relation to their present perspectives of the politics and history of the modern Turkey.

Furthermore, I will also intent to analyze how they construct their own subjectivities through telling their stories. After bringing together several testimonies, I became able to understand their similarities and differences based upon my interviewees’ local identities, gender, class and political orientation. What is common in all the narratives is that interviewees start telling their life stories by talking about the 1915 which took place long before they were born. Events that occurred after the establishment of the republic and influenced religious minorities such as capital tax and events of September 6-7 are also touched upon though none except one of the interviewees witnessed them in Anatolia.

⁴⁸ Portelli, p. 36.

⁴⁹ Daniel James, “Listening in the Cold: The Practice of Oral History in an Argentine Meatpacking Community” in *The Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.) 83-101, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 86.

Thus, I will argue that life stories are told with the background of problems of minority groups in Turkey and personal experiences of interviewees are related to a more general picture of Turkey. Interviewees emphasize the similarities between their experiences and the shared oppression of Armenians during the 1915, confiscation, immigration, violence and conversion are the main themes in all stories that I collected.

Cultural Memory and Postmemory

In this thesis, while analyzing the narratives, I will use concepts like cultural memory and postmemory. Criticizing Halbwachs' concept of "collective memory", Jan Assman uses the concept of "cultural memory" and defines it as "a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated practice and initiation".⁵⁰ For him, a group receives its awareness of its unity and peculiarity through the knowledge that cultural memory preserves.⁵¹ He argues that this supply of knowledge in the cultural memory makes a concrete distinction between those who belong to a group and those who do not. Moreover, Assman says cultural memory "works by reconstruction, that is, always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation."⁵² While Portelli says that oral testimonies say more about the meaning, Assman emphasizes the importance of current

⁵⁰ Jan Assman, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity in New German Critique* 65 (Spring/Summer 1995) pp 125-134. p 128.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 130.

situation. As Armenians still feel repressed by the state and societal norms, I argue that their narratives tell more about their current concerns. Their ongoing fears about their children's future play an important role in the reconstruction of the past. Thus the past is narrated to demonstrate how the 1915 did not end but still is at work in the lives of Armenians. Their memories are based on the distinction between Armenian identity and Turks/Muslims/Assyrians etc. but what is more interesting is the fact that there is also no concrete Armenian identity. Rather, as I will try to show, their social class and local identity come into prominence in their identity construction.

I will also make use of the concept of postmemory while looking at the stories that the interviewees did not experience but heard about their family's past. For Marianne Hirsch, postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated."⁵³ The assumption in the discussions of postmemory is that second or third generations of survivors live in a post-conflict context which make them feel that their personal histories and experiences are trivial compared to that of previous generation. Furthermore, it is presupposed that the next generations of survivors 'remember' the violent past in a post-conflict present. Then, what is at stake is the weight of the past on the present. Thus, while contemporary situation of Armenians influence their stories about the

⁵³ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 22.

past, the violent past itself also plays an important role in the construction of self-representation and stories.

Therefore, my main argument is that the Armenians narrate their histories as part of 1915. As a result, their narratives are underlined with an emphasis on a struggle and resistance against the state, neighbors, or other minority groups in order to protect their Armenian identities. Their decisions on naming, marriage, work, immigration or conversion are narrated as a part of a life strategy to survive in a context that resembles 1915.

However, multiple survival strategies which stemmed from different sociological parameters such as local identity, class, gender and political orientation also multiplied the ways life stories are produced and narrated. I will, thus, try to explain how local identity, gender, class and political orientation played role in their life histories and also shaped their present perspectives of the politics and history. While all stories underline with a constant struggle to remain Armenian (the term used by interviewees to refer both their ethnicity and religion), the ways this struggle is experienced and told diverge as a result of these sociological parameters.

In the second chapter, I will give a short summary to reflect my own experiences during the process of conducting interviews and also to give information of strengths and shortcomings of my own research. In the third chapter, I will investigate why the 1915 constitutes an important role in constructing Armenian identity and I will also try to analyze the commonplace elements in self-representations to understand collective identity. Then I will try to analyze the narratives that I collected based on three important themes that emerged in all stories predominantly: marriage,

immigration and conversion. Those themes are used as strategies to protect their lives but also their identities in an environment where they witness abduction, confiscation and violence regularly as ‘continuation of 1915’. I will also try to analyze in a chapter how Armenians remember and periodize the history of the Republic of Turkey according to their life histories and present political stand.

I believe that such a study on the Armenians can also help us to understand their experiences in Anatolia during the history of the Republic of Turkey which had long been ignored by historians but also can contribute to our understanding of the past and the present politics and history of contemporary Turkey.

CHAPTER II

ON METHODOLOGY AND REFLEXIVITY

While there is an extensive literature concerning the 1915 events and the international relations between Armenia and Turkey, there is however little knowledge on how Armenians of Turkey experienced the Republican times. As put forward in the Introduction, a significant number of memoirs and historical surveys concerning mainly the Ottoman Armenians have been published lately. Yet these works still need to be supported by more data, documenting the multi-layered nature of this experience, particularly in provincial areas and among the middle and lower classes. Michael Frisch argues, oral history is a “powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them”.⁵⁴ Thus, as the best way to better understand and voice out the Armenian experience of Republican history oral history research appeared to be a compulsory approach to take.

The most difficult part of the research process was to contact and convince people for an interview. I dealt with this problem through my personal network and an Armenian friend. It was indeed my friends who found informants for me. Rupen, whom I also interviewed with, was a close friend of one of my friends.⁵⁵ After we met, I talked to him about my thesis subject

⁵⁴ Frisch, p. 188.

⁵⁵ To protect my interviewees, I used pseudonyms.

and he accepted my request for an interview. During our first meeting, he also questioned me to understand my political views on the 1915 but also on the Kurdish issue and Middle East politics. After a long conversation in a café, he invited me to a talk which is organized by a political party that Rupen was a member. Thus, Rupen did not want to be a passive informant but also tried to influence me on different political debates. Rupen also introduced me to his relatives and friends who also migrated from Batman, Sason. Through Facebook, he also introduced me to his other friends and guaranteed that I am a trustable person. After making several interviews with people from Sason, I started to meet new people through their networks.

Due to the political processes of Republican times, many Armenians living in the provinces had migrated to big cities or abroad. This is why I conducted my research in Istanbul, focusing on different neighborhoods such as Kadıköy, Yeşilköy, Samatya, Bakırköy and Şişli where the majority of Armenians live. I started my interviews in 2012 and it lasted until the beginning of 2014. Though I conducted 23 interviews, I focused on twenty of them. I left out three interviews since those informants did not want me to record our interview due to their concerns about privacy. They also emphasized that they did not know much about the past and thus they were reluctant to speak with me. The age range of my interviewees is between 33 and 91 and the average age is 56. While I preferred to speak with people who are over their 60s, I also interviewed younger people to be able to make comparisons between different generations. My informants' birth places included Batman, Adıyaman, Iskenderun, Amasya, Kayseri, Bursa, Balıkesir, Izmir and Konya.

In the beginning of my research, I was intending to conduct the interviews in the informants' houses. However, nearly half of the informants did not prefer that I visited them in their own place. Male informants wanted me to go to their workplaces and some female informants preferred to speak in cafés. As I knew that this preference was related to privacy and trust, in the beginning of the interviews, I asked help from my friends who were acquaintances with my informants, and they accompanied us during the interviews. Their presence was essential to set a reliable and comfortable milieu for the informants. Once trust was established, I could continue the interviews by myself. Nevertheless, even as such, the interview places like their workplace or cafés, were not appropriate settings to conduct serene interviews. The dialogue we had would often be interrupted whenever another acquaintance entered the café or someone entered the workplace. To give an example, because of these interruptions, I had to visit a dentist informant four times in order to complete the interview. However, this also made our relationship stronger, as my persistent commitment also displayed the value I was giving to my research subject and to his account in particular. Based on the trust established between us through the process, in the last interview, he started to speak about his brother in exile, which he never mentioned in the previous conversations. Conducting interviews with women in the cafés also had an advantage, since it enabled me to meet my informants' friends with whom I also conducted interviews.

Yet, three of interviewees were reluctant and eight people actually refused to speak with me about their lives, emphasizing repeatedly that they 'did not know anything'. This repeated sentence, "I do not know anything",

can be translated as “I do not want to talk about politics”. This anxiety, however, did not disappear in some interviews even though I told them that I did not want to learn any specific thing, but only wanted to listen to their life histories. What was at stake, however, was that their life story itself was political. As can be seen throughout this thesis, my interviewees started their life story with the 1915 and could not proceed without giving reference to the political events that happened thereafter.

Therefore, I can clearly state that the most difficult aspect of the research process was to reach out and convince informants. Because of the weight of their traumatic memory of history, the ongoing state-sponsored oppression against their community and Hrant Dink’s murder, Armenians still felt uncomfortable telling their life stories to a stranger or to a person who is not Armenian.

Even though I was able to contact my potential interviewees, during the interviews I still had trouble creating an intimate space where they could open themselves to me. To establish trust, I usually began by telling my own life story and that of my Armenian grandmother. My grandmother who was born in Arapgir had lost her husband and son when she was in her 20s in 1915. This mutual exposure between us turned our interviews into a dialogue in which I could also comment on their stories. Alessandro Portelli recommends, “Don’t be neutral. Be open, tell them about yourself, answer questions”.⁵⁶ During the interviews, I was not neutral, instead I openly told them about myself and shared with them my own opinions, answering whatever they asked. This

⁵⁶ Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, (Madison, Wis : University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 62.

mode of interaction relaxed my informants, which made them more engaged, focused and articulate. On the issue of being taped, many felt nervous in the beginning of the interviews. Especially female informants did not want to tell their children's or their own names. I had to relieve them and emphasized that I will not use their real names in the thesis. I also used the term 'genocide' to define the events of 1915 while speaking with the informants to express my own stance. I realized that only after I used this term they started to use this term. This also showed me that the attitude of the researcher to the events that the informants think important also influences the relationship between the researcher and the informants.

During the interviews, my informants also raised some ethical issues about the responsibilities of the researcher. Although I thought I was aware of these responsibilities, after hearing their stories I started to feel much more committed. They all knew that I was just a graduate student, but I realized that for them I was also representing Turkish/Muslim community. To put differently, to them, I represented the public that is Turkish and Muslim. Thus, even if they did not want me to use their correct names or places where they live, they wanted me to demonstrate the "realities" about Armenian question to the Turkish/Muslim audience. All my interviews ended with the same scene. Informants spoke directly to the recorder –not to me- and said that they had no problems with Turks; they just wanted them to recognize their pain and lament. They said that they were not looking for an economic compensation; rather they were expecting recognition.

While making transcriptions of the interviews, I realized that many narratives had similar discourses and there were many repetitions and

overlapping themes among narratives. This made me think that I reached a certain ‘saturation point’ and I started to reflect upon the stories that I had. According to Bertaux, “in placing together several testimonies of the lived experience of the same social situation, for example, one will be able to transcend their singularities to achieve, by a progressive construction, a sociological representation of the social (collective) components of the situation.⁵⁷ Similarities in discourses, repetitions and overlapping aspects of narratives enabled me to make some assertions on the experiences of Armenians in Anatolia after the 1915. Given this, however, as Catherine Kohler Riessman argues, life story narratives should not be seen as “transparent” representations of lived experience or representations that are clearly distinct from real life.⁵⁸ Paul Ricoeur asserts, “the event is not what happens, the event is that which can be narrated”.⁵⁹ That is to say that narratives of life stories do not simply lead us to access to experience but rather they show how experience is translated into knowledge that the subject acquires about himself or herself and about others. Therefore, analyzing life stories of Armenians in this thesis opens up a space through which we can understand how they deal with multiple forms of power by constructing specific representations of themselves and their own experiences.

⁵⁷ Daniel Bertaux, *Les Recits de Vie..* (Paris: Editions Nathan, 1997), p. 23.

⁵⁸ Nazan Üstündağ, *Belonging to the Modern: Women’s suffering and Subjectivities in Urban Turkey*, (Unpublished Thesis, Indiana University, 2005), p. 15.

⁵⁹ Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 15.

CHAPTER III
THE 1915, ARMENIAN IDENTITY AND SELF-REPRESENTATIONS IN
LIFE STORIES

According to Passerini, oral testimonies are “first and foremost statements of cultural identity in which memory continuously adapts received traditions to present circumstances.”⁶⁰ She argues that through examining the recurring self-representations in narratives, we can understand the general character of life stories. Self-representations also enable us “to reveal cultural attitudes, visions of the world and interpretations of history, including the role of the individual in the historical process.”⁶¹

In my analysis, I realized that the 1915 play a crucial role in the construction of life stories. It recurs in all stories as a starting point and the rest of the stories have many references to the 1915. Experiences ranging from migration to kidnapping are told in a context that signifies that the 1915 continues or still has influence on their lives. Though they share some common features like the themes of 1915, struggle and honor, self-representations of narrators also vary according to gender, local identity and class. Through their self-representations, narrators not only construct their subjectivities but also imagine a common Armenian identity.

⁶⁰ Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 17.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

According to Portelli, “the organization of the narrative reveals a great deal of the speakers’ relationships to their history.”⁶² Narrators try to make sense of the past, to give a form to their lives and to place their lives into a historical context. The most interesting aspect of narratives is the fact that the narrators set their lives into a historical context that has its roots in 1915. Although they did not experience 1915, their narratives are strongly shaped by the history that they heard from their elders over and over again or books that they had read. Reiteration of stories heard from elders and histories that they read play a crucial role in the formation of narrators’ subjectivities. As Tonkin says, memory, cognition and history are interconnected and together they shape our individual selves.⁶³ Armenian identity is constructed through this collective repertoire which is composed of not only personal experiences but also histories and stories that were heard. Life histories are not told before giving a general history of Armenian society in the Ottoman Empire and their families’ experiences in 1915. Their lives in Anatolia starts as a continuous part of this general history. Their personal experiences are given meaning in a context that is shaped by the 1915 and are told to underline that 1915 is not a far past. Rather, for them, their lives demonstrate that the 1915 still determine all their lives. As a result, their individual memory and life histories are integrated into a collective memory which involves 1915, the 1941 incident of the twenty classes, the wealth tax of 1942, the events of 6-7 September 1955,

⁶² Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories : Form and Meaning in Oral History*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 50.

⁶³ Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Past: The Social Construction of Oral History*, (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 1.

events of Cyprus in 1963-64, the confiscation of the properties of non-Muslim foundations and the assassination of Hrant Dink.⁶⁴

The prominent role of these critical events in the construction of life stories shows that there is postmemory at work. Hirsch uses the concept “postmemory” to define “the relationship between that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they remember only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up.”⁶⁵ Thus, she claims that the second or third generation of survivors who live in a post-conflict context also ‘remember’ the past and feel the weight of the past. And yet, how can we understand the case of Armenians for whom the violence did not end in 1915 but continued in the following decades in different forms? How can this phenomenon change the relationship between the past and the present and between the experiences of different generations? I would argue that in the case of Armenians the present is not shadowed by the past but is made meaningful and understandable through the stories of the past. This phenomenon signifies that there is actually no difference between the past and the present but a continuation between the two. The past that my interviewees did not witness and their elders’ experiences during and after 1915 are emphasized to demonstrate the discriminations they witness today. According to a recent TESEV report, “the pressure and discrimination stemming from

⁶⁴ Halbwachs uses the concept of “collective memory to explain that memory is not an created individually, rather, people acquire them in a society and “it is in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories”. Halbwachs, Maurice *On Collective Memory* (edited by Lewis A. Coser) p 38 Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1992)

⁶⁵ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 22.

both the state and the society play an important role in the shaping of the perceptions and feelings of the Armenians about their selves. Many of them describe being an Armenian in Turkey as a ‘very difficult and arduous thing.’⁶⁶ At many times, the narrators emphasized the difficulty of living in Turkey as a result of state policies and social pressures.

That said, the present context in which people live shapes their interpretation of the past and “impose[s] the subconscious historical structure of the narrative.”⁶⁷ Influence of the political orientation of the narrators, for example, is very visible in their narratives. The common elements in the self-representations helped me to understand their “visions of the world and interpretation of the history.”⁶⁸ Their understanding of events of 6-7 September, is closely linked to their thoughts about Adnan Menderes. Moreover, I came to realize that the future expectations of the narrators are also shaped in the light of their past experiences. Through past experience, they “draw a social portrait, a model which is a reference list of what to follow and what to avoid.”⁶⁹ Therefore, in this chapter, I will first investigate how postmemory works in shaping the life stories of the narrators and their understanding of Armenian identity. Then, I will look at the common self-representations of narrators as an Armenian which is strongly influenced by their gender, class and local identity.

⁶⁶http://www.tesev.org.tr/Upload/Publication/c6208a2d-ad0d-4ea3-9dd6-7b5262d9029a/12091engErmeniler17_05_12.pdf

⁶⁷ Trevor Lummis, “Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence” in *The Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 276.

⁶⁸ Passerini, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Tonkin, p. 1.

The Ending and the Beginning of Stories and Histories: 1915

The 1915 is the starting point in all narratives that I collected. It is both an ending and a beginning in the narratives. It is an ending because many of the narrators say that their wealthy and cultured grandparents lost both their properties and their lives in 1915. For them, the post-1915 generations are very different from the previous one in terms of their wealth, education and culture. Contrary to the older generations, new generations were poor, illiterate, uncultured and could not practice their religion. Therefore, the narrators imply that a pure Armenianness was lost irreversibly after the 1915.

It is also a beginning because many of them do not know any information about the older generations since the 1915 cut the continuity amongst different generations. In the aftermath of the genocide, their parents or grandparents started a new life and did not talk about their previous lives with the next generations. My interviewees, therefore, knew little about the origins of their family since their parents/grandparents were children in 1915 and their parents/grandparents themselves did not know about their parents. Thus, 1915 is the starting point of the histories of families.

Before telling their own life histories, narrators start with their parents' or grandparents' experiences in 1915. Many of them state that they do not know the older generation since 1915 cut the continuity and caused a new generation that neither lived in the same place that their elders had lived nor had relatives. They regret that they do not have any information about their grandparents. Garabet says: "My father does not have previous generation.

None of them has. Search all people from Sason! You can't find older generations. They do not know their grandparents."⁷⁰ Another interviewee from Sason, Firat, supports Garabet's claim: "They killed everyone in my grandfather's time. My father, his uncle and aunt escaped. They were from Sason. They were a family of 35, they killed all of them."⁷¹

As a result, the whole family story begins with a "struggle" that started in 1915. Their knowledge about their elders does not go beyond 1915. For example, Satenik, who was born in Adıyaman, learns the past from her father but her knowledge does not go beyond 1915: "My father was often telling the past and his grandfather's experiences to me. I think his grandfather was 5 or 6 years old during the Genocide. He stayed with a Kurdish agha as a handmaid. They loved him. He worked as a shepherd."⁷² She knows how old her grandfather was and what he did after the genocide but could not say anything about his life before 1915.

Their descriptions of the places that they had lived before migrating to Istanbul also give references to the 1915. While 1915 means the cleansing of Armenians from Anatolia, it also means a beginning of new spaces for the Armenians survivors. When Diran is describing Kayseri where he was born, he starts with 1915: "Armenians started to settle in the vicinity of the church. But there were four churches before."⁷³

⁷⁰ *Babamın eski nesli yoktur. Hiçbirinin yok. Bütün Sasonluları araştırın! Eski nesli bulamazsınız. Dedesini bilmezler.*

⁷¹ *Dedem zamanında hepsini öldürmüşler 1915te hepsini. Babam ve amcası ve halası kurtulmuş. 3 4 kişi kurtulmuş. Sasonlularmış. O zaman 35 kişilik bir aileymişler, o zaman hepsini öldürmüşler.*

⁷² *Babam eskiyi çok anlatırdı bana dedesini yaşadıklarını. Dedem sanırım soykırım zamanı 5 6 yaşındaymış bir Kürt ağanın yanında yanaşma olarak kalıyor. Sevmişler onu. Çobanlık yapmış.*

⁷³ *1915'ten sonra kilisenin etrafına yerleşmişler amma evvelden daha yaygın 4 kilise var.*

Those who know about the lives of their previous generations emphasize the dramatic change after the 1915. They make comparisons to demonstrate how 1915 put an end to “wealthy and happy” lives of their grandparents. For instance, Zabel’s grandmother was very rich and had a horse farm in Kayseri. She went to college and spoke English, French and Armenian. However, her children who were born after 1915 had different lives: “Those two children did not go to school although their cultured family went to college and spoke many languages. My mother was illiterate. My father dropped out at the 3rd grade.”⁷⁴ According to Zabel, her family “hit bottom” both economically and culturally. Diran also says that everything ended in 1915: “The majority [of his grandparents] studied till second class. Then school ended, everything ended. It coincided with 1915.”⁷⁵ Elbis emphasizes the wealth of her family in Bursa before 1915:

Can you think that my grandfather who had done olive cultivation and sericulture near the Iznik Lake had to work in a bakery here [Istanbul]. But he could not do anything else with three children. I am still grateful to them as we owe them everything we have now. We did not have the life of a dog. They were hardworking. From the zero. My grandmother was going to a French College in Bursa by a carriage ridden by a stable boy. That woman cleaned a pasha’s house, barn and livestock in Konya. How could she stay with 4 children? Armenians were very rich, this fact has to be accepted.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Koleje gitmiş çok dil bilen bu kadar kültürlü bir ailenin iki çocuğu okumamış. Benim anneannemin okuma yazması yoktu annemin de yok. Babam 3. Sınıftan terk.*

⁷⁵ *Çoğu birinci sınıfa ikinci sınıfa kadar gitmiş. Sonra okul bitmiş her şey bitmiş. 1915’e denk gelmiş.*

⁷⁶ *Düşünebiliyor musun adam Iznik Gölü’nde zeytincilik ve ipekçilik yaparken burada ekmeğin fırınında çalışmak zorunda kalıyor. Ama ne yapacak üç çocuk. Yine de çok şükür bizi buralara getirdiler. Biz ne süründük ne şey oldu. çalışan adamlarmış. Sıfırdan. Babaannem atlı arabayla yola çıkıyor ve Bursa’ya seisiyle okula Fransız kolejine gidiyor. O kadın Konya’da paşanın ahırını evini hayvanlarını temizliyor. Nasıl kalacak 4 kişi nüfusla. Çok zenginmiş Ermeniler bunu kabul etmek lazım.*

This drastic change symbolizes an end. An end of a family and an end of a wealthy past. This end also proves that there occurred the genocide for narrators. Zabel says: “Genocide is not necessarily only about murdering. Its name is genocide. Because if I am exhausted both culturally and economically this demonstrates that my ancestry was slaughtered.”⁷⁷

This ending also symbolizes a rupture between generations. There is a division between the Armenians lived before and after the 1915. Komitas (Batman) uses the word “eski/old” when he is talking about pre-1915: “There was an Armenian cemetery close to the village. No name was written on gravestones. There were inscriptions on the old Armenians’ gravestones. Old Armenians were literate. There were schools and churches.”⁷⁸

In short, the 1915 became the main theme in the narratives, as it constituted a breaking point in the lives of their grandparents: the end of a wealthy and happy past and the beginning of desperate life. The current economic situation is rooted in the 1915 and very different from the previous generations. Their illiterate parents are the victims since the 1915 halted a cultural and social development of the Armenian society. Thus their lives cannot be narrated and understood without giving references to the 1915.

⁷⁷ Soykırım ille de insan öldürmek değildir. Bunun adı soykırım. Çünkü kültürel olarak da ekonomik olarak da bitmişsem bu benim soyumun kırışığının göstergesidir.

⁷⁸ Köye yakın arkada Ermeni mezarlığı vardı. İsim yazmıyordu mezar taşında. Okur yazar yok ki. Eski Ermenilerin taşlarında yazı vardı. Belki şimdi onu da kaldırmışlar. Eski Ermeniler okuma yazma biliyormuş. Okul var kilise var.

Armenian Identity: a Constant Struggle and an Honor

When I looked at the grammatical structure of the narratives, I realized that many life stories, especially male informants' stories, are told in first-person plural rather than first person singular. This made me think that narrators see their lives as a part of common Armenian history that is politically loaded. Both male and female narrators have a historical consciousness and place their lives onto a broader political and historical context. However, male narrators give long information on Armenian history in the beginning of interviews. Those recurrences made me think about how an Armenian identity is presented in narratives and such an approach also helped me to better analyze construction of the life stories.

According to my interviewees, we can understand what it means to be an Armenian only if we understand the 1915. The narratives of my interviewees start with an introduction which demonstrates the influence of 1915 on the existence of Armenians in Anatolia. They also emphasize that the 1915 continues because the state policies continued to be repressive against Armenians. Zabel says: "It did not end in 1915. It continued in different ways such as 'Citizen, Speak Turkish.'"⁷⁹ Krikor, born in Amasya, gives more comprehensive information on post-1915 in order to demonstrate that the Turkish Republic maintained pressure against non-Muslims:

My generation witnessed the continuation of policies against non-Muslims. We witnessed the September 6-7 events. I was 15 years old when I came to Istanbul. September 6-7 was the turning point for both Armenians and other minorities in Istanbul. Until 1923, Greeks and Armenian were exterminated

⁷⁹ 1915'te bitmedi iş. Bir sürü "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş" politikalarıyla bir sürü şeylerle.

in Anatolia and Thrace. Jews in Thrace were exterminated in 1934. But they remained in Istanbul. Armenians came to Istanbul from Anatolia until the 1950s. Official ideology dictated the annihilation of minorities in Istanbul. From the beginning of the republic, it was manifested through the restrictions on [non-Muslim's] profession and travel. It started with restrictions on trade and de facto applications. Twenty classes, wealth tax, September 6-7, the 64 exile. Then dispossession of foundations started. Properties of foundations were seized.⁸⁰

The narrators mention the 1915 as it did not end, but still continues.

Therefore, being an Armenian is meant to be in a constant struggle. Being an Armenian itself can only be achieved through a struggle. Nazaret is from Adıyaman and lived in a neighborhood where Armenians lived with Assyrians in "Gavur Mahallesi". When he defines Armenian identity he makes comparison with Assyrian identity and finds the difference in Armenians' insistence on struggle and resistance:

Armenians don't give importance to material things. They all work like a horse and spend well. They are honest. They have work ethic. Assyrians are totally different. I am universalist but there are many things more important than material values. For instance Armenians fought and resisted. They risked death. So they remained Armenian. They have never been machievalist but Assyrians are. They just say 'I want to live I want to have money', for instance, we have never trusted to the state, we always fought and struggled. Thus we won our rights in Lausanne. But Assyrians wanted Turks to represent them in Lausanne. As a result, they do not have schools. If they don't have school, they lose their language.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Benim kuşağım da yine azınlık karşıtı politikaların hala devam ettiğini gördük. 6 7 Eylül olaylarını yaşayan kuşağıyız. 15 yaşındaydım İstanbul'a geldiğim sene. 6 7 Eylül hem Ermeniler hem İstanbul'daki diğer azınlıklar için dönüm noktası oldu. Şimdi 1923'e kadarki süreçte Anadolu ve Trakya'daki Rumlar ve Ermeniler yok edildi. 1934'de Trakya'daki Yahudiler yok edildi. Ama İstanbul'dakiler kaldı. 1950'lilere kadar olan süreçte de Anadolu'daki Ermeniler İstanbul'a geldi. Resmi ideolojinin gereği olarak İstanbul'daki azınlıkların da yok edilmesi gerekiyordu. Cumhuriyet'in ilk yıllarından itibaren meslek ve seyahat kısıtlamalarıyla başladı. Ticaret kısıtlamalarıyla başladı ve fiili uygulamalarla başladı. İşte 20 kura askerlik, varlık vergisi. 6 7 Eylül, 64 sürgünü. Ondan sonra sıra vakıflara mülksüzleştirme süreci başladı. Vakıfların mallarına el konuldu.*

⁸¹ *Ermeniler maddi değerlere önem vermez tüm dünyada. Herkes eşek gibi çalışır adam gibi yer. Dürüsttürler. İş ahlakları vardır. Süryaniler tam tersi bana göre. Ben enternasyonalist bir adamım ama maddi değerler üstünde çok şeyi var. Mesela Ermeniler kavga etmişlerdir direnmişlerdir. Ölümü göze alırlar. Bu sayede Ermeni kalabilmişlerdir. Makyevalist hiç olmamışlardır ama Süryaniler öyledir. Ben yaşayayım benim param olsun der. Mesela devlete*

Those comparisons of Armenian identity with others are widespread in the narratives. Armenians are depicted as ‘hardworking’ vis-à-vis Turks, ‘honest’ vis-à-vis Jews and Assyrians, ‘unlucky’ vis-à-vis Greeks. When they talk about the pre-1915 period, they associate Armeniannes with modernity, craftsmanship, wealth and a kind of high culture. What is more interesting is that those interviewees who immigrated to Istanbul from different parts of Turkey depicted themselves as ‘Anatolian Armenians’ vis-à-vis Armenians of Istanbul. They believe that they preserve a purer Armenianness while Armenians of Istanbul are assimilated. They also emphasize a class division between ‘Anatolian Armenians’ and ‘Armenians of Istanbul’. Comparison of Armenians with Assyrians is replaced by a comparison with ‘Armenians of Istanbul’ when Nazaret starts to talk about his life in Istanbul after immigration:

Here was an Armenian school, but bourgeois. Istanbul bourgeois Armenians were settled here but they were assimilated a lot but we are not like them.⁸²

On the other hand, while they use the term ‘Anatolian Armenians’ to make a comparison with those had already been living in Istanbul, they also differentiate ‘Anatolian Armenians’ according to their local identity. Diran (Kayseri) uses the word ‘Kurdish Armenians’ to mention Armenians from the eastern Anatolia. Hovannes (Iskenderun) says those living in Kasımpaşa are ‘Armenian Gypsies’. Rupen (Batman) mentions himself as ‘Eastern

de hiçbir dönem güvenmemişiz hep kavga edip mücadele etmişiz o yüzden Lozan ile haklarımızı elde etmişiz. Ama Süryaniler demiş bizi Türkler temsil etsinler. O yüzden okulları yok. Okulları olmayınca dillerini kaybederler.

⁸² *Burada Ermeni okulu var burjuva yani İstanbul Burjuva Ermenisi yerleşik ama onlar çok asimile olmuşlar ama biz öyle değiliz.*

Armenian’ when he compares himself with the ‘Armenians of Istanbul’. All these self-identifications show well how hybrid the Armenian identity is. In their narratives about the post 1915 and the present, the expression “Kurdish Armenians” is particularly interesting, indicating that living within the Kurdish community, speaking Kurdish and perhaps most importantly engagement with the Kurdish politics made them embody two different ethnicities. Furthermore, in some cases, Armenianness is defined on the basis of class, in others space i.e. Anatolia. My interviewees’ idea that the Armenians of Istanbul were being assimilated (even though they are not converts) also signify that religion and language are not the main determinants of Armenianness as most of the interviewees did not speak Armenian at all and never went to a church before coming to Istanbul. For the interviewees, Armenianness rather refers to Anatolia as the homeland of Armenians and to the morality and solidarity which existed among the Armenians in that space. For example, ‘Anatolian Armenians’ are thought to be more courageous than ‘Istanbul Armenians’. Rupen, who was born in Batman, states it more clearly:

Anatolian Armenians are –let’s say- more courageous. Because we are coming from the mountains. Anatolian Armenians are more stubborn here. They did not hide themselves. They did not want to hide themselves. Because they were tired of that. I told you my sister’s story. What can happen worse than it? What will happen? At most they will kill us or rape. How long will you hide?⁸³

Preserving one’s Armenian identity is a struggle and in this struggle, some people surrender and convert. My interviewees think of conversion not only

⁸³ *Anadolu Ermenileri daha şey oluyor bence cesurlar diyelim. Çünkü dağdan geldik. O zor hayat şartlarını biliyoruz. Burada da Anadolu Ermenileri biraz daha dişli ve şey çıktılar. Saklanmadılar, saklamadılar kendilerini. Saklamak istemediler herhalde. Çünkü orada canlarına tak etti. Ablamın olayını anlattım yani artık bundan kötüsü ne olacak ki? Ne olacak yani? Çok çok gelip öldürecekler bizi veya tecavüz falan. Nereye kadar saklanacaksınız?*

as the loss of ethnic identity but also of honor. And since, to my interviewees, to keep to be an Armenian is possibly only with struggle, we can suggest that Armenianness itself is associated with resistance. Thus, Zabel is very grateful to her grandparents since they did not convert to Islam and preserved their Armenian identity:

Nevertheless, I am very grateful to my grandparents. They lived without converting and protected their identity under those circumstances. Because now I worry when I see the children of a family who had to convert. Their conditions are worse than mine. To be between a rock and a hard place, to lose your real identity. I am sure they would prefer to be in my place. I am very grateful to my grandparents because I still have something to attach to, despite all those bad stories.⁸⁴

What is more interesting is the fact that while the past is narrated with Armenians' brave and rebellious identity to protect their honor, the future is spoke about as a dark and frightening since the crimes against are unpunished. They are afraid of their children's future. They do not want to give them an Armenian name and warn them to be silent and compliant whenever they are with Turks/Muslims. Zabel says that she warns her children not to say that they are Armenian. Hayganuş does not want her children to involve in politics.

⁸⁴ *Yine de ben kendi adıma yüzlerce binlerce kere dedeme büyükanneme şükrediyorum. O şartlar altında kimliklerini kaybetmeden din değiştirmeden yaşamışlar. Çünkü ben bugün dinini değiştirmek zorunda kalan ailenin soyunu çocuklarını gördüğüm zaman çok üzüliyorum. Onların durumu benden daha kötü. İki arada bir derede yaşamak gerçek kimliğini kaybetmiş olmak. Eminim tercih edeceklerdi, benim yerime olmayı tercih edecekti o duruma olan bir insan. Çok şükür ki en azından bütün bu kötü hikayelere rağmen tutunabileceğim bir dal var o yüzden Allah razı olsun dedelerimden.*

Self-Representations in the Narratives

I

According to Passerini, “in self-representations, narrative forms are repeated which are affected, though not in a deterministic way, by age and gender.”⁸⁵ In my interviews, I realized that the way narrators tell their stories and the content of the stories are also related to the local identity, class and gender. In women’s narratives, the image of rebel is prevalent. Women who were born in Istanbul narrate their lives as a struggle to protect Armenian identity. However those who migrated to Istanbul from different parts of Anatolia also emphasize their fight against their fathers and husbands to protect their own and their daughters’ rights. This divide among the women stems from their birth-place but also class. Though they all choose to tell their stories with a born-rebel image, I can divide those stories into two categories. The first one is the stories of women who were born in Istanbul after their parents’ migration. Their parents worked in low paid jobs such as housekeepers or workers. Those who were born in Anatolia are mainly coming from peasant families. The women in the first category are more educated and work in better jobs than their parents. They also chose their own husbands without their families’ interference. The main theme in their stories is the resistance against state policies and social pressures against Armenians.

Different from women, men do not tell their stories as born-rebel but as “always have been libertarian”. It seems to me that this difference stems from men’s involvement in leftist politics which is closely related to their education level. The majority of male interviewees said that they have been involved in leftist politics especially when they were students. Men, therefore, represent

⁸⁵ Passerini, p. 17.

themselves as part of a bigger community such as socialist movement or alumni of Tbrevnank High School. They do not tell their stories as an individual's struggle. Rather they prefer to emphasize the struggle of a community, political party or a movement, while women think they resist individually against both discriminatory state policies and societal norms. Therefore, men's and women's stories of resistance are told in different genres. Men's stories are also marked by a change which makes their narratives a story of development/improvement. The majority of my male interviewees attribute this change to their entrance to the Private Surp Haç Tıbrevnank High School. It symbolizes an important change which led them to be enlightened first and then start a new struggle within socialist movements.

II

Independent from class and local identity, women tell their stories with a rebellious tone. They all emphasize that they had never denied or hidden their Armenian identity in any situations. All public spaces such as public offices and work places are seen as both spaces of discrimination and struggle. For instance, Satenik was born in Adiyaman but grew up in Iskenderun. She said that her father was very important for her and explained the reason below:

We received that courage from our father. 'Never deny yourself'. It is because his [ethnic] identity was very important to him. He told us everything he experienced in the past. So did my mother. She gave me my first political thought when I was 12 years old...

Then the children learned that I am Christian. They easily understood it. It was a small place. They should have heard when I was speaking to the teacher. I was the only Christian. They had a negative attitude towards me. Jeering. 'you are *gavur*', 'Where did you come from?', 'Did you come from the space?' Then boys were gathering. Our house was in the opposite place. Every time, I was running home after school. I was the first to arrive at the neighborhood. Nobody could run better than me. They were doing many things to beat me in

running. ‘Why she is always the winner? Let’s run’ Then boys started to block my way. They beat me up a few times. I came home crying. I was a girl. They were gathering around me. I was just 10 or 12 years old. ‘You are *gavur*, Where did you come from? You go to the church?’ They excluded me. I was beaten twice and came back home. My father said to me ‘Why are you crying? You have hands too. Why don’t you fight?’ My father backed me up and encouraged me. ‘You will beat them up. You will fight if someone wants to fight. You will never come to house after being beaten again’. They raised me like a boy. Then I beat them up. It is because my father encouraged me and said to me ‘You also have hands, you can beat them’. He was a carpenter and he made a bag for me which was like a suitcase. Like wooden suitcases. It was very beautiful. He varnished it. It had a handle. I was putting my books in it. We grew up with it. All children had plastic bags but mine was a wooden suitcase. But my father was making whatever he could. Our bag, our wedding chest... My dad made everything. Then when those boys attempted to beat me up, I was whirling around with that bag to their heads. Tak tak tak (she is laughing). I never forget. Then I was never beaten up again. I was not beaten up but I did beat them up.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ *Ama babamdan aldık bize o cesarete. ‘Asla kendinizi inkar etmeyeceksiniz’. Çünkü babam şeyine çok düşküdü. Kimliğine çok düşküdü. Bize anlatıyordu tek tek o geçmişte ne yaşamışlardı. Annem de öyle. İlk bana o siyasi düşünceyi annem vermişti zaten 12 yaşında..*

Sonra çocuklar öğrendi Hıristiyan olduğumu. Hemen öğrendiler. Küçük yer. Demek ki öğretmenle konuşurken duymuşlar. Hemen böyle bir de bir tek ben varım. Tavır aldılar. Alay etmeler. Gavurmuşsun sen. Nereden geldiniz? Uzaydan mı geldiniz? Sonra erkek çocukları toplanıyordu. Evimiz böyle karşı mahalle gibi. Ben hep okuldan çıkar koşa koşa eve giderdim. O mahalleye ilk giden ben olurum. Kimse beni geçemiyordu. Beni geçebilmek için şey yapıyordu çocuklar. O niye hep birinci? Biz gidelim falan. Sonra erkek çocuklar benim yolumu kesip beni dövmeye kalktılar. Birkaç sefer beni dövdüler. Ben eve ağlayarak geldim. Kız çocuğum. 10 12 yaşlarında etrafımda toplanıyorlar. Sen gavurmuşsun sen şeymişsin. Nereden geldiniz? Siz niye kiliseye gidiyorsunuz? Böyle dışlamalar. Ben iki sefer dayak yedim eve geldim. Babam dedi kızım sen neden ağlıyorsun senin elin yok mu? Sen neden dövmüyorsun dedi. Babam bana arka çıktı cesaret verdi. Sen de döveceksin dedi. Seni döven olursa sen de döveceksin bir daha dayak yiyip eve gelmeyeceksin dedi. Erkek gibi yetiştirdiler beni aslında. Sonra ben onları dövdüm. Çünkü babamdan cesaret aldım ya babam dedi senin elin yok mu sen onlar döv dedi. Babam marangozdu ya bana böyle bir çanta yapmıştı bavul gibi. O tahta bavullar var ya. Çok güzel bir çanta yapmıştı. Verniklemişti. Kulpu da vardı. Kitaplarımı onun içine koyuyordum. Biz onunla büyüdük. Onla gidip geliyorduk. Herkesin ki plastik çanta benim tahta bir bavulum var. Ama babam üretebileceği her şeyi yapıyordu bizi. Çantamız çeyiz sandığımız camekan böyle. Her şeyimizi babam yapıyordu. Sonra o çocuklar beni dövmeye kalktıklarında ben o tahta bavulla bir dönüyordum böyle kafalarına. Tak tak tak (gülür) yani hiç unutmuyorum. Ondan sonra hiç dayak yemedim. Dayak yemedim ben dövdüm

Different from Satenik, Maral was warned by her family when she started her university education. They wanted them to be silent and cautious about her identity and not to involve in politics:

When I was accepted to the university, my uncles came to me and said (she is laughing): ‘Maral, look! We are Armenians, not Kurdish and in your identity card it is written that you are from Sason. It is written that you are Christian. Everything that nationalist people could consider negative is on your identity. Therefore, you should not get into trouble. You will not do anything. You will graduate in 4 years and come back here... But even if you listen to such advises, you want to do something when you go there. You are coming from an oppressed culture. so you want to represent yourself. I tried to explain Armenianness when I was there... For instance I said ‘I am Armenian in a class. The professor asked me ‘How can you use this word so easily?’ And I stood up and told ‘It is not a defect, it is my identity and denying it does not help me. And accepting it does not harm me’ I also said ‘I am proud of being Armenian’ .⁸⁷

Hayganuş was also warned by her friends when she started to work as cleaner in apartments. Her story not only shows how she defended her identity but also how she implied that Turkish identity is associated with the murder, confiscation and kidnapping that had been committed since 1915.

Then when I went for a cleaning job they said ‘Don’t say that we are Armenians. They either don’t give your money or behave badly’ ... Why don’t you tell it? Don’t lie. You are Armenian! For instance, they saw the cross on my necklace recently in a hospital. They were all staring at me. I was doing this but there is nothing (she is touching on her clothes) Then a

⁸⁷ Ben üniversiteyi ilk kazandığım sene tuttular oturtular amcalarımın hepsi beni. Karşıma geçtiler (gülerek anlatıyor) ‘Bak Maral’ dediler. “Biz dediler Kürt değiliz. Ermeniyiz. Bak senin kimliğinde de Sason yazıyor. Nüfusa kayıtlı olduğun yer Sason yazıyor. Hristiyan yazıyor. Bütün hani nasıl diyeyim sana böyle kör milliyetçi bir zihniyetle bakan insanların olumsuz diyebileceği her şey senin kimliğinde var. O yüzden kesinlikle hiçbir şeye karışmıyorsun. Hiçbir şey yapmıyorsun ve dört sene içinde okulunu bitirip buraya geliyorsun. Ama insanlar ne kadar böyle tavsiyeleri dinlese de gittiği zaman mutlaka bir şeyler yapmak istiyor. Sen zaten ezik bir kültürün içinden gelmişsin. Bu yüzden bir şekilde kendini yansıtmak istiyorsun. Ya ben de oradayken işte yapabileceğim kadar Ermeniliği anlattım... Mesela ben sınıfta “Ermeniyim” dedim. Sınıftaki hoca bana dedi ki: “Sen bu lafı nasıl bu kadar rahat kullanabiliyorsun?” dedi. Ben kalkıp şey dedim işte. “Bunun bana bir zararı yok ki, bu benim kimliğim ayrıca, bunu inkâr etmenin bana hiçbir faydası olamayacak, hiçbir zararı da olmayacak.” Ayrıca “Ben” dedim “Ermeniliğimle gurur duyuyorum.

girl approached and asked ‘Sister what do you have on your neck?’ I was doing this and thought there was a button. I did not realize there was a cross. Then I said ‘Please walk, why are you looking at me?’ They were all looking at the cross. Then the girl asked ‘Sister, are you Muslim, where are you from?’ I said ‘I am Armenian’ ‘How can you be Armenian?’ she said as if there was a dog among people. I said ‘For god’s sake, what are you saying? What did happen? You asked what I am and I said I was Armenian. Why? As if there was a bomb.’ Then she asked ‘what is there on your neck?’ ‘I don’t have anything on my neck.’ Another girl came and ‘What is this sister? Why are you showing this to us? To insult us?’ And I said ‘Be sure that I did not realize it’. I kissed the cross and put on my head. Then there was another guy who was at my age. This happened five years ago, by the way. He said: ‘What a person she is! She says she is Armenian among so many people’. ‘Yes, I am Armenian and I am very happy with this’. ‘How can you say that you are Armenian?’ ‘I am Armenian but I did not kill anyone, I did not confiscate anyone else’s property, I did not kidnap a girl. Why should I not say I am Armenian? What did I do?’ ‘Sister how much do you love it?’ ‘I love it a lot and I will die for it’ Then the guy who was at my age said ‘If we were her, we would be scared. But she is not scared, she is not scared among such people’ I said ‘Why should I be scared of? The god created me and if he did not like Armenians he would not have created them. Many people do not have children but they want children. The god gave many children to them. If he did not like them he would not. He created me as a Christian. Then why should I not love my religion? Don’t you love your religion?’ Then they were shocked. I am telling the truth, why should I hide it? ⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *Ondan sonra merdiven işine gittiğim zaman dediler ‘Deme biz Ermeni’yiz. Ya paranı vermezler ya ters hareketlere şey olursun’... Yav niye söylemiyorsun. Kandırmaca gibi olma. Sen Ermenisin! Mesela geçen bu haçı burada gördüler. Herkes bana ters ters bakıyor. Ben de böyle yapıyorum şey yapıyorum bir şey yoktur (vücudunda giysisinde eliyle bakıyor) sonra bir genç kız gelmiş yaklaşmış. “Abla” dedi “senin boynunda ne var?” ben de böyle yapıyorum düğme zannediyorum. Hiç haç olduğunu boynumda bilmiyorum. Ondan sonra “yürüyün diyorum allah aşkına ne bakıyorsunuz ne var ne var?” onlar da hepsi dönmüş bu haça bakıyorlar. Sonra bir kız dedi. “Abla” dedi “Sen ne şey ne Müslüman(?)neredensin?” Dedim “Ben Ermeni’yim”. “nasıl Ermeni’sin?” dedi sanki yani affedersen toplumun içinde bir köpek girdi herkes böyle şey oluyor. Dedim “Ne diyorsun sen Allah aşkına? Ne oldu? Sordun nesin, ben Ermeni’yim. Niye” dedim “hani bomba patlıyor gibi şey oluyorsun?” bir baktım dedi “Senin boynundaki nedir?” “Benim boynumda bir şey yoktur” genç bir kız geldi “Abla bu bu nedir?” dedi. “Niye bunu gösteriyorsun bize gıcıklık olsun diye mi?” ben de “İnan ki görmedim” dedim. Tuttum böyle öptüm, başıma koydum. Bir baktım orada şuan benim yaşında, 5 sene oldu, “Aman dedi bu ne insandır? Ben bu kadar kişinin içine kendine diyor ben Ermeniyim” “Evet Ben ermeniyim ve çok mutluyum Ermeniyim.” “Nasıl diyorsun sen Ermeniyim?” Dedim “Ermeniyim ama kimseyi öldürmedim, kimsenin malını zapt etmedim. Kimsenin kızını da kaçırmadım. Niye demiyim Ermeniyim. Ne yaptım ?” “abla ne kadar seviyorsun bunu?” “Valla ben çok seviyorum. Öldüğüm zaman da bunun üstüne ölürüm”. Bir baktım o benim yaşındaki adam dedi “Bak biz olsaydık nasıl korkardık. Ama bu hiç korkmaz. Bu kadar kişinin içinde korkmaz”. “Niye korkayım?” dedim “Çok çok beni söylüyorsun ama Allah beni böyle yaratmış, sevmeseydi yani Ermeniği insanları sevmeseydi zaten allah vermezdi. Çok kişi çocuksuzdur ama kimse istemiyor çocuksuz kalsın. Gene Allah bunlara bu kadar şey*

When the interviewers tell non-Armenians that they are Armenian, they feel like they are confessing or disclosing a secret. Being an Armenian is something to come out suddenly and they say they are so brave to do this publicly. To articulate their Armenian identity, to them, is not only a rebellion but also a way of protecting their honor. Zabel thinks that hiding her Armenian identity could be a betrayal. Even in a workplace where she is the only female, she said she did not hide it:

I have always been comfortable with being an Armenian. It is related to my anarchist character. I have never thought that one can get rid of it by escaping. It was also an insult to my identity. To deny my identity is to insult myself. It is what I am and you should accept me like this. I was the only female who was working among sixty men in Tahtakale. Everyone knew that I was Armenian.⁸⁹

The above excerpt demonstrates that expressing one's own identity in this context is itself seen as rebellion. Whether their families and friends support them or want them to hide their identities, women represent themselves as brave and rebellious in the public. Moreover, as Hayganuş's story in hospital implies, being an Armenian is to be victim as opposed to Turkish identity that is perpetrator. Similar to Hayganuş, Elbis, whose family is from Bursa, uses state discrimination to show how Armenianness is innocent vis-a-vis Turkishness. She complains that until recently all non-Muslims had to go to a special school

etmiş. Vermezse vermez. Beni Hristiyan olarak dünyaya vermiş. O zaman ben niye sevmiyim. Sen kendi dinini sevmiyor musun?" Ondan sonra böyle şok oldular. Ben gerçeğini söylüyorum, niye saklıyım?

⁸⁹ *Ben hep rahattım Ermeni olmamla ilgili. Anarşist yapımla da ilgili. Hiçbir zaman gizlemedim. Bundan kaçılarak kurtulacağımı hiçbir zaman düşünmedim. Kimliğime de hakaretti. Kimliğimi yoksaysak kendime hakaret. Ben buyum beni kabul ediyorsanız böyle. Tahtakalde bir hande 60 dükkân içinde tek bayandım çalışan. Hepsini de bilirdi Ermeni olduğumu.*

to register their children to the non-Muslims' schools. According to the laws, children of previously converted people cannot enroll in these schools. This is one of the state discriminatory policies. Elbis argued with the Turkish official: "I could not stand and I said 'How happy are you! You register all honest people in the Armenian schools and give murderers' children to the Turkish schools.'"

III

The stories of women who were born in Anatolia but migrated to Istanbul are very different from the histories of women who were born in Istanbul. They came from peasant families and started working in low paid jobs in Istanbul such as housekeeping and textile factories. While they also emphasize their struggle to protect their identities, they also fight against men who are mainly their fathers and husbands. Their lives are divided into two phases: before and after they started to resist against men, a moment which also coincide with their decision to come to Istanbul. They learned how to read and write in Istanbul and started working as housekeepers or textile workers. Their narratives lay stress on their struggle as women more than being Armenian.

Hayganuş was born into a peasant family in Batman. She had to marry when she was 10 years old because "the Armenian girls were abducted by Muslims" at the time. She did not want to marry but her father forced her to do so since "otherwise ağas' sons could abduct her". Her father explained her that at least she would not be repressed because of her Christian identity if she marries a Christian. Yet Hayganuş still accuses her father for this wrong marriage: "I said 'Father, how you found this man and made me marry with him?'" She regrets for this marriage because she thinks her husband is not smart

enough and very conservative. Moreover, she became victim of domestic violence when they were living in village:

In a village, you cannot say anything if your father gives you to a neighbour or to an aga. They beat you up and do not give you food. Whatever happens, you are there. If you go to your father's house, he can beat you up. If you go to your husband's house, he can beat you up. You can be quiet but how long? ⁹⁰

Yet she still claims that she was very “tough” and “stubborn” and went to Istanbul without her husband's permission to visit her brothers and sisters. While in the village, she could not resist against her father and husband, after migrating to Istanbul she starts to resist against her husband. She claims that she herself decided to come to Istanbul and persuaded her husband despite his relatives who tried to manipulate him. In Istanbul, she started to work and also learnt how to read and write. This enabled her to gain more power at home. For example, her husband did not want their daughters to study but Hayganuş opposed him and sent the youngest daughter to the school (Her older daughters who were born in Batman did not go to school but worked in Istanbul in a textile factory and went abroad after they married):

Their father says: ‘Never mind, she is a girl, she will marry and go one day’. Let her marry and go. We want the son to study. Why does our daughter study? For instance, this girl goes to school. I want her to study a lot. I support her education. But their father does not think like me. ⁹¹

⁹⁰ Köyde yani ağalardan olsa komşulardan olsa yani hani evde olursa baban seni kime verdi tamam senin sesin çıkmaz. Sen orada dayak da yersen aç da kalıyorsun. Ne olursa olsun. Sen oradasın artık. Ne olursa olsun babana geldiğin zaman bu sefer babandan dayak yiyorsun oraya gittin ondan dayak yiyorsun. Sussan da sussan da nereye kadar?

⁹¹ Babaları boş ver yani kızdır yarın öbür gün evlenir gider diyor. Evlensin gitsinler. Oğlanı okutmak istiyoruz. Kız neden okumasın? Mesela bu kız dışarıdan okuyor (evdeki genç kızı) bir de ben çok istiyorum okusunlar. Savunuyorum okusun diye. Babaları biraz daha şeydir.

Forced by her family, Satenik also married an Armenian when she was 17 years old. As her husband was living in Germany, she had to go there but came back to Adiyaman where her husband's family lived after her husband died. She could not receive legacy of her husband since her own family and her husband's family thought she did not need it. But she struggled against her family to gain what she "deserved":

They decide whether I will live in Germany or Turkey, they decide about my son's future and what I am gonna do with my money. They decide everything about me. Just because they want it that way.

Later, my aunt brought my files (from Germany) and hired a lawyer and sued in Ankara. We won in the first trial. I won the case in the first trial...My husband died. That night, I decided to come to Istanbul. Because when I came to visit my sister in Istanbul I saw that her children studied in Armenian schools. My identity is very important to me. But only to me. My brothers are not like me. That night I decided. My nephews' courses were taught in Armenian and this made me very happy. I did not speak Armenian at that time. I was living in Adiyaman. My husband was still alive. I decided at that time. I decided in that oppressive period. I could decide about my life. I was not under anyone else's control. I was 20 years old and I was a mother, a widow. Now I can decide. Nobody can decide about my life. I will do whatever I want. I gained my independence. I struggled for four years in Iskenderun. I saved money. Otherwise I could not have come to Istanbul.⁹²

⁹² Benim Almanya'da yaşamayışıma Türkiye'de kalmama onlar karar veriyorlar çocuğumun geleceğine onlar karar veriyorlar paramın ne olacağına onlar karar veriyorlar. Her şeyime onlar karar veriyor. Keyifleri öyle istediği için. Daha sonra dosyayı topladı geldi teyzem Ankara'da bu sefer avukat tuttuk, bir dava açtık. Birinci duruşmada kazandık. Birinci duruşmada kazandım ben bu davayı...Eşim vefat etti. Ben o gece karar verdim İstanbul'a geleceğim. Çünkü İstanbul'a gidip gelirken ablamın çocukları ermeni okuluna gidiyordu. Benim böyle kimliğime bir düşkünlüğüm vardı her zaman. Özümü koruma içgüdüm. Babam böyle öğretti böyle gördüm. Belki de. Her zaman böyle bir farklılık vardı bende. Kimliğime karşı düşkünlük. Ama bir tek bende vardı. Kardeşlerimde yoktu. O gece karar verdim ben. Orada okuduklarını Ermenice ders gördüklerini öğrendim ne kadar hoşuma gitti. Ben o sırada Ermenice bilmiyorum. Adyamanda yaşıyorum o dönem. Eşim vefat etmemişti daha. O dönem karar verdim. O baskılı dönemde karar verdim. Hayatımla ilgili kararları ben verebilirim. Kimsenin kontrolünde değilim artık ben. 20 yaşındayım ama anne olmuşum hatta dul olmuşum. Artık kararlar benim elimde. Kimse karar vermez benim adıma. Ben öyle istiyorum öyle olacak. Özgürlüğüme bir nevi kavuştum aslında. Dört yıl İskenderun'da bir mücadele gene verdim. Ev parası biriktirdim. Yoksa İstanbul'a gelemezdim.

As Satenik's story demonstrates there is a relationship between migration to Istanbul, being close to the Armenian community in Istanbul where they are many opportunities for them and decision to live without family's intervention.

IV

While women's narratives demonstrate their embodied experience, everyday practices of resistance against patriarchy and Turkish nationalism, men's narratives are less elaborate in terms of lived experience, focusing largely on macro politics in Turkey and the leftist movements in which they have been involved. Men talked about their everyday life only when they talked about their childhood. And different from women, men represent themselves "libertarian" rather than a "rebel". For them, being an Armenian itself does not mean being in a constant struggle. They start to involve in a libertarian struggle after joining a larger group either through entering Tibrevank High School or a political party. Their histories are marked with a change that led them to involve in a larger community to struggle against injustice. Men do not 'fight' only for their Armenian identity. Actually their lives are divided into three separate but related periods. The first period is their childhood when they witnessed their elders' struggle against state and society in their villages. The second period starts with their migration to Istanbul. Nearly all male interviewees had immigrated to Istanbul in their adolescence. The main reason is their education. They came to study in Istanbul and registered to Tibrevank High School. Through education and socialization with other Armenians and Turks, they started to involve in politics. In this period, which for the majority coincides with the emergence and increase of socialist and youth movements after 1968, their main concern is depicted as class struggle and democratization in Turkey. The coup d'état of

1980 symbolize the beginning of the third period in which they start to explore their Armenian identity “again”. In the rest of the histories, men’s histories concentrate on the general problems of Armenians as a different social group in Turkey. In other words, while women’s narratives give a rich account that shows what an Armenian individual experiences in everyday life, men’s narratives provide an abstract discussion about the general problems of Armenians as a minority.

That said, however, men’s childhood stories are similar to women’s. They tell their first encounter with injustices. Different from women, who emphasize their resistance, men tell these stories just to explain how they were subject to injustices against Armenians. Women use those stories to demonstrate how they resisted and protected their identities. Rather than describing themselves, through childhood stories, men try to explain the context in which they grew up. For instance, Diran’s story is told to demonstrate the social pressure on Christians in Kayseri:

What was the difficulty? The difficulty was religion. It was the difference of religion and difference of nationality. You were scorned because Islam is the biggest religion. The last religion is Islam. They were disturbing Greeks, Armenians, Kurds by saying ‘Kurdish sperm’ to create enmity. I was 7 years old. My best friend was the son of my mother’s step aunt. My aunt had to marry a Muslim to survive. He said to me ‘Be Muslim and go to heaven’. Why should I be a Muslim? He was a child but he had an influence on another child. There was the same influence in the Ottoman Empire. They tried to Islamize. Since the religion and nation is different. It is still there.⁹³

⁹³ *Ha zorluk neydi. Zorluk dindir. Milliyetçiliktir. Din ve milliyet farkıdır. Din farklı olduğu için her zaman hor görülüyorsun çünkü Müslümanlık en büyük din. Son din İslam. Bu baskı vardı. Arkasından düşmanlığı körüklemek için Rumları Ermenileri Kürtleri Kürt dölü vs diyerek rahatsız ediyorlardı. Burada ben yedi yaşındayım. En yakın arkadaşım annemin üvey teyzesinin oğlu ki mecbur olmuş bir Türkle evlenmeye sağ kalabilmek için. Çocuk bana sen Müslüman ol cennete git derdi. Ben neden Müslüman olayım. O çocuklu başka bir şey çocuk üzerinde ailenin bıraktığı etki başka bir şey. Bu etki Osmanlı’da da var. Müslümanlaştırmaya çalışıyor. Arkasından religion and milliyet farklı olduğu için daima şimdi de var.*

Krikor's story on his childhood demonstrates the inequality and injustice he experienced in school.

I went to school in Amasya. My school was built in an old Armenian Church. I learnt it later. I was surrounded by the Church's old walls. We were three Armenian friends. The teacher wanted us to leave the class during the religion lesson. We were waiting in the yard. This upset us a lot. The children were saying 'Gavurs, do not attend the class. We were waiting next to the high wall of the old church sadly. I remember I did not want to go to the school the days when we had the religion lesson. My father was rigid and said 'You will go and study'. I still remember that.⁹⁴

Half of the male interviewees graduated from Tibrevank High School. They came to Istanbul alone to study and then their families followed them. Their self-representation as students and alumni of Tibrevank come to the forefront during the narratives. They depict Tibrevank as a turning point in their lives. Tibrevank itself is narrated as a project to lead such a change in the lives of Armenians coming from Anatolia to Istanbul. Nazaret summarizes the importance of Tibrevank in his life:

All of those who are coming from Anatolia had to go to Tibrevank because it was a boarding school. We are the last Mohicans in Turkey. We are the last immigrants. Our families came with us. Tibrevank is the most serious project designed for that. It brought together an extinguishing culture again. Thus we graduated as socialists from Tibrevank. We were all oppressed, outcasted children there. We came and became successful students here. By coincidence, our teachers were in solidarity, we took courses from good teachers. We studied in a boarding school. I did not have anyone here. Then my aunts came to Istanbul. They all came gradually.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ İlkokula Amasya'da gittim. Okulum sonradan öğrendim ki eski bir Ermeni Kilisesi'nin duvarları içine yapılmış. Eski kilisenin yüksek duvarlarıyla çevriliydi. Üç arkadaşlık okula giden Ermeni. Üç arkadaşlık. Din dersinde öğretmen bizi dışarı çıkartırdı. Biz de din dersinde avluda beklerdik. Çok üzerdi bizi o olay. Çocuklar dışarı çıkınca "gavurlar derse girmiyor" derdi. Biz de kilisenin taş yüksek duvarın altında mahsun mahsun beklerdik. Sonradan ben hatırlıyorum programda din dersinin olmadığı günlerde okula gitmek istemezdim. Zorla babam biraz sertti gideceksin okuyacaksın derdi. Hala daha onu unutamam.

⁹⁵ Anadolu'dan gelen herkes Tibrevank'a gelmek zorunda çünkü yatılı. Biz Türkiyenin son mohikanlarıyız. Son göç edenleriz. Bizlerle beraber ailelerimiz de göç etmiştir. Tibrevank o iş

Studying at Tıbrevank means being ‘Anatolian Armenian’. It designates where they are from but also it indicates their class background. They represent themselves as ‘libertarian’ and ‘democrat’ instead of rebels. Tıbrevank is depicted as a place where they became experienced. They start to be politicized and join the socialist groups. Being a student at Tıbrevank means being Anatolian, democrat and socialist at the same time. However, being from Tıbrevank also means paying the price for the struggle:

Those students were oppressed and poor and they started to learn their culture again. We, as Tıbrevank democrats, were not only excluded and outcasted by Turks, but also by Istanbul Armenians. Anatolian. Like Kurds are called ‘kıro’, we are Armenian ‘kıro’. For instance when I was a 17 year old, a bright boy; an Istanbulite girl would not be interested in me if she knew that I was from Tıbrevank. 4 of 5 Armenian high schools were bourgeois. Urban Armenian children went to those schools. But we were more successful and democratic. Why were we democratic? We involved in socialist democratic movement because we thought that we would gain more if democracy flourished in Turkey. Wherever the wind brought us in those days... We were not in the same group. Some of us were there some of us were here. I involved in four or five groups. It is because this is something you come across for the first time [this idea]. You read one book and it makes you something, you read another book and it makes you another thing. We transmitted whatever we knew to younger students. The reason we were socialist and democratic was that. You came from Anatolia as a loser child at the age of eleven or twelve. Our fathers and mothers did not show their affection to us. Loving, buying an ice cream, buying shoes, we did not experience such things. You will be happy if your father buys an ice cream and takes you to a hairdresser. The majority did not experience them. You don’t have any connection during eight months. There was no telephone. You can receive five or

için düşünölmüş en ciddi projedir benim için. Hakiki anlamda yok olan költürü tekrar toparladı. Onun için Tıbrevank’tan hepimiz sosyalist olarak çıktık. Orada hep sürünmüş ezilmiş horlanmış çocuklardık. Geldik burada. Hepimiz de iyi öğrenci olduk. Tesadüfen öğretmenlerimiz de dayanışma içinde iyi öğretmenlerden ders aldık. Yatılı okuduk. Kimsem yoktu. Sonra teyzemler geldi sonra halamlar geldi. Böyle peyderpey geldiler....

Bizler, democrat mesela yalnız Türkler tarafından değil İstanbul Ermenisi tarafından da horlanan dışlanan ötekileştirilen insanlarız Tıbrevanklılar. Anadolulu.

ten lira and could only get on the tram or ferry and go to cinema. Our pocket money was so limited. Those who experienced all these wanted to change the order and wanted democracy. We thought we would not be otherized, scorned or excluded because of being Armenian if the system changes. So we got involved in different groups ranging from TIKKO to TKP. Our 7 or 8 friends died there. They were taken into custody or arrested. Tibrevank suffered seriously. We, as Tibrevanklı, paid a high price.⁹⁶

Such educational institutions are seen as indicators of class and political attitudes in the narratives. Apart from Tibrevank, which is a high school, Karagözyan Primary School is also mentioned to designate class division among Armenians. Hovannes, who was born in Iskenderun, came to Istanbul and registered in Karagözyan states that:

I studied in the Karagozyan Boarding School. It is still known as ‘poor-fellow’ school. As the name implies it is an orphanage. As I will explain later, we have a conflict with the community about this. It is scorned. Rich families do not send their children there. Now we neither. Karagozyan is now a ‘poor-fellow’ school. Now, poor-fellows are the three or five families living in Kasımpasa. They are Armenian gypsies. There are some others coming from Yozgat. There are Armenians from Corum who live in Kucukcekmece and Buyukcekmece. Their children

⁹⁶ *O insanlar ezik yoksul kültürünü biraz bilen ya da yeniden öğrenen insanlar oluştu. Bizler demokrat mesela yalnız Türkler tarafından değil mevcut kültür tarafından değil İstanbul Ermenisi tarafından da horlanan dışlanan ötekileştirilen insanlarız Tibrevanklılar. Anadolulu. Kürt'e nasıl kıro diyorlar biz de Ermenin kırosu. Mesela bize 17 yaşında pırıl pırıl delikanlıyken bir İstanbullu kız bana yüz vermez bilse ki Tibrevanklıyım. Mevcut 5 tane lisenin 4 tane burjuva kentli Ermeni çocukları gidiyor biz şeyiz ama biz daha başarılıyız daha demokratız. Demokrat niye olduk. Biz Türkiyede demokrasi ne kadar çoğalırsa bizim de alacağımız pay artacak diye çoğumuz sosyalist demokrat şeylerde yer aldık. İşte o günün koşullarında rüzgar bizi nereye atarsa. Hepimiz aynı grupta değiliz. Birimiz şurada birimiz burada. Ben şahsen hemen hemen 4 5 yerde gezdim. Çünkü ilk kez karşılaştığım bir olay. Bir tane kitap okuyorsun seni şey yapıyor öbürünü okuyorsun şey yapıyor. Bir abiyle konuşuyorsun şey. Biz de o bildiğimizi bizim alta aktarıyoruz. Yani şeyiz. Demokrat sosyalist olmamızın ana şeyi şeyden geliyor. Anadolu'dan gelip eziksin 11 12 yaşında çocuk. Ana baba kucak. Sevmek dondurma almak. Ayakkabı almak. Şeylerini yaşamadı. Bir baban sana ayakkabı aldığında sevinirsin elinden tutup berbere götürdüğünde. Onları yaşamamıştır çoğu çocuk. 8 ay okul döneminde hiç kimseyle ilişkin yok. Telefon yok. Mektupla artık ne kadar şey olursa sana 5 lira 2 lira 10 lira bi para gelir onunla da hafta sonu bir vapura tramvaya otobüse binersin sinemaya da gidersen gidersin. Öyle o kadar cılız paralarla harçlıklarımız. E bunu hisseden içini gören insanlar mecburen bu düzenin değişmesini bu düzenin demokrasiye doğru gitmesini böyle bir şey olursa Ermeni olduğumuz için horlanmayacağımızı dışlanmayacağımızı ötekileştirilmeyeceğimizi varsayarak hepimiz işte artık herkes kendini nereye yakın bulursa TIKKO'dan TKP'ye kadar o yelpazenin içinde yer aldı. Burada da bizim 7 8 tane insanımız öldü. Tutuklandı. Gözaltına alındı. Ciddi şey çekmiştir Tibrevank. Bunun bedellerini ödemiştir Tibrevanklı.*

go there. But there are also the ones who think that the preschool is good and they send their children. But for the primary school they are few.⁹⁷

Life histories of those men who did not attend Tıbrevank or any other high school also have the same change between childhood and socialization. Garabet came to Istanbul from Batman and did not go to school after primary school. However, his narrative also has the same change with others' stories. Though he did not go to Tıbrevank, he was involved in socialist movements and this leads him to emphasize that he was in another struggle which had no relation with his Armenian identity:

Garabet: We came to Istanbul before 1970 coup d'état. We were students at the primary school but able to understand. Why did we become leftist? We continued after graduating, in the workplaces. We researched and read. We resisted against injustices and the oppressors. We struggled, we did not fear.

Can: Was it known that you were Armenian in that environment?

Garabet: We forgot our Armenianness there. There was not that stuff. There are many Armenians in leftist movement. Both in that time and afterwards.

Can: Was anything about that issue spoken?

Garabet: No. There were people from different groups. Maoists, DevSol, DevGenç. The first thing that I did in the 1980 coup d'état was to burn all books in the stove. I was single in those days. They could come and take me any moment. Many friends were taken like this. I was living with my family⁹⁸.

⁹⁷ Karagözyan bugün de cemaat içinde gariban okulu olarak bilinir. Yetimhanedir adı üstünde. Birazdan cemaatle çatışmalarımızı da anlatacağım buna bağlı olarak. Küçümsenir. Sosyete çocuğunu oraya göndermez. Şimdi biz de göndermeyiz. Karagözyan şimdi gariban okuludur. Şuan ki garibanlar Kasımpaşa'da oturan üç beş aile kaldı. Ermeni çingenesi Yozgat'tan gelen var. Küçükçekmece Büyükçekmece'de Çorum Ermenileri var. Onların çocukları gelir. Ama kız çocuklarını 'anaokulu iyidir' deyip veren de var ama sonrasında azalır.

⁹⁸ Garabet: 1970 darbesinden önce geldik İstanbul'a. Biz ilkokuldaydık ama aklımız eriyordu. Niye solcu olduk. Okuldan sonrada da lisede de iş yerimizde de devam ettik. Araştırdık okuduk. Haksızlığa ezene karşı çıktık. Mücadele veriyorduk korkumuz yoktu.

Can: O çevrede Ermeni olduğunuzu biliyorlar mıydı?

Garabet: orada Ermeniliğimizi unuttuyorduk. Orada şey yoktu. Sol hareket içinde çok Ermeni var. O dönemde de sonrasında da.

Can: O konuya dair bir şey konuşuluyor muydu?

As Garabet states, their involvement in leftist movements prevent them to define themselves as Armenians when they talk about that era between 1960's and 1980. They use the words 'socialist, leftist, libertarian' and represent themselves within a broader struggle.

The third phrase of male life stories can be said to be after 1980 coup d'état era. It starts with the repression of the socialist movements by the state. Though they do not make such an explicit division in the narratives, the context of the stories about their lives after 1980 changes clearly. Their self-representation as libertarian does not change but the context within which they struggled changes. For instance, Tarık was born in Adıyaman and came to Istanbul for his university education. Although his family was converted in Adıyaman, he explored that he could only exist within Armenian community in Istanbul. His exploration of his Armenianness coincides with the 1980 coup d'état and demonstrates that Turkish socialist movement is seen to fail in containing Armenians:

We did not feel that we belong anywhere. We knew our roots but... We were between a rock and a hard place. We could not decide. Should we be like this or that? Moreover, in the name of leftism, it was said in a Universalist manner that we are all brothers and sisters; and religions and nations are irrelevant. Later we realized that this is not true. Muslims, Turks were highly strong in these movements. It was imbedded in their subconscious. You can't remove this from people's mind easily. The official ideology is engraved in their genetics. It is a living person. I was leftist, I was organized. I was in the middle of the events. We realized that the truth was different. For us as well. For instance, we were at the age of marriage. Whom will you marry, think about it! We had friends. 'Can I marry her?' You think this and she also thinks the same. My name is Tarık, it is a more neutral name. We did not have to

Garabet: *Hayır. Farklı görüşten insanlar vardı. Maocular, Devsoldan, devgençten. 80 ihtilalinde ilk yaptığım iş evdeki tüm kitapları sobada yakmak oldu. Bekardım o zaman. Her an gelip götürebilirlerdi. Çok arkadaşımız gitti o şekilde ailemle yaşıyordum o zamanlar.*

tell it to anyone. We were also Turks in the identity cards. As my grandfather was converted, we were known as Turks. Afterwards here I changed it 25 years ago. I became Christian again. I think I was 35 years old. I had done my military service. It is not important to change it on your ID. It is important whether you want it sincerely or not. Your own decision. Then after reading and investigating... We were like white patch on the black in this geography. We decided that we had to choose this part of [our identity] and decide about it. It is not possible, they do not accept. Even if you pray not 5 but 15 times a day, they do not erase that stain. It is like this in this geography generally. They even do not want your daughter. They search your family. The Turkish Republic does the same.⁹⁹

Conclusion

According to Passerini, “the choice of a narrative stereotype does not immediately express a psychological identity, but a cultural acceptance of commonplace notions about oneself, some more widespread in society than others, depending on various factors, like gender.”¹⁰⁰ The life stories that I collected designate how Armenians locate their own lives into a wider context.

⁹⁹ *Bir taraftan bir tarafa aidiyet hissetmiyorduk. Kökenlerimizi biliyorduk ama... İki arada bir derede kalmıştık. Karar veremiyorduk. Öyle mi olalım böyle mi olalım. Bir de bu solculuk adına halkların kardeşliği falan filan diye daha global laflar içinde dinlerin milliyetlerin çok önemli olmadığı laflar ediliyordu. Sonra o lafların çok geçerli olmadığını gördük. Müslüman olan Türk olanlar bu hareketler içinde daha kıdemliydi. Bilinçaltlarına yerleşmiş bir şey. Bunu kolay kolay insanların beyninden kazıyamazsın. Resmi ideoloji işlemiş genetiklerine. Yaşayan biri. Solcuydum örgütlüydüm. Olayların içindeydim. Baktık ki kazın ayağı öyle değil. Biz de öyle. Mesela evlilik yaşımız geldi. Kimle evleneceksin bir düşün. Arkadaşlarımız vardı. Biz bununla bir evlilik yapabilir miyiz? Sen düşünüyorsun. Karşıdaki de düşünüyor. Adım çok daha Tarık turnak içinde nötr bir isim. Kimseye söylemeye ihtiyacımız yoktu. Dolayısıyla bizim de nüfusumuz Türktü. Dedemin dönmesinden dolayı bizim de nüfusumuz Türktü. Sonra ben burada. Bundan 25 sene önce değiştirdim. Tekrar Hıristiyanlığa döndüm. Herhalde 35 yaşlarındaydım. Askerliğimi yapmıştım. Kimlikte değiştirmek önemli değil. Önemli olan içten isteyip istememen. Ona karar vermen. Sonra okumaya araştırmaya başlayınca. Biz bu coğrafyanın üzerinde siyahın üstünde beyaz yama gibiydik. Bu tarafımızı artık seçmek durumunda olmak zorunda olduğumuzu karar verdik ve karar verdik. Mümkün değil kabul etmiyorlar. Günde 5 değil 15 vakit de namaz kulsan o hiç lekeyi şey etmezler. Genel bu coğrafyada böyledir. Kızını bile istemezler. Araştırıyorlar soyunu sopunu. T.C. de böyle yapıyor.*

¹⁰⁰ Passerini, p 60.

The narratives start with 1915 and they relate their own stories to the 1915. 1915, as a reference point, enable them to give meaning to their own experiences. As I will try to demonstrate in the following chapters, their experiences ranging from marriage to migration are all contextualized within a broader history. Through describing an Armenian identity, they also express the commonplace notions about themselves such as ‘hard-working’, ‘arduous’, ‘honest’, and ‘generous’. However, their narratives also demonstrate how they separate themselves from other ethnicities and from other Armenians according to their local identity and class. While there are many similarities between the narratives in terms of the description of an Armenian identity, their self-representations vary according to gender, local identity and class.

CHAPTER IV
“SURVIVAL TACTICS” IN ANATOLIA: CONVERSION, MARRIAGE
AND MIGRATION¹⁰¹

In the previous chapter, I argued that the 1915 play an important role in the construction of life stories and that the personal experiences are told in a context that signifies that the 1915 continues or still has influence on narrators' lives. Though gender, local identity and class shape narratives in different ways, they all share common emphasis such as struggle and honor. My main aim in this chapter will be to analyze three recurring themes in the narratives: conversion, marriage and migration. As I argued in the previous chapter, life stories underline mainly a constant struggle which has its basis in the 1915. Those experiences are also told as survival tactics which are shaped within this context.

Conversion

According to Selim Deringil, between 1895 and 1897 Anatolia witnessed the mass conversions of Armenians. He argues that the Hamidian Massacres triggered the conversions of the Armenians in Anatolia. Yet he also suggests that these conversions “were entirely a survival tactic” and that “many went back to their original faith once the danger is over”.¹⁰² My research shows that

¹⁰¹ I borrow the term “survival tactic” from Deringil to explain the strategies that my interviewees seek to survive in Anatolia.

¹⁰² Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire*. (Cambridge University Press: 2012), p. 233.

this is the case for twentieth century as well, namely during the genocide and its aftermath, as the cycle of conversion and reconversion narrated by my interviewees proves that conversion was a survival tactic. Almost all narratives that I collected include stories of conversion and converts. While only one of my informants is still Muslim, nearly half of them were either children of converts or were raised as Muslims and reconverted to Christianity by their own choice. Especially those who were converts did not want to talk about being a convert but their narratives gave me some clues about their experiences.

In the narratives, conversion is represented as a strategy, a survival tactic. It dates back to 1915. The harsh conditions of 1915 were emphasized by the narrators to show that conversion was not an option but in some cases inevitable for survival.

Conversion is a tactic but it is also a stain which contaminates Armenian identity. Thus, the period that they remained as Muslim is also told as a process which still involves sacrifice. Conversion is just to protect family. Even though they practiced Muslim pray, they emphasize that it was just a disguise. For instance, men who were converts underlined that they were not circumcised. This was, to them, an act of resistance. Being a convert is also a temporary solution. Narrators emphasized that they/their elders reconverted to Christianity with the first opportunity. In short, conversion is considered a period in which they were disguised. It was both inevitable for survival and a stain, in their terms, to be gotten rid of in the first opportunity. Reconversion to Christianity is represented as enlightenment which occurred through migration and becoming conscious.

The conversion of Armenians has challenged both Muslim and Armenians identities. The Armenian converts were excluded from the Armenian community. Also, even though they practiced Islam, they were still called *gavur* by their Muslim neighbors and were not included in the Muslim community. That is to say that neither Armenians nor Muslims accept converts as part of their communities. This exclusion created a tension with which the next generations could not deal and, partly because of this, they reconverted to Christianity. While some Armenians reconverted to Christianity, their many relatives preferred to remain Muslim, which created another tension within families. I would suggest that the cycle of conversion and reconversion created a gap between generations and a crisis in kinship relations within the Anatolian Armenian community. While conversion is considered a survival strategy and hence a necessity, reconversion to Christianity is seen as an optional act signifying one's devotion to his or her identity. Next generations' reconversion to Christianity resulted in the situation that different generations of a family belong to different religions. And since some families did not reconvert, different families within a larger family happen to belong to different religions, which led to the unraveling of kinship relations.

I

Living in Anatolia after the genocide is told to be tough. There remained no Armenian community but Armenian survivors who lived within the Muslim community. Conversion to Islam (and change their names) was one of the few ways through which they could stay in Anatolia.

Krikor was born in Amasya in 1941. During the first interview, he did not talk about religion. However, in the second interview, he suddenly decided to talk about his grandfather's conversion:

Can: Was there anyone who converted to Islam in Amasya?

Krikor: There wasn't when I was there. The converts were called *gavur* Ahmet. There was one when I was there... (silence) Can I tell you something? As I said before my mother is from Merzifon. They took the men before 1915 and said to the rest "If you accept Islam you can stay here". Some of them converted to Islam. They stayed. My mother's father is one of those who converted to Islam and stayed. It was written Islam on my mother's identity card. It was written Islam on my identity card too. My mother's name was Zekiye on her identity card. But actually it was Bercuhi. There was a seal. It was written that her name was changed from Bercuhi to Zekiye by the court decision. Do you know what was written in my mother's identity card for her father's name? "Convert Adil". On the old identity card. I regret that I did not keep it. Even if you convert, you are stigmatized. It was not written "convert on my father's card. His religion was also Islam. They converted too. There were two kinds of families who could stay in Turkey after 1915. The first group stayed by conversion. The second stayed with the help of their neighbors... Our city (Gümüşhacıköy) was the place of converts. Samsun region was occupied by Britain. After the British came in 1918, they converted back to their old religion in Ordu, Fatsa, Havza, Merzifon. But 3 years later, Topal Osman burned the majority. My grandparents took them back. They remained Muslim during 3 years. My mother changed her identity card. My grandfather did not convert back to Christianity. He became "Convert Adil" and remained Muslim. He remained like that until he died. My uncle and my mother changed it there. My mother changed it after she got married and after I was born. There was that seal on my old identity card. She changed after I was born. Zekiye was deleted and she started to use her old name, Bercuhi after I was born. Her name became Bercuhi but her father's name remained "Convert Adil".

Can: Did all Armenians experience the same process as your family there?

Krikor: Sure, but they had never practiced Islam. Life forced them to do this. There are many people in Anatolia. Many people come to me. Here. Whether I know them or not, they come for their business. I can understand that she will say something. If she feels comfortable, she says "My

grandmother was an Armenian convert. We are *kılıç artığı*¹⁰³.
If someone else comes, she stops speaking.¹⁰⁴

The story of conversion to Islam that Krikor told in the form of a confession was the only way his family could stay in Amasya. And yet conversion and thereafter having Muslim names did not necessarily include them in the Muslim community, a fact manifested in the expression *Gavur Adil* written on his grandfather's ID. Convert Armenians were stigmatized and perceived to be Christians both by the state and the Muslim community. This phenomenon

¹⁰³ 'Kılıç artığı' means 'sword's wastes' in Turkish, it is publicly used to define the Armenian survivors after the genocide.

¹⁰⁴ Can: Amasya'da din değiştirip Müslümanlaşan oldu mu?

Krikor: Benim dönemimde olmadı. Zamanında olanlara da zaten gavur Ahmet derlerdi. Bizim orada bir tane vardı... (Sessizlik) Ben size bir şey söyleyeyim mi? Dedim ya anne tarafım Merzifonlu diye. Şimdi 1915'te önce erkekleri götürmüşler sonra geride kalanlara demişler ki Müslümanlığı kabul ederseniz kalacaksınız. Bir kısmı Müslümanlığı kabul etmiş. Kalmışlar onlar. Annemin babası sonradan Müslümanlığı kabul edip gitmeyenlerden. Sonradan annemin kimliğinde din kısmında Müslüman yazıyordu. Benimkinde de din kısmında Müslüman yazıyordu. Annemin ismi Zekiye yazıyordu. Normalde Bercuhuydu. Sonra mühür vardı. Şu şu mahkeme kararıyla Zekiye Bercuhi olarak değiştirildi diye. Annemin nüfus kağıdında baba ismi ne yazıyordu biliyor musun? Muhtedi Adil, Dönme Adil. Yapraklı nüfus kağıdında. Yanarım yanarım onu saklamadığıma. Dönsen de o damgayı yemişsin bir kere yani. Babamda yazmıyordu. Babamınki de Müslümandı haa. Onlar da değiştirmiş sonra. Türkiyede 1915'ten sonra kalan aileler iki türlü kalmış. Bir din değiştirerek öbürü de her şeyi göze alan komşunun hayırseverin yardımıyla. Bizim orada 1915'te dönenlerin orası Samsun bölgesi İngiliz işgal bölgesi. İngilizler 1918'te İngilizler geldikten sonra Samsun Ordu Fatsa, Havza Merzifon o bölge 1918'de Müslümanlığı kabul ederek dönenlerin eski kimliğini iade etmişler. Ama ondan sonra 3 yıl sonra Topal Osman geldiğinde hepsini büyük bir bölümünü yakmış. Bizimkiler de geri almış. Üç yıl Müslüman olup geri almışlar. Annemin o kimliği dedem dönmemiş. Muhtedi Adil olmuş ve Hristiyanlığa dönmemiş. Sonuna kadar öyle gitmiş. Dayım da annem de orada değiştirmişler. Artık o evlendikten sonra, ben de doğduktan sonra. Benim yapraklı nüfus cüzdanımda o damga vardı. Ben doğduktan sonra değiştirmiş. Zekiye silinmiş eski ismini almış ben doğduktan sonra. Annemin ismi Bercuhi olmuş ama baba ismi muhtedi Adil kalmış.

Can: O zaman sizin oradaki tüm Ermeniler o süreci sizin gibi mi yaşamışlar?

Krikor: Tabi tabi ama hiçbir zaman pratik etmemişler. İşte yaşam onları buna zorlamış. Şimdi de Anadolu'da böyle çok var. Bana çok kimse geliyor. Buraya gelir. Tanırım tanımam işi içi gelir. İşte ben anlarım bir şey söyleyecek. Kendini rahat hissederse kimse işitmeyecek gibi der ki benim büyük annem Ermeni dönmesi biz kılıç artığıyız. Biri girince hemen susar.

shows that, I would suggest, the forced conversion to Islam, from the state's point of view, did not necessarily mean Armenians becoming Muslim but undoing of Armenian identity. That said, Armenians represent conversion as a survival strategy where they pretended like they are Muslim as they did not really practice their new religion. When the conditions got better and the environment in which they lived became milder, some reconverted to Christianity, as Krikor's mother and uncle did. But those who were still afraid and did not feel safe remained as Muslims, as Krikor's grandfather did.

Satenik's story shows well how complicated this issue is. Satenik's mother's and father's families had to convert to Islam in Adiyaman and changed their names. She says that her grandparents "could not convert to Christianity again because of the conditions". Nevertheless, reconversion to Christianity is represented to signify a brave sacrifice of families to protect their honor:

Satenik: My grandfather was Islamized when he was with that Kurdish agha. He never converted back to his religion again. He adopted Islam. He fasted. My father also fasted when he grew up. Very interesting. They knew that they were Christian before but their names, their identities all changed when they were with the aga. They were converts. They had to convert in the village. My grandfather's name was Garabet, they made his name Karabit....Both my mother and father were born in Adiyaman. They were the oldest children of two important families. They got married. They were from the same village. From Orbiş in Gerger. They spoke Zazaki. Their names were Turkish. My father was Mamo, Mahmud. He was a craftsman. He was a carpenter. He produced. He was working outside of the village, he was going to the cities. They migrated to Mardin after they married. My mothers' uncles migrated to Mardin as they were Assyrians. My fathers went there too and lived there for 4 years. Kaletmeran Village in Mardin. Close to Deyrulzafaran. My father became Christian again after migration. They were just married. He was not 30 years old. He learnt to read and write by himself. The Assyrian priest gave him a bible there. My father read it during the same

night. He was baptized there. Then they made religious marriage.

Can: Was your mother baptized?

Satenik: No. They were in the village. They knew that they were Christian but they did not know their religion. They only knew that they were different. Because there was no church, no priest. There was not an Armenian community. How could they know? How could they learn? They were baptized in Mardin and married. As my father was the oldest he made his siblings convert. He struggled to protect his identity. He pioneered. Thanks to Deyrulzafaran Church. He pioneered.¹⁰⁵

According to Satenik, conversion to Islam was a necessary strategy and after the conditions changed by migration, his father restarted his struggle and changed both his and his family's religion. Satenik's family's story starts in Adıyaman, later her parents migrated to Mardin and 4 years later they went back to Adıyaman. Satenik was born in Iskenderun since her family migrated to Iskenderun since there were Armenians and a church. After she married to a

¹⁰⁵ Satenik: O Kürt Ağanın yanında Müslümanlaşmıştı. Sonra dinine dönmedi dönemedi. Müslümanlığı benimsedi. Oruç tutuyordu. Benim babam da artık kendini biliyordu delikanlı olmuştu o zaman kadar oruç tutuyordu. Çok enteresan. Hristiyan olduklarını biliyorlar ama o ağanın yanında ismi değişti kimliği değişti her şeyi değişti. Muhtedi olmuşlar. Din değiştirmek zorunda kaldılar köyde. İsmi Garabetken Karabit yaptılar. Annem ve babam Adıyaman'da doğdular. İki popüler ailenin en büyük çocuklarıydı onlar. Onlar da evlendiler. Biz şimdi yabancı ile evlilik olmuyor. İç içe dönüyor. Aynı köydenler. Orbiş köyünden. Gerger'in Orbiş köyü. Zazaca konuşuyorlar. Anadilleri Zazaca. İsimleri Türkçe. Babam Mamoydu. Mahmud. Benim babam sanatkardı. Marangozdu. Usta sanatkardı imalat yapardı. İş sebebiyle köyün dışında çalışırdı şehirlere giderdi. O dönem yeni evlilerken Mardin'e göç etmişler annemin dayıları Süryani oldukları için oraya göç etmişler çeşitli sebeplerle. Benim babamlar da oraya gidip 4 yıl orada yaşamışlar. Mardin'in Kaletmeran köyü. Deyrulzafarana yakın. Oraya gidince babam Hristiyan oluyor tekrar. Yeni evlenmişler. 30 yaşında yoktur. Babam kendi kendine okuma yazma öğretti. Oradaki Süryani rahip ona İncil veriyor. Onu bir gecede okuyor babam. Vaftiz oluyor. Dini bilgisi olsun diye. Sonra annemle dini nikah kıyıyorlar.

Can: Anneniz o sırada vaftiz olmuş mu?

Yok. Köydeler ama Hristiyan olduklarını biliyorlar ama dini bilmiyorlar. Sadece farklı olduklarını biliyorlar. Çünkü kilise yok. Din adamı yok. Toplum yok nereden bilsin nasıl öğrensin. Mardin'de vaftiz oluyorlar. Nikahlanıyorlar. Babam en büyük olduğu için köyden gelen tüm kardeşlerini Hristiyanlığa çekiyor. Öncülük yapıyor. Kimliğini korumak için mücadele ediyor. Hepsini. Deyrulzafaran kilisesi sayesinde oluyor bu. Hepsine öncülük yapıyor.

relative who was still a convert, Satenik went Adıyaman back to live with his husband's family but she was shocked that they were still Muslims.

They were my relatives but they were living totally like Muslims. I used to go to church on Sundays. There was nothing. I was constantly feeling emptiness. I was very religious. I was faithful and we received a special religion course in the church. We regard ourselves lucky. I grew up in such an environment then went among Muslims. They were my relatives. There was nothing beautiful in life for me. There was nothing to continue my life there, no social or religious environment. They fasted. They lived like Muslims.¹⁰⁶

For Satenik, conversion can only be understood and tolerated within its context. The conditions in Adıyaman prevented her grandparents to live as Christians but Mardin and Iskenderun had the conditions to reconvert. Istanbul is seen as the most appropriate place to reconvert to Christianity and Satenik is very angry with her relatives who remained Muslim even after migrating to Istanbul:

Satenik: One of my relative invited me to her grandson's circumcision feast in a hotel. She is my husband's cousin and we have the same surname. I was shocked. I said "What do you say? You invite me to your grandson's circumcision not to his baptism. You are Islamized! Everyone can freely choose her religion but I think you are in the wrong side and you impose it to me. I said "I can't come". She did not say anything. My cousin was with her too, they are always together. They all go to the church, they are faithful. She is the only one who is Muslim. I asked them "Why don't you put pressure on her? Why don't you exclude her? Why don't you all unite and exclude her?"

Can: Is it because her husband is Muslim?

Satenik: Yes but her husband is also Armenian. They preferred to be Muslim and still continue. Nobody forces you in Istanbul. Yes there was pressure in hometown. But you are living together in Istanbul. All of your relatives go to church. Why wouldn't you go? What is this fear? Nobody stones you,

¹⁰⁶ *Tamamen Müslüman gibi yaşıyorlar. Pazar günleri ben kiliseye gitmeye alıştım. Pazar günü orada öyle bir şey yok. Nasıl bir boşluğa düştüm. Çünkü imanlı bir insandım ben. İnançlı bir insan ve biz özel din dersi gördük kilise bünyesinde. Ayrıca şanslı hissediyoruz kendimizi. Böyle bir ortamda büyü sonra git Müslümanların içinde. Tamam, akrabalarım ama beni açabilecek hiçbir şey yok. Benim yaşamımı devam ettirebilecek hiçbir şey yok. Ne bir sosyal ne bir dini çevre var. Oruç tutuyorlar şey yapıyorlar. Müslüman gibi yaşıyorlar*

nobody puts pressure on you. It is not like in the hometown. There is no fear. Why do you do this as it is very normal?"¹⁰⁷

Satenik thinks that being a convert cannot be seen as normal in Istanbul. Conversion is not seen as a choice, it is a necessity and whenever there emerge appropriate conditions one should convert to Christianity. She even considers the invitation to the circumcision feast by her relatives an imposition, or worse an insult to herself. Since she does not think that Armenian converts can really believe in Islam, she perceives them as betrayers who should be excluded from the community. These stories also show how the issue of conversion shapes kinship relations within the Armenian community.

II

Like those whose parents were converts, the ones who were converts until they came to Istanbul depict conversion as a strategy. Like Satenik, Tarık was born into a convert family that lived in the city center of Adıyaman. He also explains his grandfather's conversion as a necessity caused by the social pressure. For

¹⁰⁷ Bir akrabam beni torununun sünnetine davet etti otelde. Bilmem ne. Bilmem ne otelinin bilmem kaçınıcı katında torununun mevlit törenine beni davet ediyor. Eşimin amcasının kızı ve biz aynı soyadını taşıyoruz. Şok oldum ya dedim sen ne diyorsun ya. Torununun beni mevlidine çağırıyor, vaftizine değil. Müslümanlaşmışsın. Tamam herkesin inancı kendine ama sen bana göre yanlış taraftasın ve sen bana bunu dayatıyorsun. Gelemem dedim yani. Gelmeyeceğim dedim. Sesini çıkarmadı. Hatta yanında amcamın kızı var onlar toplu halde yaşarlar. Hepsi de kiliseye gider hepsi de inançlı insanlar o bir tane içlerinde Müslümanlık yapıyor. Dedim neden buna toplumsal baskı yapmıyorsunuz neden bunu dışlamıyorsunuz? Niye hepiniz birleşmiyorsunuz?

Can: Kocasından dolayı mı acaba?

Evet ama kocası da Ermeni. Müslümanlığı tercih etmişler ve hala devam ediyorlar. Kimse sizi zorlamıyor İstanbul'da tamam memlekette baskı vardı. Ama İstanbul'da toplu halde yaşıyorsun. Senin çevrendeki tüm akrabaların kiliseye gidiyor sen neden katılmıyorsun? Neyin korkusu neyin sıkıntısı? Kimse seni taşlamıyor kimse sana baskı yapmıyor. Memleket gibi değil artık yani. Korku yok yani. Niye hala bir de çok normal bir şey yapıyormuş gibi bizim yüzümüze sokuyorsun?

him, conversion means failure to resist. But it is also a sacrifice to protect one's family. When the conditions change after migration to Istanbul, Tarık reconverted to Christianity with his family. He explains this with "becoming conscious":

My grandfather converted when he was very young. I guess when he was 30s or 35s. They pressurized them a lot. My grandfather converted to Islam. His name was *gavur* Mustafa. Even if he was Muslim. Even if he prayed. My grandfather was a smart man. He spoke Arabic. He spoke Armenian, French, English. He could speak, count, write. I don't know but he was smart. He was a good veterinary who was also a good blacksmith. He cut, sliced, sewed animals, cows, cattles. He converted to Islam to protect his children from pressure. He did not convert during 1915. He married and had children. He had to convert because he could not resist. He converted in order to make his children study. We knew it when we came to Istanbul. We came from Adıyaman and were accustomed to this culture here. We returned to our Armenian identity after we gained consciousness about that. We can also explain this in another way. My parents married. My mother was from Malatya, my father was from Adıyaman. My mother is very important because she protected us from getting lost. She was very important. She resisted. For instance, circumcision. She resisted and prevented us from being circumcised. My grandfather insisted a lot but it was just to show off. My mother was still Christian.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ *Dedem çok geç yaşta dönüyor Müslüman oluyor. Herhalde 30 35li yaşlarda. Epey bunlara baskı yapıyorlar. Dedem Hıristiyanken Müslüman oluyor. Adı "Gavur Mustafa"ydı zaten. Ne kadar Müslüman olursan ol namaz kılmasına rağmen. Dedem akıllı bir adamdı. Arapçayı bilirdi. Ermenice Fransızca İngilizce bilirdi o zaman ki tahsiliyle. Konuşuyordu sayıyordu yazıyordu. Ne biliyim nasıl bir zekaysa. Nalbantlıkta da iyi bir baytırdı kendisi. Hayvanları biçer diker keser şey ederdi onun için inek ve büyükbaş hayvanları. Çok şey etmişler tabi baskı görünce çocuklar rahat etsin diye kendisi dönüyor geç yaşta. Önceleri peşin dönenlerden değil. Evlendikten sonra çocukları oluyor. Dönmek zorunda kalıyor çünkü dayanamıyor. Çocuklarının okuması için önleri açılın diye öyle bir dönüş yapıyor. Biz de şey yaptık tabi. Buraya geldiğimiz zaman biliyorduk zaten. Adıyaman'da öyle yoğun bir kültür içinde yaşamamamıza rağmen gelip bu kültürle daha aşına olduk. Bilinçlenince normal Ermeni kimliğimize döndük. Böyle bir yaşam. Bunun tabi şey versiyonu var. Annemle babam evleniyorlar. Annem Malatyalı babam Adıyamanlı. Bizim yetişmemizde kaybolmamamızda annem çok önemli. Annem etkendi çok önemli bir unsurdu. O direndi mesela. Affedersiniz ne derler sünnet. O direndi sünnet ettirmede bizi. Dedem çok şey yaptı ısrar etti falan ama onlar çok şey değil. Şekil şeyi. Annemler halen Hıristiyandı.*

As Satenik and Krikor, Tarık also explains conversion as a necessary survival tactic. It is very interesting to see that Tarık accepts that his grandfather had to convert but he also emphasizes that he performed five time prayer to demonstrate that his grandfather was sincere. He says that the society was hypocrite and his grandfather sacrificed himself. The most interesting is that even though his grandfather remained Muslim until he died, Tarık talks about him as if he was a Christian who had to behave as Muslim:

Can: How did your grandfather permit your father to marry a Christian girl?

Tarık: Because he himself is ...

Can: But he converted to Islam

Tarık: He was a Muslim of himself. He was not ... It is a hypocritical society. You have to be hypocrite. Show off. He prayed. He performed five time prayer. He was an honest guy. When I said hypocrite I meant ... He had to sacrifice himself. He could not resist. He sold his house twice and bought it himself. During the time of wealth tax. Even though he was a Muslim, they sold his house. He was sent to twenty class military service. After coming back, he realized that his house was on sale. His neighbor intended to buy his house and increased its price. Then his neighbors intervened and he bought his own house again. Then he could not resist. During the time of WWII there was the incident of twenty class. They brought non-Muslims to Pozantı and used them in the road construction. It was the turning point. He must have converted in 1938-39 or 40. My father was already born at that time, must be 8 or 10 years old. ¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Can: *Dedeniz nasıl izin vermiş babanızın bir Hıristiyanla evlenmesine?*

Tarık: *E kendi de şey*

Can: *Ama din değiştirmiş.*

Tarık: *O kendine şey, Müslüman. Çok şey değildi. Riyakar bir toplum. Mecburen riyakarlık yapıyorsun. Gösteriş. Namazını kılardı. 5 vakit namaz. Düzgün bir adamdı. Riyakar derken. Bu mecburen bunu görerek ve bilerek kendini feda etti. Artık dayanamadı adam. Evini iki kere satılığa çıkarttı. İki kere kendi parasıyla aldı. Varlık vergisi zamanında. Müslüman olmasına rağmen tekrar evini satıyorlar. 6 kura askerliğe gönderiyorlar bunu. Dönünce bir bakıyor evi satılık. Komşusu artırıyor evi. Neyse araya komşuları giriyor artırmıyor tekrar satın alıyor evini. Ondan sonra dayanamıyor artık. İkinci dünya savaşında 6 kura askerlik var. Gayrimüslimleri topladılar Pozantı'da falan yol yapımında kullandılar. O dönüm tarihi olabilir. 38 39 40 o yıllarda dönmüş olabilir. O sırada babam doğmuş 8 10 yaşında.*

III

Fırat is from Batman and converted to Islam before he migrated to Istanbul. He is the only Muslim informant that I interviewed. He was very reluctant to speak about himself and he emphasized that his life story is neither important nor interesting. As I could not achieve to hear a complete life story from Fırat, our interview continued like as a question and answer interview. While he is known as Muslim by his environment (I was introduced to Fırat by another informant and he said that Fırat was an Islamized Armenian) he does not define himself as Muslim. My interview with Fırat demonstrated that the conversion as a survival tactic does not determine a strict conversion from Christianity to Islam. Rather, the boundaries are very ambiguous that Fırat does not see difference between two religions.

Can: Have you ever been to a church before you came to Istanbul?

Fırat: No, I did not.

Can: Have you ever been to a church in Istanbul?

Fırat: Sure, I still go to church. Both church and mosque is the God's house.

Can: Do you go to mosque too?

Fırat: I do when it is necessary.

Can: Then, you know how to pray.

Fırat: (laughs) We do whatever we know.¹¹⁰

Though Fırat goes to mosque to pray he still complains about the Muslims who ostracize him: "Indeed, they do not go to mosques like us but they still name us 'Armenian'".¹¹¹ For Fırat, the word "Armenian" does not refer to ethnicity but

¹¹⁰ C: *Siz İstanbul'a gelmeden hiç kilise görmüş müydünüz?*

H: *Yok canım.*

C: *İstanbul'a gelince gittiniz mi?*

H: *Tabi ki şuanda da gidiyorum. Kilise de Allah'ın evi cami de Allah'ın evi.*

C: *Camiye de gidiyor musunuz?*

H: *Gerektiği zaman gidiyorum.*

C: *Namaz kalmayı biliyor musunuz o zaman?*

H: *Bildiklerimizi yapıyoruz.*

¹¹¹ *Açıkçası bizim gibi camiye de gitmezler ama yine bize 'Ermeni' derler.*

to religion. It is paradoxical, therefore, that while Firat does not deny that he is Armenian but he thinks that going to mosque is not compatible with being an Armenian.

In conclusion, referring to their parents and grandparents, Armenians perceive conversion to Islam as an inevitable survival strategy. To them, their parents and grandparents were actually pretending, when they practiced Islam. My interviewees do not consider the possibility that some might have really believed in Islam and that is why they did not want to reconvert to Christianity. But this discourse of “pretending” is used to prove that Armenians did not betray their religion and identity. And yet in spite of conversion and practicing Islam, Armenians were still marked as “Gavur”, not being able to belong either to the Muslim community or to the Armenian community. It is also significant that while those who grew up in a Christian family see Islam and Christianity as a binary opposition, those whose families did not reconvert to Christianity seem to be in-between, practicing both religions.

Marriage

Marriage is another survival tactic for Armenians. The decisions and stories of marriage are told in a way which either emphasizes a sacrifice or price for freedom. Only some of those who married in Istanbul stated that they married someone they wanted. For the rest, marriage is a way to protect their lives or the Armenian identity.

While men and women tell their marriage stories in different ways, there is also another division between marriage stories in Anatolia and Istanbul.

I

Both women and men who married in Anatolia said that their parents decided for them to whom they should marry. Men do not give their marriage stories in a detailed way. They just tell when they married and which networks (majorly family relations) enabled them to marry. Contrary to women, they do not say anything whether they wanted to accept their families' decisions or not. While women's stories are loaded with emotions, men's stories like Komitas's, do not have any reference to their emotions:

We married in the village. My wife and I were small. From different villages. We did not meet before. It was ok when both the father and the mother wanted. Were pleased about the marriage. I was 14 years old. We lived in my village. ¹¹²

When I asked how he met his wife and married, Hovannes started to talk about how he could not marry his Turkish girlfriend. Like other male informants, Hovannes summarizes his marriage with one or two sentences but he talked more about why his Turkish girlfriend left him and married his Turkish classmate.

Can: How did you meet your wife?

Hovannes: It was not a love marriage. We met and liked each other and married etc. When I was a university student I loved a Turkish girl. We were serious. I took the risk of burning the bridges but she did not... ¹¹³

Murad was born in Konya and married an Armenian girl after 4 years of flirting in Istanbul. He still thinks that his marriage was a strategy that he had to realize with "minority responsibility". It is such a responsibility that made him to

¹¹² Köyde evlendik. Eşim ve ben küçüktük. Farklı köyden. Tanışmıyorduk. Baba anne razı olunca tamam. Aşağı yukarı 14 yaşında falandım. Kendi köyümde yaşadık.

¹¹³ Can: Eşinizle nasıl tanıştınız?

Hovannes: Eşimle aşk evliliği olmadı. Tanıştık birbirimizden hoşlandık evlendik falan. Üniversite zamanında sevdiğim bir Türk kız vardı. Ciddiydik. Gemileri yakmayı göze almıştım ben ama o alamadı.

sacrifice his own preferences and marry an Armenian to preserve Armenian identity. He also emphasizes that the scarcity of potential Armenian spouse triggers people to marry when they meet an Armenian:

I married when I was 28 years old. Very young. The most important reason was the fear of not finding someone with the same identity. Let me explain it. It is a funny story. There are 60 thousand Armenian in Turkey. We estimate it. There is no official record. Nobody knows it except the state. 35 thousand of this number is over 50 years old. The rest is 25 thousand. The 15 thousand of it is assimilated; they do not have Armenian identity. The rest is 10 thousand. 5 thousand is female, 5 thousand is male. How many girls can you meet from these 5000 girls? As a result, you want to marry someone from these families whenever you meet them. This is why divorce is very common among Armenians. Because there is a minority responsibility. It is a psychological depression.¹¹⁴

Contrary to other male narrators, Rupen is still single and he was the only male informant who talked about his relations. He was born in Batman but grew up in Istanbul. What is interesting in his narrative to see that like women who married Armenians regret for their marriages but could not see another option to protect Armenian identity, Rupen regrets that he left his Turkish girlfriend due to his parents' disapproval:

I fell in love with an Alevite Turkish girl when I was 23 or 24 years old. It was the biggest mistake that I have ever made. If I had married, I would have children now. But if I had married her, my father would have died. I never told them about my relationship but they are against mixed marriages. Sometimes I am making fun of my mother and tell her that I am going to marry a Muslim girl. She says "I would prefer to burn the house. Such a girl cannot enter this house when I am alive". I

¹¹⁴ 28 yaşında evlendim. Erken evlendim. En büyük sebebi kendi kimliğimden birinin çekincesi de vardı. Şöyle anlatıyorum. Bu komik bir hikaye. Ermeniler Türkiye'de 60 bin kişi. Tahmin ettiğimiz. Resmî belgesi yok. Devlet dışında bunu bile yok. Bunun ihtiyar kısmı tahminen 35 bin. 50 yaş üstü. Kalan 25 bin kişi. Bunun 15 bini asimile olmuş, Ermeni kimliğinden kopmuş. Kalıyor 10 bin kişi. 5 bin kız 5 erkek ise. Bu 5 bin kızdan kaç tanesini tanıyacaksın kaç tanesi sana denk gelecek kaç tanesi ile evleneceksin. Dolayısıyla böyle bir aileden de bir his duyunca biraz daha sana uyabilecek kişiye sahiplenip evlenmek istiyorsun. Bu yüzden de Ermeniler arasında boşanma çok fazla. Çünkü azımlık sorumluluğu var. Psikolojik bir depresiflik.

also doubt about mixed marriages because it leads us to extinguish. Even if I don't believe, there is Easter etc.¹¹⁵

Independent of class and local identity, male informants told their marriages in two or three sentences. However, those who grew up in Istanbul had longer stories about their relationships with Turkish women. They emphasized that either they or their girlfriends decided to break up due to the ethnicity. The love is only told within impossible love context. The marriages have no story, it is told like a duty done when they were young.

II

On the other hand, for all women who married before migrating to Istanbul, their marriages were wrong. They all regret for their marriages but also emphasize that it was a necessity within the given conditions.

Abduction of Armenian girls has been a widespread practice. The narrators give references to the single women who had to marry a Muslim and convert to Islam in order to save their lives during the 1915. Thus, marriage with Armenians is a tactic to prevent abduction and conversion. Both women and men told many stories about their relatives who had been abducted and had to get married Muslims. Thus, women say that their elders (mostly fathers) forced them to marry when they were very young or children. The most important reason was to prevent Muslim guys to abduct Armenian girls. They are not happy with their marriages but they also emphasize that they did not have another options since

¹¹⁵ *Ben de Alevi bir Türk kızına âşık olmuştum 23 24 yaşında. Hayatımın en büyük hatasıydı. Yani evlensem çocuğum olurdu. Ama ben evlensem babam kesin nakavt olurdu. Ben hiç söylemedim ama bizimkiler çok karşılar karma evliliklere. Anneme bazen şakayla karışık diyorum bir türk getireceğim diye. Onunla evleneceğim diyorum. Evi yakar yıkarım perde bile vermem. Ben yaşadığım müddetçe bu eve öyle bir kız giremez” Ben de çekiniyorum ama karma evliliklerden çünkü bizim de sonumuzu getiriyor. Ne kadar inanmasan da paskalya vs var.*

they could not marry a Muslim. For instance, Hayganuş married when she was 10 and she says that if she did not, they would have abducted her.

We survived through marriage. I mean during my time. When I was a girl. If my father did not give me to my husband, the agha's son would kidnap me. But my husband is a relative of the agha. Agha was also Armenian. I meant, agha's mother was my husband's aunt (Armenian convert). Agha's father said to my husband's aunt "If you don't marry me I will kill all your family". Then he forcefully married my husband's aunt. We had our land there. We know that it belonged to the Armenians. They confiscated our land. They are called "agha". Agha has a lot of lands. You can't deal with him. Agha sees that the girl grows up. He does not want to find another girl. His son also wants that girl unconsciously. What can you do? He is the agha. They also gave my aunt to someone. My father was always crying. They gave my aunt to someone who was an untidy guy. His hands were dirty. My aunt married him and went to Mus. My father did not want her to marry that guy. But the agha said that he saw her and he will make her marry his relative. As he wants to marry her, you can not say anything.¹¹⁶

In this excerpt, Hayganuş explains that both her and his husband's aunts had to marry Muslims because of agha's pressure and threats. Thus, she understands that her father was right to make her marry when she was 10 years old. She says they were always hiding from Muslims to protect themselves. She openly says

¹¹⁶ *Bizim kurtuluşumuz böyle oldu. Yani benim zamanımda. Diyelim benim kızlık zamanında. O zaman diyelim babam beni buna vermeseydi ağanın oğlu götürürdü. Ama bu da ağanın akrabası oluyor. Ermenidir. Yani ağanın annesi bunun halası gibi oluyor. Babasının halası oluyor. Orada demişler hani, o ağanın babası bunun halasına demiş. "Sen beni almazsan bütün aileni hepsini keserim." Mecburen bunun babasının halasını öyle götürdü. Yani toprağımız. Tamam Ermenilerindi biliyoruz. Bunlar yani oraya giden zapt etmiş kendine. Bu sefer ona ağa denilir. Ağanın toprağı çoktur. Baş çıkamıyor. Ağa şimdi bakıyor. Kız büyüdü. Başka birisinden hani kız alıncaya kadar. Oğlu da bilmiyor diyor bu kızı ben istiyorum. Ne yapacaksın sen? Tabi ağadır. Aslında benim halamı birisine vermiştiler. Babam hep ağlıyordu. Bir de gelmiş hani elbise var ama böyle kirli pasaklı, yüzünü yıkamasını bilmiyor. Elleri böyle çatlamış kirden şeyden. Halam da böyle geçiyor. Muş'a götürmüşler. Babam da demiş bu benim kız kardeşimdir. Babam da kız kardeşine böyle yapmış yani "git seni görmesinler" diye. O da demiş "yok sen boşuna şey etme ben bunu gördüm ben alıyorum". Ağa "tamam" demiş "madem bu istiyor sen bir şey demiyorsun.*

that she had never been happy with her husband, then she says that she understands her father because there was no other alternative. Different from her father, Hayganuş did not let her daughters marry in Batman. When her two daughters grew up, agha decided to make them marry his relatives. Hayganuş, cuts her daughters' hair like boys and sent them to Istanbul secretly. Thus, either marriage with an Armenian or migration is the only solution for Armenian girls.

Siranuş's story is similar to Hayganuş's. She did not want to tell about her childhood in Sason and started her narrative with her migration to Istanbul. However, she said that if she did not come to Istanbul she would be abducted when she was 12 years old. Her father sent her alone to Istanbul then the whole family came to Istanbul. She married an Armenian when she was very young but she said that it was better to stay in Sason and marry a Muslim.

Satenik also had to marry an Armenian when she was 17. She states that their experiences of adolescence were different from those who are "normal". Their options are limited and their road is closed from the beginning. She also adds that wrong marriages demonstrate another aspect of genocide:

We were taught that "never look at a Turk". You cannot fall in love. This was taught us when we were young girls. We cannot fall in love with our peers. Our roads are closed from the beginning. We cannot do anything like this. We do not have options. Therefore, we have to marry someone like us. My sister fell in love with a Turk. She asked my mother what she would think if she marries a Turk. "What would you think if I fall in love with a foreigner?" My mother said "I cut you into slices but do not allow you to marry a Turk. I was very little, 12 or 13 years old. I thought the same is valid for me too. I could not think something like this. Our ways were closed from the beginning. You will never fall in love with a Turk. You cannot marry a Turk. Don't even think about it. Then my sister married an Assyrian man and went to Izmir. Assyrians are Christian. Then I married when I was 17. He was my relative. I went to Adiyaman and gave birth there. We were not given the chance to decide. We all made wrong marriages. We married wrong guys since we had to marry our

people. Wrong marriages. Why? Because we should not marry foreigners. My sister got divorced two years ago. After 25 years. They could not match. It was wrong from the beginning. I married an ill man. They even did not ask my opinion. He was 22 years older than me. Why? Because he was Armenian. He was from our people. We could not decide our marriages. You cannot decide. This is another aspect of genocide. Why? Because he is your relative. There is not another guy, you cannot decide. My husband was ill. He had brain tumor. They all knew it but still forced me to marry him. He was older than me and ill. He suffered attacks and fainted. They even did not tell it to me. I saw his doctor reports after 3 months in Germany. I was shocked. They threw me into fire. When I was 17. My own family did it because we could not choose. To prevent Turks to abduct me. To protect me, they made me marry. Then I had a baby and my husband died after 4 years. We were in Germany. They knew. They did not tell it to me. It was the biggest mistake that I have ever made in my life. I did not marry again. It has been 20 years since my husband died and I did not marry again.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ *Bize şey öğretildi. Asla bir Türk'e bakmayacaksın. Aşık olma gibi bir durumunuz olamaz sizin. Bu bizim beynimize kazılır genç kızken. Normal insanlar gibi kendi yaşlılarına aşık olma durumu yok. Baştan kapantıyor bizim yolumuz. Biz asla öyle bir şey yapamayız. Zaten seçeneğimiz de yok. Onun için bizden birileriyle evlenmemiz gerekiyor. Ablam bir Türk'e aşık olmuştu. İşte annemin ağzını yokluyor. Böyle bir şey olsa ne düşünürsün. Yabancı biriyle olsa ne düşünürsün? Annem dedi ki ben seni dilim dilim doğrarım yine vermem dedi seni bir Türke. Şimdi ben de küçüğüm yeni yetişiyorum 12 13 yaşlarında. Şimdi onlara olan şey. Demek ki benim için de aynısı geçerli. Ben hiç öyle bir şeye cesaret edemezdim. Baştan bizim yolumuz kapantıyordu. Asla bir Türk'e aşık olmayacaksın. Böyle bir evlilik olamaz. Öyle bir şey düşünmeyin bile. Aklınızdan geçirmeyin. Sonra tabi ablam da evlendi. İzmire gitti. Süryani biriyle. Süryani Hıristiyan. Kökeninde var birşeyler. Sonra ben evlendim 17 yaşında. Kendi akrabamızla. Uzaktan bir akrabamız. Adıyaman'a gelin gittim. Sonra çocuk doğurdum. Bize seçme şansı verilmedi. Hepimiz yanlış evlilikler yaptık. Aman bizden olsun. Bizim insanımız olsun diye olmayacak kişilerle evlendik. Yanlış evlilikler yaptık. Nedir aman yabancıya gitmesin bizimki olsun. Bizimki olsun da benim bir büyük ablam iki üç yıl önce boşandı 25 yıllık evlilikten sonra geçinemedi geçinemedi başından beri yanlıştı. Beni hasta bir adama verdiler. Bana sormadılar bile. Benden 22 yaş büyük bir adama verdiler. Nedir Ermenidir. Bizim insanımızdır. İnsanın bu şekilde hayatı da kararabiliyor. Çünkü seçme şansımız yok. Bu da soykırımın başka bir boyutudur. Nedir senin akrabandır. Başka insan yok seçme şansın yol senin. Beyin tümörü vardı. Ve beni bile bile onunla evlendirdiler. bile bile. bana söylemediler. Yaşının Büyük olmasının dışında rahatsız bu adam. Ve nöbet geçiriyordu. Bayılıyordu pat pat. Bana söylemediler bile. Ben evlendikten 3 ay sonra Almanca'da Türkçe'ye çevrilmiş doktor raporlarını gördüm. Benim başımdan aşağı kaynar sular döküldü. Beni bile bile ateşe attılar. 17 yaşında. Benim ailem yaptı ve seçme şansımız olmadığı için bunu yaptılar. Bir Türk beni kaçırmamasın diye yaptılar. Bir Türk beni almasın diye. Aman bizim kızı kimse kaçırmamasın başına bir şey gelmesin. Evlendirdiler beni. Sonra çocuğum oldu sonra 4 yıl sonra pat diye öldü. Almanya'daydım. Ve biliyorlar. Bana söylemediler. Hayatım en büyük hatasını yaptım bu evlilikle. Bir daha da evlenmedim. Eşim öleli 20 yıl oldu bir daha evlenmedim.*

III

Satenik accepts that her marriage was a mistake but she also states that it was necessary. What is more interesting is that all those who regret from their marriages do not want their children to marry Turks.

Can: Would you permit your son to marry a Muslim girl?
Satenik: Never! I taught him when he was a child and he never does it. Never. Like my family, I taught him. "Never look at a Muslim girl, never fall in love with a Muslim girl. Never think such a marriage". Because we cannot. Because we do not have a future with a Muslim. Because we do not share anything with them. Neither our perspectives nor our beliefs or cultures. We have nothing similar. We cannot. It is not about grudge. It is about values and culture. There are many conflicts. We have many mixed marriages nowadays. It is over 50 percent of all marriages. None of them is happy. They are all failure. Because there will be children and it is difficult to decide to which side they will belong. There is no shared culture. I do not have an end. It is impossible.¹¹⁸

Like Satenik, other male and female informants also emphasized that they do not want their children to marry Muslims though they could understand marriages with someone from other Christian communities such as Greeks or Assyrians.

Tarık grew up into a convert family but he reconverted to Christianity when he was 30 years old and married an Armenian girl. I asked him whether

¹¹⁸ Can: Fırat Müslüman biriyle beraber olsa?

Satenik: Asla. Zaten küçüklüğünden beri ona beyninine yerleştirdim asla öyle bir şey yapmaz. Asla. Çünkü nasıl ki benim ailem benim beynime yerleştirdi. Asla birine bakmayacaksın asla öyle birine aşık olmayacaksın evliliği zaten hiç düşünme. Çünkü biz yapamıyoruz. Çünkü bizim bir geleceğimiz yok bir Müslümanla. Çünkü bizim hiçbir şeyimiz uymuyor. Hiçbir şeyimiz. Ne yaşama bakışımız ne inancımız ne kültürümüz. Hiçbir şeyimiz aynı değil. Hiçbir şekilde uyşamayız bu halkla. Kinden dolayı değil. Bizim yaşama bakışımız aynı değil. Değerlerimiz kültürümüz hiçbir şeyimiz aynı değil. Bir sürü çatışmalar var. Yapan yok mu var. Günümüzde çok var. Yüzde elliye geçti neredeyse Türklerle evlilikte. Hiçbiri de mutlu değil. Hepsi hüsrarla sonuçlanıyor. Çünkü ileride çocuk olacak hangi tarafı öğrenecek. diyorlar ki klasik çocuk büyüsün hangi tarafı tercih ederse. Ortak bir kültür yok. Sonu yok yani. İmkansız bir şey".

he would permit his daughters to marry Muslims or not. He replied: “We are a handful of people. 60 or 70 thousand. We have to marry each other to protect our culture. Mixed marriages annihilate our culture. It annihilates you. Even if that person is the best one it is not possible to continue. It is because two cultures cannot live together. It is not possible”. Elbis also underlines that their opposition to mixed marriage is to protect Armenian identity and to survive:

This society did everything to survive. Not to get lost not to extinguish. This is why we do not give girls to outside. I do not approve mixed marriages. Love ends one day.¹¹⁹

It should be noted that not only those whose marriage was arranged by parents but also the ones who did love marriage (again with Armenians) emphasize the relationship between marriage and protecting their identity.

In short, since mixed marriages (together with conversion) in the past led to the unraveling of Armenian community, marrying Armenians has been seen as way through which they could protect their community and identity. However, since marriage is a very personal issue involving emotions and since many marriages of this kind have failed, my interviewees told me quite contradictory accounts, as seen above, going back and forth between regret and responsibility.

Migration

According to Machado, narrators “equates migration from village to town as a story of progress, success and modernity” and it “highlights the cleverness and

¹¹⁹ *Erimemek için elinden geleni yaptı bu toplum. Kaybolmamak, yok olmamak için. Dışarıya kız verilmemesinin sebebi bu. Benim de hiç onaylamadığım bir şey. Aşk bir gün biter.*

singularity of the actor”.¹²⁰ On the other hand, in my interviews, migration was told as a part of a struggle that the narrators were born into. Rather than being a story of progress and modernity, it is narrated as another survival tactic in Anatolia. While the last destination is Istanbul for all, other cities where Armenians live are also visited before coming to Istanbul such as Iskenderun, Malatya, Izmit or Beirut.

Migration is a survival tactic. Some tell it as a way of escape, some tell it as part of a struggle. It is the last option if they reject to convert and marry Muslims. While for all narrators it is a way to survive, they give different reasons for migration. Conversion or marriage with Muslims can prevent pressures. If they resist to conversion and marry Armenians, they are exposed to different pressures which are shaped in different cities in different ways. Economic pressure, threat of abduction, social exclusion or death threat are the main reasons for migration

I

Narrators who were born in eastern Anatolia point aghalık system as the main reason for their migration. “System of Aghalık” is represented as both an economic system which exploits Armenian labor and social system in which Armenians are exposed to discrimination and intervention of others in their marriages or religious practices. Garabet, Siranuş and Komitas are both from Batman and they both point “agha” to explain the reasons of their migration. However, they give different reasons for their migration. For Garabet, economic exploitation was the main reason of their migration. Siranuş escaped

¹²⁰ Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson (eds). *Narrative and Genre*. (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 12.

from abduction but she did not want to talk about it. She explained their migration as a strategy to protect Armenian identity and culture. Komitas had to migrate to Istanbul because of fear of abduction of his daughter.

Can: Why did you migrate?

Garabet: We had to obey my father because we were children and he decided for us. I remember that I was thinking that my father was right. There is a tradition. System of aghalık. The house was ours, land was ours. My mother, my uncle, children were cultivating, producing but someone was coming and saying “I am your agha. You will give me half of your products”. They were giving for years. You do not have any right here. The land is not yours. You are coming from a village that is 3 hours away. How? “I am your agha, I am protecting you” But I did not have an enemy. You will give. With force. If you do not give, he takes by force. Poor guy revolted against this at the end, I remember it very well. He just took his jacket and money, without taking anything else. Without taking a blanket. We walked to the center of Sason. There was a relative there, we stayed there. The next day we were going to go to Istanbul by Kurtalan Express. We heard that there were other Armenians migrating to Istanbul. We heard that the church helped those people. At least, they stayed in church and they found jobs for them. When we heard it we decided to go but this agha blocked our way with his horses and men. He was Kurdish. He asked ‘Where are you going to?’ I can never forget it because it cannot be forgotten as he used violence. My father said that we were going to Istanbul. He said that I am going to Istanbul for my children’s future. He did not say that we are fed up. The agha said ‘You cannot go’. They discussed and we were scared because they had guns. ‘Agha’ was a terrible word. My father said even if you kill me I’ll go. Then the agha said you can fuck off and go. They spoke in Arabic, I understood. He was Kurdish but spoke Arabic. The agha said you can go but we will take your wife and children. My sister Anuş was 1 year old. My father said I will not give my children but you can ask to my wife if she wants to stay with you. If she wants to stay I cannot do anything. He asked her. She said ‘You are my husband, I will come wherever you go’. Then they understood that my father was serious and that these threats will not work. Then they stopped and we came. ¹²¹

¹²¹ Can: Neden göç ettiniz?

Garabet: Babama uymak zorundaydık çünkü çocuktuk kararları veren o. Babam da hem benim açımdan hatırlıyorum hem kendi açısından 100de 100 haklı. Orada bir gelenek var. Ağalık sistemi. Ev bizim tarla bizim annem çocuklar amcam ekiyorlar biçiyorlar ürün elde ediyorlar ama sonra birileri geliyor ben senin ağanı diyorum. Elindeki ürünlerin yarısını bana vereceksin diyor. İşte 1 sene ver 2 sene ver ama yıllardır veriliyormuş. Kardeşim senin hiçbir emeğin yok burada. Tarla senin değil. Sen 3 saatlik köyden gelip hak talep ediyorsun neye istinaden. Ben senin ağanı, seni koruyorum. Ya benim düşmanım yok ki. E vereceksin. Zorla, vermezsen zorla alıyor. Adamcağız buna isyan etti eni sonunda ben bunu çok net hatırlıyorum. Ceketini parasını alıp, başka bir şey almadan, yorgan falan almadan. Sason merkezine yürüyerek

Siranuş: It is not about economy, if we stayed there we would not be Armenian now. Armenians' migration was not economic. It was necessity to maintain our religion and culture. It was obligatory, not arbitrary. We did not come to Istanbul because it was paved with gold. We were forced to migrate. Even if you go to gendarmerie and it comes to help, it cannot wait next to you 24 hours. When they go, you stay alone again with the agha.¹²²

Komitas: I had a daughter who was 12 years old. Many things happened, nobody stayed there. The agha pursued her. They were either going to kill me or... Thanks God we came to Istanbul.¹²³

In conclusion, while the agha's pressure is the main reason, narrators have different stories about agha's pressure to tell: economic exploitation, struggle

geliyoruz. Merkezinde tanıdık birisi var orada kalacağız ertesi gün Kurtalana exprese gideceğiz ve İstanbul'a geleceğiz. Sağdan soldan duyuluyor da İstanbul'a göç eden başka Ermeniler var. Kilisede sahip çıkılıyor onlara diye. kilise sahip çıkıyor. En azından birkaç gün kilise misafir ediyorlar iş buluyorlar diye. öyle duyunca babam biz de birkaç km kala öyle hatırlıyorum çok az yürüdük çünkü bu ağa önümüzü çeviriyor atlarla beraber. 3 4 5 kişi. Kürt. Diyor ki nereye gidiyorsun diyor. Bunları hiç unutmam hafızamdan silinmeyecek şeyler çünkü şiddet de kullanılıyor orada. Diyor ki babam ben İstanbul'a gidiyorum. Neden gidiyorsun? Ben çocuklarımın geleceği için gidiyorum diyor sizden bıktım falan demiyor adam. Sen gidemezsin diyor. Giderim gidemezsin. Ufak bir sürtüşme oluyor biz de korkuyoruz tabi adamlarda silah var atlarla gelmiş. Ağa böyle korkutucu bir kelime. Babam gidemezsin giderim diyor. Beni öldürmeniz lazım çeviremezsiniz beni buradan. O zaman sen diyor siktir git nereye gidersen git diyor ama Arapça konuşuyorlar ama ben anlıyorum. Ağalar Kürt ama Arapça da konuşuluyor. Ben diyor karına da bir de kızkardeşim var bu annemden doğan. İsmi de Anuş. Ben 10 yaşındayım o da benim omzumda. Annem babam başka şeyler taşıyor. O da 1 yaşında ya var ya yok. Çocuklarına ve karına el koyuyoruz sen nereye gidersen git diyor adam. Ben çocuklarımı bırakmam, öldürmeniz lazım diyor. Ama karıma soracağım diyor. Kalmak istiyorsa bir şey yapamam diyor. Ama kalmak istemezseniz bizi öldürmeniz lazım diyor. Ona soruyor. Sen benim kocamsın sen nereye gitmek istersen seninle beraber gelirim diyor. Onlar da işin ciddiyetini anlıyorlar bu tehditlerin işe yaramayacağını anlıyorlar. Sonra duruyorlar ve biz geliyoruz.

¹²² Siranuş: Ekonomik sebeplerle değil göç sebebi biz orada kalsaydık şuan hiçbirimiz Ermeni değildik. Ermenilerin göçü ekonomik değil. Ermeniliğimizi kendi dinimizi kültürümüzü sürdürebilmemiz için bu şarttı. Mecburi göç. Keyfi değil, daha rahat İstanbul'un taşı toprağı altın deyip gelmedik. Göçe zorlanıldık. Gidip şikayet etsen jandarma gelir ama 24 saat başında bekleyemez. O gider baş başa kalırsın yine ağayla.

¹²³ Komitas: On iki yaşında düşmüşler peşine. Olaylar geldi başıma şimdiye kadar bir kişi kalmadı bu kadar köy oraya. Ağa düştü peşine. Beni ya öldüreceklerdi ya da şimdi diyorum yarabbi şükür gelmeseydik...

to maintain Armenian or abduction of girls. Migration is told as way to survive and escape from aghas' pressure.

II

The rest who are from Kayseri, Iskenderun, Amasya, Balıkesir or Konya demonstrate also show economic pressure and abduction of girls as the reason of their migration. However, contrary to previous stories, they think the whole society is responsible for this pressure.

Diran was born in Kayseri. He mainly argues that the economic pressure on Armenians led them to migrate to Istanbul but he also points the Islamization through marriage.

Diran: My father was the last one. He migrated in 1986. We were the only family in Kayseri. The 80 percent of Armenians migrated between 1950 and 1970.

Can: Why?

Diran: You are a craftsman like a millinery or shoemaker. And they loved Armenians a lot. They said "We cannot be deceived. Armenians sell goods of high quality" and they were coming to your shop. The next neighbor also was selling shoes. Then they started to block their ways: "Why do you go to *gavurs*' shop?" this is the first reason. If I cannot continue my trade. There is no other job. He cannot be officer. Should he be a thief? Because of this pressure. Another reason is that Christian girls have to marry Muslims in Anatolia. This is another way of Islamization. This does not influence men but girls have to convert and change their names after marriage. And it is not possible for a Christian man to marry a Muslim girl. They kill you. What can they do? They will go to Istanbul where more Armenians live... The pressure that some people face in business or the fear of abduction of their daughters and the molestation of people are the main reasons of migration. ¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Diran: En son babam 1986'da göç etti. Tek aile kalmıştı. 1950 ila 1970 arasında yüzde 80i Kayseri'den göç etti.

Can: Neden?

Diran: bir yavaş yavaş esnaf içerisinde yer açıyorsun tuhafiyeye ayakkabıcı vs. ve Ermenileri de çok severlerdi. "Yani biz aldanmayız. Ermeniler çok düzgün mal satar" zihniyetiyle size gelirleri. Yan komşusu da aynı tuhafiyeyse tuhafiyeye ayakkabıysa ayakkabı satıyor. Başlamışlar yol kesmeye "gavurun dükkanına neden gidiyorsunuz?" diye. Birinci sebep bu. Ben ticari yaşamımı sürdüremiyorsam. Başka bir iş yok. Memur olamıyor. Hırsızlık mı

Hranuş is also from Kayseri but her father decided to migrate to Beirut rather than to Istanbul since he witnessed 6 – 7 September when he visited Istanbul. However, she says that the pressure on Armenians who went to Beirut after living in Turkey was much more than the pressure in Anatolia. She emphasizes that those who migrated to Beirut from Turkey were excluded from the Armenian community in Beirut and that they were labelled as “Turkish seed”. Thus her father preferred to migrate to Istanbul since being “gavur” is better than being “Turkish seed”:

After witnessing 6 – 7 September in Istanbul, my father decided to leave Kayseri. We had an uncle in Beirut. We went there. I don't remember well. We went by train. There we suffered a lot too. We went there from here. We had Turkish passport and we were accepted as Turks. We had economic difficulties. There was no job. They did not employ us because we were Turks. We were hungry. We received assistance from the church. My mother felt insulted. Somehow we started shoe-making. Somebody recommended to my brothers that they should sell cake near cinemas. My brothers did not speak Armenian. When they spoke Turkish, they beat them asking if they were Turks. They beat my brothers, toppled cakes and took their money. “You are Turkish seed”. They came home and cried. We are *gavur* when we are here. They always excluded us by calling Turkish seeds . We stayed there seven or eight years and they never accepted us. When my brothers were young there were associations. Hınçak and Taşnak Parties. They accepted my brother to one of these parties. They gave a gun to my oldest brother. They provoked him against my father. “Your father is in favor of Russia, He is from Hayastan. He is not sane. Kill your family”. Because my father was Turkish seed. He did not speak Armenian. We are *gavur* here and Turkish seed there. We had difficulties in both places. My father took us there to have better live. To give a better life to his children. They did not leave us in peace there. I went to

yapsın? Köyden göç etmiş. Köyde sorun yok tarla kendisinin ona müdahale edemezsiniz. Yapılacak tek şey tarlamızı ekininizi mahveder ama şehirde iş yeri açmak gerek ve iş yerleri yan yana. O baskıdan dolayı. Bir de gençlerin daha çok bahsetmedim. Türkiye’de Hristiyan kızları Müslümanlara gitmeye mecburdur. Öyle bir Müslümanlaştırma var. Erkek çocuğunu bir şekilde etkilemiyor ama evlendiği zaman kız çocuğunun hem ismi değişecek hem Müslümanlaşacak. Ve bir Hristiyan erkekle Müslüman kızın evlenmesi mümkün değil. Vurular yok ederler. Ne yapacak? Ermenilerin daha çok yaşadığı İstanbul’a gidecek... Bazı insanların iş hayatında gördüğü baskılar ya da kızının kaçırılmasından korkması bir de topluca taciz etmeleri göç sebepleri.

primary school. I went to Protestant School. The rest did not accept me since I was Turkish seed...They were peevish because we stayed here.¹²⁵

As Hranuş's narrative, whole stories about migration emphasized that Istanbul was the ultimate destination to come and live in peace. The existence of an Armenian community, Armenian schools and church are the main reasons for their choice.

III

Migration is also told as a necessary step to maintain Armenian identity. Its alternative is either conversion or marriage with Muslims, thus independent of various reasons, its main motivation is to survive as Armenians. It is emphasized that those who did not migrate to Istanbul had to convert to Islam. Siranuş says: "If some Armenians still can live there it is because they are Muslim now".

What is more interesting is that depending on region some narrators tell Armenians' migration to Istanbul in a wider context which relates migration to the important historical events. Hranuş says that her father witnessed 6 – 7 September in 1955 in Istanbul and decided to go Beirut from Kayseri after this event. Those who were born in Adıyaman, Cyprus events in 1964 is the main

¹²⁵ *Onun için burayı görünce Kayseri'den gidelim demiş. Beyrutta amcamız var. Biz onun yanına gittik. Tam hatırlamıyorum. Trenle gittik. Orada da kötülük gördük. Buradan gittik. Türk pasaportu var Türk diye geçiyoruz. Zaten geçinemiyoruz. İş yok. Türk olduğumuz için iş vermiyorlar. Aç kaldık. Kiliseden yardım alıyorduk. Anımın zoruna gidiyordu neden ben kiliseden yardım alıyorum diye. İyi kötü kaçak kundura işi yapmaya başladık. Birileri önerdi. Pasta falan satın alın çocuklar satsın sinema köşelerinde. Ermenice bilmiyorum abilerim. Türkçe konuşunca vay siz Türk müsünüz diye pastaları devirip çocukları dövüyorlar ellerindeki paraları da alıyordular. Bunlar eve geliyor ağlaya ağlaya. Vay siz Türk tohumunuz diye. Burada olsak gavuruz. Türk tohumu türk tohumu diye hep dışladılar. Yedi sekiz sene kaldık orada hiç aralarına almadılar. Hatta abilerim delikanlıyken dernekler vardı. Hınçak taşnak dernekleri. Bu partilerin bir tanesine onları çektiler. En büyük abimin tabanca verdiler eline. Babama karşı kıskırttılar. Baban şöyle baban böyle baban Rusya'yı tutuyor. Baban Hayastanlı diye. Akli başında değil diye. Tüm aileni öldür diye. Çünkü babam Türk tohumu. Ermenice bilmiyor. Burada gavur orada Türk tohumuyuz. İki yerde de zor durumumuz. Babam kaçırıldı bizi ki orada rahat edelim. Orada çocuklar rahat etsinler diye. Orada Türk diye yaşatmadılar bizi. İlkokula gittim. Protestan okuluna gittim. Diğer okullar Türk tohumu diye kabul etmediler beni. Protestan okulu kabul etti... Biz burada kaldığımız için hınçlılardı.*

reason of migration to Istanbul from Adıyaman. Tarık argues that the migration from Adıyaman started after the Cyprus events in 1964. Nazaret is also from Adıyaman and he also gives 1964 Cyprus events as the main reason of migration from Adıyaman.

Nazaret: The main migration from Adıyaman occurred in 1964. Cyprus events. Is there any relation between a man from Adıyaman and Greeks? *Gavur Makarios*. One day Adıyaman people went to see a movie. A movie. Then they went out of the cinema. There was a small scene where Makarios harmed Turks. They went to Armenian neighborhood after the movie. They beat whoever they found and damaged properties. They beat and damaged. The governorate took measures and prevented death but many were hurt. They came to the neighborhood with sticks etc in midnight and damaged and beat whatever they found. After that day, the remaining Armenians went wherever they had relatives. For instance, someone's uncle went to America in 1915, he wrote him and said 'I'm in this situation and have no life security. Can you find me a job if I come there?' ¹²⁶

All in all, migration is told as a necessary strategy to survive. It is either to escape from threats to one's life or threat of abduction or to escape from economic pressure but it is emphasized that migration to Istanbul became necessary in order to protect the Armenian identity.

¹²⁶ Nazaret: Asıl Adıyaman'dan dağılma 64tedir. Kıbrıs meselesinde. Hiç Adıyamanlının Rumla ne ilgisi var? *Gavur Makarios*. Bir gün sıradan bir Türk filmi izlemeye gidiyor Adıyaman halkı. Sinema filmi. İsmi cismi bilmiyorum biz orada değildik o zaman. Sinemadan çıkıyor Makarios Türklere kötülük ediyor diye ufak bir parça varmış. Sinemadan çıkıp hurra Ermeni mahallesine. Vuruyorlar kırıyorlar. Valilik zorla önlem mönlem ölüm mölüm olmuyor ama çok can yaniyor. Sopalarla mopalarla gecenin bir vakti giriyorlar mahalleye bulduklarını dövüyorlar kırıyorlar. O günden sonra son kalanlar da asıl kim nerede ne ilişkisi varsa adamın 15te gitmiş amcazadesi Amerikaya ona yazıyor. Diyor ben böyle böyle durumdayım can güvenliğim artık kalmadı. Ben gelsem bana iş bulur musun yer bulur musun şeklinde.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the narratives that I collected based on three recurring themes in all stories: marriage, immigration and conversion. Their stories are contextualized in an environment where they witness abduction, confiscation and violence regularly as ‘continuation of 1915’. Therefore, those themes are narrated as survival tactics that narrators used in order to protect both their lives but also their Armenian identity.

CHAPTER V
PERIODIZATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Jan Assman asserts that “cultural memory is characterized by its distance from the everyday” and it has its “fixed points”. “These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance).”¹²⁷ Despite the lack of such an institutional cultural formation, the narratives I collected demonstrate that Armenians in Turkey have a cultural memory which is composed of different fateful events of the past. As I tried to demonstrate above, interviewees narrate their lives as a part of general history of Armenian society and their experiences of marriage, conversion and migration are not separated from their elders’ experiences in 1915.

Moreover, the narratives show that the crucial events that occurred in the recent history of the Republic of Turkey also influenced Armenians’ lives deeply. Different periods of their lives represent different political and economic periods of Turkey. The most important theme that recurs in all stories is confiscation. The 1915 and its afterwards in Turkey is periodized mainly according to confiscation of Armenian properties.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, 129.

History of the Turkish Republic as History of Confiscation

Üngör and Polatel argue that the Young Turks “launched a societal and economic transformation in order to establish a Turkish nation state with a robust economy consisting of ethnic Turks.”¹²⁸ The ethnic homogenization of the Ottoman economy was mainly based on the legitimized mass pillage of Ottoman Armenian wealth.¹²⁹ Akçam and Kurt extend this period of ethnic homogenization to the whole history of the republic and argue that the republic and its judicial system are based on the confiscation of Armenian cultural, social and economic wealth and extermination of Armenian existence.¹³⁰ Akçam and Kurt’s work demonstrate how the laws were made in order to eliminate all Armenian traces in Anatolia. In the narratives, this process of elimination of Armenian traces through law making is also emphasized. My interviewee Nazaret’s family went to Del Zor in 1915 and those who could survive came back to Adıyaman after 4 or 5 years. Even though the laws that guaranteed that those who come back are allowed to retake their properties, Nazaret’s family could not possess their land again.

Neither sold nor returned. Confiscated. Mustafa Kemal made a law that guarantees Armenian who return could have their properties back but this law just give 15 days. When my family learned it in Del Zor, two years passed after. They stayed there 4 or 5 years. It is said that “Properties will be given back” and they returned. The state did not assist them for the transportation. Zero. They did not have any money. My aunts who were the children of that wealthy family, they were 17 – 18 years old. The state said “If you came in 15 days

¹²⁸ Uğur Ümit Üngör, Mehmet Polatel. *Confiscation and Colonization: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property*. (London; New York: Continuum, 2011), p. X.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, X

¹³⁰ Taner Akçam, Ümit Kurt, *Kanunların Ruhu – Emval-I Metruke Kanunlarında Soykırımın İzini Sürmek* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), p. 11.

we would had given your properties back". I mean nobody could take his/her property back. ¹³¹

Firat also says that their land was occupied during 1915 and his father had to work and buy new lands in Batman. Yet, he says that even today his relatives have trouble with Muslim neighbors as his relatives' lands are used by them as meadow for their animals. Similarly, Murad emphasizes that his family had to repurchase their own lands in Konya after coming back from Syria.

There are properties that were confiscated during the migration. A lot. Many properties. They return some of those properties today but just the documented ones. There are many properties without document. Land. Mountain houses. There are uplands in inner Anatolia. All those houses were lost. They could not take their houses back after 1915. There are many lost properties. Churches were destroyed, cemeteries were pillaged and the school was destroyed. They repurchased the houses they had lived in again when they returned. ¹³²

However, our knowledge about properties of Armenians who did continue living in Anatolia or could come back after 1915 is very limited. My interviews show that the narrators claim that their properties were also confiscated by Muslims even though there was actually no law legislating this confiscation. Rather, the threats and assaults made them to leave their lands and properties.

¹³¹ *Ne satılmış ne şey edilmiş. El konulmuş. Bir de Mustafa Kemal bir yasa çıkarıyorlar dönene Ermenilere mallara iade edilecek diye ama 15 gün zaman veriyorlar yani. Bizimkiler onu duyduklarında iki sene geçmiş toplama kampında. Dört beş sene kalıyorlar. Mallar verilecek deniyor onlar dönüyor o yüzden. Hikaye çok uzun. Dönüyorlar müracaat ediyorlar devlete biz şeydeydik diyorlar. Devlet getirtiliyor. Sıfır. Paraları yok. O varsıl ailenin çocukları o bibiler 17 18 yaşında. İşte devlet 15 gün içinde gelseydiniz verirdik diyor. Yani bu mallardan bir kişi bile yararlanamıyor.*

¹³² *Bir de tabi elimizden alınan mülkler de olmuş göç sırasında. Çok fazla. Birçok mülkler. Bazı mülkler bugün iade ediliyor ama bunlar belgeli olanlar. Belgesi olmayan çok mülk var. Arsa. Yayla evleri. İç Anadolu'da yaylalar vardır. O evlerin hepsi kaybedilmiş. 50lerden önce. 1915'te de gidince kaybettiklerini alamamışlar. Çok mülk kayıpları olmuş. Var olan kiliseler yıkılmış mezarlıklar talan edilmiş okul yok edilmiş. Kendilerine ait olan yerleri geri dönünce geri satın alıyorlar.*

The 1915 stands as a turning point in Armenian history to the extent that everything is understood or made sense according to whether it happened before or after 1915. While the “before” refers to a period where a wealthy and culturally developed community existed, the “after” signifies the loss of everything this community had. And yet, for my interviewees talking about loss itself was an ethical issue. Some said that it is embarrassing to talk about material loss rather than the dead. For example, Sırpuhi who was born in Balıkesir in 1923 and currently lives in Istanbul tells:

An enormous fortune was left. We talk about only the dead. Beside the dead, the worth of the lost fortune cannot be understood. We don't speak about it because we are embarrassed. We have a lot of dead. I say that we are a little bit mad. A normal person cannot stand. Hence my mother became ill.¹³³

Nora, Sırpuhi's daughter, however, stresses the material loss in 1915, a discourse that shows well how the Armenian property was transmitted to Muslims.

I was born in 1960. How many years did pass after it? 45. My mother's father had 14 olive groves and houses and mansions in Edincik. My father's father was a partner with mine in Zonguldak. Now those does not belong to me. I could be as rich as Koç or Sabancı family now. I am a teacher for 30 years. I raised children for this country. I have a house and car. My husband and I worked shoulder to shoulder. Solely we made this.¹³⁴

¹³³ *Muazzam servet bırakılmış. Biz yalnız ölümlerden bahsediyoruz. Ölümler bir tarafa, bırakılan servetin değeri ölçülemeyecek kadar çok. Ondan konuşmuyoruz çünkü utanıyoruz. O kadar çok ölümüz var ki. Ben diyorum biraz delilik var bizde. Normal bir insan dayanamaz bu acılara. Nitekim benim annem de böyle hastalandı.*

¹³⁴ *Sırpuhi: Muazzam servet bırakılmış. Biz yalnız ölümlerden bahsediyoruz. Ölümler bir tarafa, bırakılan servetin değeri ölçülemeyecek kadar çok. Ondan konuşmuyoruz çünkü utanıyoruz. O kadar çok ölümüz var ki. Ben diyorum biraz delilik var bizde. Normal bir insan dayanamaz bu acılara. Nitekim benim annem de böyle hastalandı.*

Nora: Ben 60 doğumluğum. Kaç sene geçmiş 45 sene geçmiş üzerinden. Şahsen ben anne tarafından dedemin Edincik'te 14 tane zeytin bahçeleri artı evleri konakları varmış. Babamın babası da Zonguldak madenine ortakmış. Ve bunlar şuan bana ait değil. Ve ben şuan da bir

Shortly narrating the history of the Turkish Republic, Diran also makes a comparison between the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. In this sense, the genocide is perceived as the beginning of transition from the empire to the nation state. Diran indeed favors the Ottoman era. The history of the republic, to him, is the history of loss for his family and community but also property.

After the Young Turks started to increase its power, minorities were repressed. There was pressure during the Ottoman era too but there was also freedom. But after 1923, they oppressed remaining Greeks, Armenians and Jews. "Citizen Speak Turkish!" influenced by Hitler expulsion of Jews from Trakya in 1934, the wealth tax on minorities during the WWII. Population exchange, Greece was guilty. Turkish citizens Greeks were forced to migrate in 1964. And the Supreme Court decision in 1974. It was the biggest harm to minorities after 1915, they accepted minorities as foreigner and prevented minority foundations from buying properties. Now the AKP government returns 30 percent of the lost properties. Why did I bring the subject? What did happen in my village? I lost everything in my village. ¹³⁵

The 1915, therefore, is not only a date of deportation and death, but also economic loss for Armenians. Thus, for instance, Emval-i Metruke law is told as an economic reflection of the 1915. Its main objective was to

Koç bir Sabancı ailesi kadar varlıklı olabilirdim. 30 senelik öğretmenim. Bu ülkeye çocuk yetiştirdim. Bir evim bir arabam var. Eşimle omuz omuza çalışıp olay bu. Ancak bu kadar olabiliyor.

¹³⁵ *İttihat Terakki'nin kuvvetlenmesiyle azınlıklara baskı uygulanmaya başladı. Osmanlıda baskı vardı ama bir taraftan hürriyet de vardı. Ama 1923ten sonra kalan Rumlara Ermenilere Yahudilere baskı uygulamış. Vatandaş Türkçe konuş, 1934te Hitlerden etkilenip Trakya'daki Yahudilerin sürülmesi, İkinci Dünya Savaşında bütün azınlıklara varlık vergisi konuyor. Mübadele bu da Yunanistan'ın suçu. 64'te Türk vatandaşı Rumların göçe zorlanması. Ve 1974 Yargıtay kararı. Azınlıkları bir yabancı gibi görüp vakıflar mülk edinemez yasası azınlıklara 1915'ten sonra vurulan en büyük darbeydi. Şuan da AKP hükümeti kaybedilen malların yüzde 30unu iade ediyor. Ha köyde ne oldu? Neden konuyu buraya getirdim. Ha köyümde ne oldu? Köyümde ben her şeyimi kaybetmişim.*

confiscate Armenian wealth. However, the stories emphasize that the process did not end in 1915 as Armenian properties were appropriated by the state and Muslims over and over again in different periods depending on the political developments. Krikor narrates his grandfather's piano's story as a short summary of Armenian properties after 1915.

I will tell you a story, you can use it. In 1914, it was declared mobilization and my grandfather was conscripted. My father was born when my grandfather was in the army and my grandfather did not come back. So called 1915 deportation started. They brought everyone except boys under 15 years old and women. Then they decreased the age under 15 and brought again. My grandfather joined the army and never came back. We know that they used Armenians, who were disarmed, as beasts of burden until they died in the army. We had a beautiful house there (Amasya), wooden mansion. It was a mansion because families were larger in those times. My grandfather did not come back, it was 1914 or 1915. You know Emval-i Metruke. Its aim was different and it was used to confiscate properties of Armenians who were deported. It was said "You are a traitor. You escaped abroad and your properties will belong to the treasury. They came to this house from fiscal directorate. "He joined the army, he is deserter. "Your house will belong to the treasury" and it was. "Leave the house". My grandmother, her mother and my father were living there. My father was only child because my grandfather did not come back from the army. A Muslim neighbor said "Go and look at in a recruiting office". They went and learned that my grandfather died in Sarikamis where 90 thousand soldiers died in Caucasus front. There was that information in the recruiting office. They went to fiscal directorate with this information. They were still living in the same house. There was a piano, my grandfather played the piano. Fiscal directorate said "Bring the piano and I will give you the deed back. The piano was sent there. My father said that he was a little child, 7 or 8 years old, and he cried because he also started to play piano. Piano was sent and they had the deed again. Then time passed and after 15 years old – I was a child I can remember – fiscal directorate was appointed to another city. They told my father that "We have a piano which came from your house, it is in the barn. We will sell it but nobody knows its value here. Come and buy it". There was no cash money in that time. Wealth came from the farm and grape from the vineyard. Closed economy. I was not a student yet. My father discussed with my grandmother. "You have money, give me some money and I will bring the piano back".

And she said that she had only shroud money. I remember that they discussed about it. Maybe I was primary school student. 1950s. we had a small vineyard. We had two but one of them was small. My father wanted to sell it. My grandmother said “No, it was my father’s. I don’t sell it”. In the end, my father sold it and bought the piano back. That guy took the piano but he did not have that culture, he left it there. Then I came to Istanbul, my uncles were here. In Merzifon, no Armenian remained because of Topal Osman. The came here. In our house’s garden there was also a statue. It was Roman or Byzantium. After I came to Istanbul, they founded a museum in Gumushacikoy. They came and said to my father “Grant the statue and piano to the museum”. My father sent me a letter to explain what happened. I said him to give the statue but not the piano. I had a friend who was a truck driver. I wanted him to bring the piano to Istanbul. The piano came and it is still in my house (Laughs). It was 1970’s. It is like a film story. ¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Sana bir hikâye anlatayım çok önemli kullanırsın. 1914’te seferberlik ilan ediliyor ve dedem askere alınıyor. Babam dedem askerdeyken doğuyor ve dedem askerden dönmüyor. 1915 tehirci denilen olay başlıyor. 15 yaş altındaki erkek çocuklar ve kadınlar hariç herkesi götürüyorlar. Daha sonra 15 yaş altına düşürüp tekrar götürüyorlar. Dedem askere gitmiş bir daha dönmemiş. Biz biliyoruz ki 1915 süreci başladığında askerdeki Ermeniler de yük hayvanı gibi, silahsızlandırılarak ölene kadar kullanılıyor. Bizim orada güzel bir evimiz vardı ahşap konak. Baya konaktı çünkü o zaman aileler genişti. Babam askerden dönmüyor. Yıl 1914 15 gibi. Emval-i Metruke’yi biliyorsun. O değişik amaçlarla çıktı ama esasta 1915’te gönderilen Ermenilerin geride kalan mallarına el koymak sen vatan hainisin sen yurtdışına kaçtın senin evin hazineye kalacak. Bu ev de geliyorlar mal müdürlüğünden. Askere gitti bu asker kaçacağı. Eviniz hazineye geçecek ve geçiyor hazineye. Evi boşaltın. O zaman evde büyükannem onun annesi ve babam yaşıyor. Babam tek çocukmuş çünkü dedem askere gidiyor ve dönmüyor. o arada bir aile dostu Müslüman biri diyor ki gidin bir askerlik şubesinden bakın. Gidiyorlar bakıyorlar ki oraya kayıt düşmüş: Kafkasya Cephesinde o 90bin kişinin öldüğü Sarıkamış’ta dedem ölmüş şubeye öyle geliyor. Askerlik şubesinde o bilgi var. O bilgiyi alıp mal müdürlüğüne gidiyorlar. Bizimkiler de daha evi boşaltmamış. Bizim evde bir piyano vardı o tarihte dedem piyano çalarmış. Piyano bize gitsin diyor mal müdürü gelin tapunuzu alın. Piyano oraya gidiyor. Babam diyor ki küçükmiş 7 8 yaşında olabilirmiş ağladım diyor çünkü çocukken o da çalmaya başlamış. Piyano gidiyor evin tapusu geri alınıyor. Aradan zaman geçiyor 10 15 yıl ben çocuktum aklım eriyor. Mal müdürünün tayini çıkıyor başka yere. Babam diyorlar ki sizin evden buraya piyano geldi, o piyano ahırda duruyor. O sizin eve yakışır ben onu satacağım burada kimse almaz bilmez. Sizin eve yakışır. Neyse gelin münasip şekilde onu alın. O zaman orada nakit para olmaz. İşte buğday tarladan üzüm bağdan geliyor. Kapalı ekonomi. Ne kadar? Şu kadar. Ben daha okula gelmemiştim. Babam büyükannemle tartışıyor. Senin birikmiş paran vardır ver de gidip piyanoyu alalım. O da diyor ki yok kefen paramdan başka bir şeyim yok diyor. Babamla büyükannemin o tartışmalarını çok iyi hatırlıyorum. Ben demek ki o zaman daha ilkokul çağındayım. 50’li yıllar. Küçük bir bağımızı vardı. İki tane vardı da teki küçüktü. Babam dedi o küçük bağı satalım. Babaannem dedi o babamdan kaldı sattırmam mattırmam sonuçta babamın dediği oldu o bağı sattılar kaç liraya sattılar bilmiyorum ama o piyanoyu aldılar geldi eve. Adam piyanoyu almış ama o kültür yok ki atmış bir köşeye. Sonra ben İstanbul’a geldim. Merzifon’dan dayılarım büyükannem buraya gelmişlerdi. Orada Ermeni kalmamıştı Topal Osman’da dolay. Geldiler. Evimde bir de tarlada bulunmuş bir heykel vardı evin bahçesinde. Roma ya da Bizans devrinden kalma. Ben İstanbul’da geldikten sonra bizim Gümüşhacıköy’e bir müze yapıyorlar. Babama gelip demişler ki piyano ve o heykeli müzeye bağışla. Babam bana oradan mektup yazdı oğlum böyle böyle diye. Baba dedim heykeli ver ama piyanoyu verme. Orada benim bir arkadaşım bir abim kamyoncu vardı onu buldum. Ona haber saldı. Dedim İstanbul’a ilk yük buluşunda o

The lack of documents to prove the dispossession of Armenians by confiscation is also another aspect that is emphasized in the narratives. After, the wealth tax, Diran's family lost their properties in Kayseri. He says that he cannot trust to a state which does not keep such documents. Therefore at stake is not only the process of confiscation, but also the process of elimination of documents which also demonstrate Armenians existence in Anatolia through their properties.

My grandfather told me. His fine was 1500 TL. "You either pay this price or you will go to Askale". My grandfather did not have a land nor a house. But he had 300 500 sheep and 6 7 oxes – ox was like a tractor that time. He was cultivating another man's land. The richest received a 100 TL fine but my grandfather's was 1500 TL. He had 7 children. He had two married sons but they were all living in the same house. He was known as priest's son. He went to another village Hirkali. He said I need money. He had time until October. "If you give me 750 TL I will pay the first payment and will not go to Askale. The man said "Okey, I will owe you, come next week again". He went back the same day. Then he realized that Omer Agha was reluctant and asked if he was ill or worried. Omer Agha said clearly that "My son, they say that they will collect minorities' money and will send them. Who will pay me this money back if they send you?" My grandfather replied "Is your money more valuable than my life?" Omer Agha thought carefully and agreed to my grandfather and gave the money. I mean, in a village a minority member paid 1500 TL tax because he had 300 sheep and the rest – Muslims in the village - did not pay. Many Armenian families paid it. There were 15 families and they all received the fine. They paid later. He worked and paid later. My grandfather said "Even though I did not have a land, state took 1500 TL from me. Through which state channel can I prove it today? Or you gave this fine to me but why did not you give it to the rest? There was a document but my grandfather did not keep it. But the state has registers. I do not know if someone else took that money and spend it. But the state has to have its document. I

piyanoyu buraya getir. Piyano geldi hala da evimde duruyor (Güler). 70'li yıllarda oldu bu... Film konusu gibi...

don't trust to a state that says "We cannot find it in the Ottoman achieves."¹³⁷

Deeds and Land Registry Cadastrate

Confiscation did not end in 1915. My interviewees still have land and properties in different parts of Anatolia. However, they cannot use their properties. Actually, they say that they do not want to possess these properties anymore. Nearly all narratives have deeds that were burned Armenians themselves or the properties were occupied by others while state does not intervene. The deeds are seen as the proof that Armenians had properties in different parts of Anatolia. Hence, they are also very dangerous to hold since claiming right on these properties draw reaction of people who use them now.

It is very interesting that the stories of deeds are always told with a fire metaphor. Either they themselves or the state burn deeds. Those who tell that

¹³⁷ *Yani dedem anlatır. Köyde 1500 TL ceza gelmiş. Ya o parayı ödersiniz ya da Aşkale'ye. Dedemin ne tarlası var ne evi var. Ama kendisi 300 500 koyun o zaman 6 7 tane öküzü var ki o zaman iki öküz bir traktördür. Başkasının tarlasını ekip biçip geçiniyor. En zengini diyelim 100 TL gelirken dedeme 1500 TL geliyor. Çocuk var. 7 tane çocuğu olmuş. İki tane evli oğlu var. O zaman herkes aynı evde. O parayı ödemek için bir papaz ailesi olduğu için dedemin ailesi bütün çevre köyler papaz oğlu diye tanır. Çevre köye gitmiş Hırkalı'ya. Demiş elim çok dar. Ekim ayına kadar zaman var. Bana 750 TL verirsiniz ilk taksitimi vereceğim hapse girmeyeceğim demiş. O da olur evladım haftaya gel ben ayarlayacağım demiş. Kalmış gitmiş o gün. Bakmış. Ömer Ağa durgun davranıyor hayrola Ömer Ağa üzgün müsün hasta mısın demiş. Evladım demiş açıkçası diyorlar ki bu azınlıkları toplayacaklar paralarını alacaklar ve onları burada tutmayacaklar ben bu parayı kimden alacağım sizi götürürlerse? Dedem de demiş "Benim canım mı kıymetli sizin 750 TL paranız mı? Eğer beni götürceklerse giderim terk ederim" demiş. Adam mantıklı bir şekilde düşünüp haklısın deyip parayı vermiş. Yani bir köyde bir azınlık 300 koyunu var diye 1500 TL vergi verirken öbürü hiç vermemiştir. Köydeki Müslümanlar. Birçok Ermeni aileye geliyor. Zaten 15 aile var. Onlara geliyor çoğunluğu. Sonra ödemiş. Çalışmış borcunu ödemiş. Böyle hissetmiş dedem bunu anlatırdı. Tarlası olmadığı halde devlet benden 1500 TL aldı. Bugün devletin hangi kaynağından ben bunu ispatlarım. Veya niye bunu bana verdiniz de diğerine vermediniz. Bununla ilgili belge var ama dedem saklamamış. Ama devletin kayıtları var. Ha orada alıp yiyen var mıdır bilemem. Ama devlette bunun kaydı olmalı. Osmanlı arşivlerinde bulamıyoruz diyen bir devletin ciddiyetine ben güvenmiyorum.*

their parents had burned their deeds claim that otherwise they could be the targets of their land's new owners. Elbis's family had a land and a farm in Bursa but her grandmother decided to burn the deeds to save his son's life. As seen in the below excerpt, the land is important not only because of its economic value. The land embodies their familial history as well. I would therefore suggest that the confiscation of land has also meant the confiscation of history, which is embedded in materiality.

My grandmother's father had a horse farm in Bursa. My father retained a lawyer in 1964. He send the lawyer to the village in Bursa. The shot the lawyer. My grandmother said "I have only one son" and burned the deeds in the stove. The lawyer was seriously wounded. My father visited him in the hospital. My grandmother was afraid, she had two daughters and a son. She loved my father a lot. They shot the lawyer and threatened my father. We had the deed in 1964. I went there with my father in 1983, the farm was still there with our name. With my grandmother's maiden name. My father found the garden and said "This olive tree was planted for me". He had a heart attack there. My husband brought him to hospital. My grandmother's maiden name – and also my grandfather's surname - was written on our gravestone. This takes something to my heart. The whole family is under that gravestone.¹³⁸

Rupen's family has a house in Diyarbakır but it is occupied by a Kurdish family. Rupen said that they cannot sell the house since the family threatens them to send a son and kill Rupen's family. Siranuş also says that they still

¹³⁸ *Anneannemin babasının at çiftliği varmış. 1964te babam bir avukat tuttu. Bursa 'ya köye gönderdi. Avukatı vurdular. Babaannem de bunun üzerine benim bir tane oğlum var dedi bütün tapuları sobada yaktı. Ağır yaralandı babam hastaneye gidip ziyaret ediyordu. Korktu bir daha gider diye. İki kızı bir oğlu var. Hatırlıyorum. Oğluna kıyamazdı babama. Babama da tehdit gelmiş avukatı vuruyorlar. 64te tapumuz vardı. Ben 83te gittim babamı götürdüm hala bizim soyadımızla duruyor çiftlik. Babaannemin kızlık soyadı. Babam buldu bahçeyi benim için dikilen zeytin ağacı dedi. Kalp krizi geçirdi. Kocam götürdü. Mezar taşımız üzerinde hem kızlık soyadı hem edemin soyadı. O yazının aynısı hala o çiftlikte. O çok ağrıma gidiyor işte. O mezar taşının altında tüm aile.*

have lands in Batman but they did not have their deed because it is not possible for them to live there again:

We had teşkil instead of deed. Then deeds came. For one or two years there has been deeds. We talked here. We have teşkil and we can transform it into deed. We did not go back because we were afraid of being killed. We did not sell anything when we came to Istanbul. Teşkil is here now. It belongs to us. Our fathers digged and made. You have to go there to have deed but it is useless. They will not let us live there. You cannot have a deed. Muslim would kill you there. “How can you make my land you own deed?” Even if you have a deed you cannot sell it. You cannot go and live there. You only gain an enemy. Gendarme cannot wait with you 24 hours. It does not worth to go and have trouble there. Of course I would love to go. Everyone wants to return the place that he/she was born in. I am there every night in my dreams. I am in Istanbul for 38 years but I am still there in my dreams.¹³⁹

Those who don't have deed have different stories about Armenian properties in Anatolia. The fires in Land Registry Cadastrates are interpreted as the state's ultimate effort to erase Armenian existence in Anatolia and to annihilate remaining proofs of Armenian wealth in Anatolia. Elbis thinks that all fires that occurred in land registry cadastrates of Sinop, Muş, Safranbolu and Yozgat were organized by the state. Rupen does not believe that those land registry cadastrates were fired. Rather, he thinks that the state still hides those information on Armenian deeds but pretended as if all documents are burnt and lost. Zabel was a child when she first heard about a fire in land registry cadastrate:

¹³⁹ *Tapu değil teşkilimiz vardı. Sonra tapu geldi. Bir iki sene oldu tapu geldi. Konuştuk da burada. Teşkilimiz var belki tapu eder. Çıkmadılar. Korkudan çıkamadılar bizi öldürürler diye. İki sene evvel. Hiçbir şeyi satmadık gelirken. Teşkil şimdi de burada. Aslında bizim o. Babalarımız kazmışlar yapmışlar. Tapuya çevirmek için oraya gitmek gerekiyor. Ama tapu faydasız. Bırakmıyorlar yaşayalım. Tapu alamazsın. Oradaki Müslümanlar öldürür seni. Benim elimdeki toprağı nasıl tapu yaparsın. Sen şimdi tapu alsan da satamazsın. Gidip orada da yaşayamazsın. Sadece düşman kazanırsın. Sonuçta jandarma devlet 24 saat seni beklemez. Bu saatten sonra gidip başına bela almaya gerek yok. Tabi ki insan ister. İstemez mi insan doğduğu yere dönmek. Ben her gece rüyamda oralardayım. 38 yıldır İstanbul'da yaşıyorum ama her gece rüyalarımında oralardayım.*

In 1970's, we bought a television with difficulty. We saw that a land registry cadastrate was burnt. My father said "Pimps burned" Why? Because all registers were there. I always saw the same reaction from my father. He watched the news and when a place was burnt he said "Pimps burned it". Generally where Armenians were living intensely, there occurred fires.¹⁴⁰

In short, the narratives emphasize that either Armenians themselves annihilated their deeds because of threats or the state burned the registers in order to erase the remaining traces of Armenians. Those registers and deeds were mentioned nearly in all narratives because they are seen as the last proofs of the Armenian existence in Anatolia.

Sırpuhi: Our all properties became Emval-i Metruke. They threatened the survivors during 25 years and said "Don't come here, otherwise we will kill you". They had already burnt the land registry cadastrate buildings. But some people say that the state still should have the registers even if there occurred fires. Land registry. But we don't know anything. Where are those gardens? They made a law called "Emval-i Metruke" but it is unconventional. You cannot make property of someone who did not leave Turkey Emval-i Metruke. If he/she has heir, he/she has to have his/her property forever. But they took their properties totally. It is over. The house has gone, land has gone. The worst is that people have gone.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ 70li yıllarda, Tv çok zor geldi eve zor aldık. Tv'de nüfus memurluğu yandı. Babam "yaktılar pezevenkler" diyordu. Nüfus memurluğunu yakıyorlar neden çünkü kayıtlar orada. Babamda hep bu tepkiyi görüyordum. Bir yer yandı haberlerde seyrediyor. "Yaktılar pezevenkler". Nedense genelde Ermenilerin yoğun yaşadığı yerlerin nüfusları kütükleri hep yandı.

¹⁴¹ Tüm mallarımız hepsi Emval-i Metruke oldu. 25 sene sağ kalanlara silahla korkuttular buraya gelmeyin sizi öldürürüz diye. Zaten tapu kadastro binaları yanmış. Ama diyorlar ki devlette vardır onların kayıtları yansa bile. Toprak kayıtları ama biz hiçbir şey bilmiyoruz. Nerede o bahçeler? Ondan sonra Emval-i Metruke diye bir kanun çıkartıldı hâlbuki bu gayri nizami bir şeydir. Türkiye toprağını terk etmeyen bir kimsenin mirası Emval-i Metruke kabul edilemez. Sonuna kadar kalır onun mirasçıları varsa. Fakat bunu da yaptılar tamamen aldılar. Bitti. Ev de gitti topraklar da. İnsanlar gitti en fenası.

Important Events and Figures

For Halbwachs, “in collective memory there are in general particular figures, dates and periods of time that acquire an extraordinary salience. These attract to themselves other figures and events that happened at other moments. A whole period is concentrated, so to speak, in one year, just as a series of actions and events, about which one has forgotten its varying actors and diverse conditions, gathers together in one man and is attributed to him alone”.¹⁴² In the narratives I collected, the most important dates and events apart from the 1915 are DP’s election victory in 1950, 6 7 September 1955, the emergence of the ASALA while the most prominent figures are Adnan Menderes and Hrant Dink.

The Democrat Party (DP) government and its Prime Minister Adnan Menderes are remembered as a break from the oppressive years under the Committee of Union and Progress and The Republican People’s Party (CHP). Diran says that the period between 1914 and 1950 was troubled for minorities in Turkey. The Democrat Party government is seen as a new era for minorities and this era continues until the outbreak of tension between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in 1963.

Between 1920 and 1950, Turkey was troubled. Between 1914 and 1920, it was so troubled, until 1950 it was tough for minorities. There was no patriarch. The state did not permit. There was only a deputy. There was no leader who could represent us. In 1950, the Democrat Party realized our problems and took votes by giving more freedom. It became government. After their election victory, Armenian society said that we don’t have a patriarch. They gave permission...Until the event of Cyprus in 1960’s we had a

¹⁴² Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 222-223.

religious school that raised ecclesiastics. The Cyprus Operation harmed us. That school was banned. The Commission of Minorities is founded and in 1964 they said that you can't teach theology in this school... The freedoms came with Menderes with the pressure of the US. NATO granted remaining materials after Korean War to Turkey. In return it expected freedom in Turkey. Against İnönü and CHP, Menderes gave those freedoms. For the first time, they gave holiday to minorities in military. The Christmas and the Easter. As there was also schooling, Armenian population in Kayseri increased. 2000 – 2500. Children graduated. 30 – 40 students graduated every year. In its first five years Menderes made people feel this. After 6-7 September, it decreased.¹⁴³

Those who witnessed the election in 1950 said that DP gave a lot of hope to the people including Armenians. Even though 6 7 September 1955 occurred when Menderes was the Prime Minister, interviewees defended him and accused the deep state which represented the CHP. For instance, Sırpuhi is 91 years old and she said that she witnessed all events that changed the Turkish history. For her, there occurred “four shameful events” including the incident of the 20 Classes during the WWII, the Wealth Tax, 6 7 September and Hrant Dink's murder during the republic's history. However, she narrates the period between 1950 and 1960 when the DP governed the country as a liberal interval in the republic's history:

When Menderes was elected everyone lived it up. People had fun with shawm and drum for days because they got rid of

¹⁴³ 1920 ile 50 arası Türkiye karışık. 1914 ile 1920 arası çok karışık hatta 50ye kadar karışık azınlıklar açısından. O tarihlerde patrik yok. Devlet izin vermiyor. Vekil var. Derdimizi anlatacak lider yok. 1950'de Demokrat Parti gelince ve bu sıkıntıları görünce oyu bu şekilde alıyor ve özgürlükler veriyor. İktidar oluyor. İktidar olunca Ermeni cemaati diyor ki bizim patriğimiz yok. Bir anda izin çıkıyor. Resmi olarak meslek yüksek okulu olarak açılıyor dini görevleri yerine getiren meslek. 1960lara Kıbrıs olaylarına kadar çok güzel şekilde din adamı yetiştirmeye devam ediyor. Kıbrıs Harekatı bize bir darbe oluyor. Yasaklanıyor. Azınlık Tali Komisyonu kuruluyor ve 64de siz burada yüksek teoloji dersi veremezsiniz deniyor... Menderes'le beraber bir özgürlükler gelmiş ABD baskısıyla. Kore'den artan malzemeleri NATO hibe etmiş. Karşılığında da birçok özgürlük istemiş. O da İnönü'ye karşı CHP'ye karşı Menderes açmış özgürlükleri. Azınlıklara askerde ilk kez bayram izni vermişler. Noel ve Paskalya. Bu arada okullaşma olduğu için Kayseri'deki Ermeni nüfusu artmaya başlamış. 2000 – 2500. Çocuklar mezun oluyor. 30 40 kişi mezun oluyor. 55'ten itibaren. İlk beş sene içinde bunu herkese hissettiriyor. 6 7 Eylül'de biraz duruyorlar.

People's Party (CHP). Everybody had a hope. What did Menderes do for Armenians? He said to Armenians to establish theaters and play. We were very happy. In 1950. Menderes encouraged. An Armenian play! Armenians were dying for playing. My husband's friends acted in many beautiful plays. They were happy when Menderes was elected because we got rid of CHP. All people were done with CHP.

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When I reminded her that 6-7 September occurred during his government, she said that Menderes was not responsible for the events but non-Muslims were broken.

Non-Muslims were broken after 6 7 September. They were disappointed. Because he was in Istanbul. When he was returning to Ankara, they informed him. It is said that if he came back to Istanbul, this would not have happened. But there is a doubt. It is claimed that it was organized by the state secretly with the help of CHP to topple Menderes. I reproached Menderes. He was a clear man. He did not steal. He was rich but did not steal. He seemed as a softhearted guy. How could he tolerate it, we were surprised. I never understood. ¹⁴⁵

Zabel also thinks that the events of 6-7 September was organized by the deep state to find an excuse for the coup d'etat in 1960. While political responsibility of the 6-7 September is given to the deep state which represented

¹⁴⁴ *Menderes Seçilince yer yerinden oynadı. Çünkü halk partisinin forsunu kırdık diye davul zurnalarla günlerce şenlik yaptı halk. Herkeste bir ümit oldu. Şimdi menderes Ermenilere ne yaptı. Ermenilere tiyatrolar kurun Ermenice temsiller yapın dedi. Bizimkiler nasıl havalandı. Birçok tiyatrolar kuruldu. Ondan sonra okulların derneklerine izin verildi. Biz böyle havalandık. 50'de. Ama Menderes teşvik etti. Ermenice temsil ne demek. Bizimkiler can atıyor tiyatro yapmak için. Benim eşimin birçok arkadaşı tiyatrocusu olarak çok güzel eserler oynadılar. ... çok sevindiler Menderes seçilince kurtulacağız Halk Partisinden diye. Hepsini bütün halk bıkmıştı.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ama işte o da 6 7 Eylül vesilesiyle gayrimüslimler çok kırıldı. Hüsrana uğradı. Çünkü İstanbul'daydı. Ankara'ya dönerken haber vermişler Menderes'e haber vermişler. Diyorlar ki geri gelseydi bunlar olmazdı. Yalnız orada bir şüphe var. Menderes iktidar olduğu için bunun aslında devletin gizli katlarında planlandığı CHP'nin de katkılarıyla, Menderes'e yıkılmasını sağlamak üzere bir oyun olduğuna dair. Ben ummazdım Menderes'ten. Menderes temiz bir adamdı. Hırsızlık yapmadı. Zengindi ve hırsızlık yapmadı. Yumuşak kalpli birine benziyordu. Böyle bir şeye nasıl göz yumdu diye şaşırдық biz. Ben hiç anlamadım.*

the Union and Progress mentality, its reflection in Anatolia is narrated as part of other pressures on Armenians.

Diran: I was a child in 6-7 September. I just remember that my aunt's sister in law came to our house and said clothe girls with boy clothes. In Kayseri, houses were single-floor, but there was a small section which is called "zerzem". Basement. She said "Keep girls in zerzem". They clothed girls with boy clothes. People came and shouted slogans. It was not as in Istanbul. Because it did not occur in the same time with Istanbul. After 10 days. After 67 September, the migration from Kayseri increased.¹⁴⁶

According to Diran, both 6-7 September and 1963-64 events in Cyprus symbolize the end of the relative freedom that Armenians enjoyed under the DP government. Nazaret also gives the milestone date for the Armenians living in Adıyaman as 63-63 events:

The main departure from Adıyaman occurred in 1964. Cyprus events... When the events occurred, common people even did not know the difference between Assyrian and Armenian except intellectuals. They accepted all *gavur*. Even Jews were accepted as *gavur*. The Cyprus event had nothing to do with Armenian. But the media broadcasted that the Greeks were oppressing Turks. Afterwards there occurred pressure on Armenians where they lived intensely such as Adıyaman. There was a neighborhood where the 100 percent of the people were Christian. They surrounded the quarter. They threw stones. There was no gun. They used digging tools. Craftsmen could not go work, children could not go to school. People were stuck there. Afterwards 1964 became a milestone for migrating from Adıyaman. Everyone went to different places.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Ben çocuktum. Tek neyi hatırlarım benim halamın görünçesi vardı o koşarak bize geldi. Kız çocuklarına erkek elbisesi giydirin dedi. Kayseride evler tek katlıdır ama evin altında bir bölüm vardır zerzem derler. Zemin kat. Zerzeme indirin dedi. Çoğuna erkek pantolonu ceket giydirip indirmişler. Tabi gelmişler slogan atmışlar gitmişler. İstanbul'daki gibi olmamıştır. Çünkü İstanbul'la aynı anda olmamış. Orada 10 gün sonra böyle bir yansıması var. O da sebep. 6 7 Eylül'den sonra göç hızlanmış.

¹⁴⁷ Nazaret: Asıl Adıyaman'dan dağılma 64tedir. Kıbrıs meselesinde...Kıbrıs olayları olduğunda genel halk dediğim gibi şuanda bile Ermeni ile Süryani arasındaki farkı bilmiyor entelektüellerinin dışında. Onu da gavur sayıyor. Kıbrıs'taki olayın mesela uzaktan yakından Ermeni ile ilgisi yok. Ama burada medya Rumlar Türklere zulmediyor diye haber yapıyor. Onun akabinde Ermenilerin yoğun olduğu yerlerde de baskı oluyor. Adıyaman'da mesela. Adıyaman mahallesi yüzde yüz Hristiyan olan bir mahalle. Kuşatıyorlar. Taşıyorlar. Silah yok. Kazma kürek ilkel şeylerle. Esnaf dükkanına gidemiyor. Çocuklar okula gidemiyor. Mahsur kalıyorlar orada. O günden sonra Adıyaman artık 64 yılı milat oluyor Adıyaman'dan ayrılmak için. Herkes bir tarafa gidiyor.

The emergence of the ASALA represents another period in the narratives. Contrary to the Menderes and DP period, ASALA makes Armenians lives in Turkey worse. All narrators had already moved to Istanbul when the ASALA was founded. Thus the narratives demonstrate the repercussions of the ASALA movement in Istanbul. The emergence of the ASALA and its afterwards (late 1970's and 1980's) is told as a period when Armenians started to live a hidden life in Istanbul. Elbis says that they were even bending their necks when they were walking outside because of the fear they had. Garabet says that he changed his name because of the ASALA.

Garabet: My name is Garabet. My family call me Garabet, here (in business) they call me Erol. I don't have any secret. The reason that I also started to use Erol by court decision is the pressure on Armenian due to the ASALA. To be comfortable in the military service. In 1980's, 81, 82. ASALA was existing before 1980. I remember.

Can: Did ASALA influence your life?

Garabet: I am against all kinds of violence. It killed innocent ambassadors. I had many change after it in my life. It could still change my life. If it emerges today, the same pressure will be there. There was a mass migration from Istanbul. Why did my father in law send his son to France. Everybody who had the opportunity, sent their children abroad. ¹⁴⁸

Krikor also holds ASALA responsible for aggravating Armenians' lives in Istanbul.

¹⁴⁸ Garabet: *Benim adım Garabet. Aile içinde Garabet burada Erol. Gizlim saklım yok hatta kayınpederim kızardı. Mahkeme kararı ile Erol yaptık. Erol koymamızın sebebi de burada o dönemde gayrimüslimlere ASALA sebebiyle uygulanan baskı Erol ismi bundan dolayı kondu. Askerde rahat edeyim diye. 80li yıllarda 81 82. ASALA 80 öncesi de vardı. Hatırlarım.*

Can: *Etkiledi mi sizi?*

Garabet: *Ben her türlü şiddete karşıyım. Bir de o gidip suçsuz insanı büyükelçi falan öldürüyor. Benim hayatımda çok değişiklik oldu. Halen öyle. Bugün bile çıksa çok değişiklik olmaz. Çok göç oldu o olaydan sonra. Benim kayınpederim Fransa'ya oğlunu neden gönderdi? Bir dönem imkanı olan herkes gençlerini gönderdi bir şey olursa diye.*

We suffered a lot during that dark and bad pre-12 September era and ASALA terror in 1970's and 1980's. We lived as if we did not exist. We bewared of going out. We bewared of telling our names to people we met. Our friends started to use different names in business. They changed their name on signboards. We experienced this. We still have the same fear. Now there is no Armenian in Anatolia.¹⁴⁹

As Krikor said that the Armenians still have the same fear, Nazaret wanted me to turn of the recorder when he started to speak about the ASALA. He had to send his brother to France after 1980 coup d'etat since he was involved in relations with the ASALA and Çatlı –a well known deep state assassin – was following him. He did not want me to write where his brother is living now. Nevertheless, younger generation who were children during 1980's added that the ASALA was an important milestone for Armenians:

Murad: Before, Armenian question could not be discussed in Turkey but with the emergence of ASALA Turkey faced its Armenian question. "Why do they shoot us?" Some people discovered that they have Armenian identity. Some people learned that they were Armenian on television. Such as Hamshenis. They are Armenians. Eastern Armenians. Levon Ekmekçiyen was judged after he was arrested due to the airport incident. He spoke in Armenian in his trial. When Hamshenis were watching the trials on television they realized that they spoke the same language with him and said "He spoke the same language with us". Nowadays they are discovering their identities.¹⁵⁰

Hrant Dink is the most recurrent figure in the narratives. He is attributed to different important roles for the Armenian society. First of all, the journal

¹⁴⁹ Biz özellikle 70li 80li yıllarda o karanlık kötü 12 Eylül öncesi dönemde ve ASALA terörünün devam ettiği dönemde çok sıkıntı çektik. Adeta yokmuşçasına yaşadık. Sokağa çıkmaya çekindik. Tanıdığımız kişilere isimlerimizi söylemeye çekindik. Piyasada sahte isimlerle iş yapmaya başladı arkadaşlarımız. Tabelalarda isimlerini indirdiler. Bu süreçlerden geçtik. Hala o korku içimizde devam ediyor. Bugün Anadolu'da artık Ermeni kalmadı.

¹⁵⁰ Daha önce Ermeni konusu Türkiye'de konuşulmaya cesaret edilmiyordu ama ASALA ile Türkiye Ermeni sorunuyla yüzleşti. Neden bunlar bizi vuruyor diye. Kimliklerinde Ermeni olduğunu keşfeden insanlar oldu. Televizyondan Ermeni olduğunu anlayanlar oldu. Hemşinliler gibi, Ermenidir. Doğu Ermenileri. Levon Ekmekçiyen'in havaalanı eyleminde yakalandıktan sonra yargılanır idam edilmeden önce. Yargılanırken Ermenice cevap verir. O zaman Televizyondan kahvede Hemşinlikler konuşmayı duyunca "Ulan bunlar bizimle aynı dili konuşuyor" diye dediklerini anlarlar. Günümüzde de kimliklerini keşfediyorlar.

Agos, which Dink established is considered a turning point as it started talking publicly about the violent past. Once reading about the past in *Agos*, people also started talking about it in their homes with their parents and grandparents. That is to say that the past experiences that were silenced both in the public and the private have started coming out thanks largely to *Agos* and its founder Dink. Dink is also seen as an important political figure who reminded Armenians in Turkey of their Armenian identity mostly through *Agos* and his public speeches.

Murad: Stories about the 1915 were not told in home. Those stories came up with Hrant Dink's *Agos*. They were known but not talked. They did not want us to learn. Hrant Dink was a milestone. I asked to my family and forced them to tell their stories. I started to combine the events. Hrant reminded us who we are. ¹⁵¹

Satenik: When visited Istanbul for the first time, *Agos* had just been published. It was published in April 1996. I read its second issue and became its member after going back Iskenderun. I visited my sister and read it there. I liked it a lot. There was Armenian lesson page. One page was about a particular region's history. By coincidence, it was about a village called Keferliş in Adıyaman. I learnt that there had been a boarding school for 2000 children and realized that it was my grandfather's school. I liked it a lot. I learned a lot from *Agos*. I received *Agos* for one year. My mother was afraid of having problem because of the newspaper. I was waiting for it during the week. I read its all parts. I did not leave any page unread. Because there was nothing else to do in Iskenderun. I was adapted in 1 years as if I had been living in Istanbul for ten years. Because I learned whole culture, what to do in the feasts, what should be done in special dates. I never had problem in adapting to Istanbul thanks to *Agos*. I know Hrant Dink very well. Because I read him for years. I read his column and liked a lot. As if I was communing with him. I have never met him personally. I loved him a lot. I continued reading *Agos* after coming to Istanbul. I knew him very well. I was shocked when he was killed. It was like his funeral was in our house. It influenced me so much. Nothing

¹⁵¹ *Anlatılmazdı evde. Aslında bu hikâyeler Hrant Dink'in Agos'uyla ortaya çıktı. Bilinirdi ama çok üstüne gitmezdik. Bilmemiz çok istenmezdi. Anlatılmazdı...Hrant Dink bence bu konuda milat. Evdekilere sorup zorla anlattırđım. Yaşanmış olayları da birbirine bağlamaya başlıyorsun. O bize ne olduğumuzu hatırlattı.*

could influence me as it did. I cried for Hrant more than I cried for my husband. I was unhappy a lot. Because I learned a lot of things thanks to Hrant. I learned my identity thanks to Agos. I owe a lot to Agos. It was a milestone in my life. ¹⁵²

Hrant Dink did not only remind Armenians of their Armenianness but he also encouraged them to come and speak out within the Turkish public. It is now assumed that it was Dink's effort that triggered the politicization of Armenian society in Turkey.

Garabet: Everything has changed after Hrant Dink. We took courage. We said we had already lost everything in 1915. We said that we shouldn't go on as a rafter that we came as a wood. We should say what truth is. We should say what is right and what is wrong. Brave people came out. The youth established an association. Nor Zatronk was founded after Hrant's death. ¹⁵³

Elbis: My daughter grew up in Istanbul but she walked from Osmanbey to the cemetery with me. It was the first time that she attended a manifestation. Children were also shocked. My daughter is not in the Armenian society very much. She has a lot of friends. She goes clubbing. And this is normal. But

¹⁵² Ben İstanbul'a ilk geldiğimde Agos yeni çıkmıştı. 1996'da Nisan ayında çıkmıştı. İkinci sayısını okudum ben o zaman üye oldum İskenderun'da. İskenderun'da her hafta gelirdi bana postayla o dönemde. İstanbul'a gelmişim ablama. Böyle bir gazete çıkmıştı. Ablamda okudum. O kadar hoşuma gitti ki. Bir bölümünde Ermenice var. Ermenice ders. Bir sayfası tarihten bir bölge tarihi veriyordu. Tesadüf Adıyaman'ın Keferliş köyünü vermişti. Orada yatılı bir bölge okulunun olduğunu 2000 öğrencisi olduğunu çünkü dedemin oraya gittiğini biliyorum bağlantı yaptık. Çok hoşuma gitti. Agos'tan ben çok şey öğrendim. Bir yıl boyunca geldi bana Agos. Annem rahmetli korkuyordu bu Ermeni gazeteyi alma başımıza iş açar. Ben her hafta bekliyordum ki Agos gelecek. Ben onun her tarafını okuyordum. Boş bir yer bırakmıyordum. Çünkü başka yapacak bir şey yok İskenderun'da. Agos sayesinde ben 1 yılda sanki 10 yıldır İstanbul'da yaşıyormuş gibi hemen adapte oldum. Çünkü bütün kültürü ne yapılması gerektiğini bayramlarda neler yapılır şu tarihte neler yapılır her şeyi öğrenmişim ve ben uyumda asla zorluk yaşamadım Agos sayesinde. Hrant'ı ben çok iyi tanıyordum. Çünkü yazılarını yıllarca okudum. O kadar seyerek okuyordum ki. Sanki bütünleşiyorsun o insanla. Ama fiziki olarak tanışmadım. Çok çok seviyordum. İstanbul'a gelince de Agos'u aldım. Çok iyi tanıyordum o insanı. Öldürüldüğünde de büyük bir şok yaşadım. Ben sanki o cenaze bizim evimizden kalktı. O kadar etkiledi beni. Hiçbir şey beni o kadar etkileyemezdi. Ben kocama ağlamadığım kadar Hrant'a ağladım. O kadar üzüldüm. Çünkü birçok şeyimi ben Hrant sayesinde öğrendim. Kimliğimi Agos sayesinde öğrendim. Agos bana çok şey kattı İskenderun'da kaldığım o dönemde. Yani benim hayatımda dönüm noktası oldu Agos.

¹⁵³ Hrant'tan sonra her şey değişti. Cesaretlendik. Zaten diyorsun kaybettiğin şeyi kaybetmişsin 1915 yılında. Artık odun gibi gelmiş kalas gibi gitmeyelim dedik. Neyse gerçeği söyleyelim. Haklı haksız neyse söyleyelim kardeşim. Cesaretli isimler çıktı tavır kondu. Gençler dernek kurdu. Nor Zatronk kuruldu. Hrant'tan sonra.

when Hrant was killed, those children became smaller and shocked. They were surprised because their mothers were shocked, they always looked at us. We caved in... I went to the office of Agos after Hrant's death and went to the all court. My daughter is teasing and saying "If you go to police station, don't call me (she laughs)."¹⁵⁴

He is also seen as a price that Armenian society paid for its freedom.

His death is told as a reminder that Armenians received from the state that they can still be target and killed easily.

Satenik: We were scared, we were scared more. So they can still kill us. So we are still target. They still do not forget. We are still killed. Our fears revived. I followed Hrant's all talks. He was on television programme, Siyaset Meydanı. I watched him until 1 or 3 am. We were always uneasy before April 24th. "God, this date again came, Let it go and end. Let it not been talked. Because we are scared, annoyed, bored, on tenterhooks a lot. Because things such as genocide were just started to be discussed with Hrant. We were scared for him. We worried a lot because I was following the politics for years. Hrant Dink pioneered those who came out courageously and Turkey came to its new period. Some subjects started to be discussed. I mean the price was paid. Without a price nothing changes. We gave Hrant as a price and came to these days. Today, these subjects can be talked (silence)."¹⁵⁵

The current conditions in Turkey is narrated as the period that the DP governed the country. Though they do not demonstrate a clear sympathy with the Prime

¹⁵⁴ *Benim kızım burada büyüdü ama ilk defa Osmanbey'den mezarlığa kadar yürüdü. Çocuklar da çok sarsıldı şok oldu yani. Benim kızım cemaat içinde ama o kadar içinde değildir. Bir sürü arkadaşı vardır. Diskoya da gider. Ki normal budur aslında. Ama Hrant öldüğünde küçüldü o çocuklar küçüldüler. Kalakalılar. Şaşırdılar çünkü anneler de çok şaşırdı hep bize bakıyor çocuklar. Biz de yıkıldık... Ben Hrant öldü Agos'a gittim ve bitinceye kadar her mahkemeye gittim. Hatta kızım dalga geçiyordu polise falan düşersen beni arama (gülür).*

¹⁵⁵ *Korktuk daha bir korktuk. Daha bir korktuk. Demek hala bizi öldürebiliyorlar. Demek hala biz hedefteyiz. Hala unutmuyorlar. Hala öldürülüyoruz biz. O korkularımız canlandı. Hrant'ın bütün programlarını dinlerdim. Siyaset Meydanına çıkardı 1'e 3'e kadar dinlerdim. Ve biz o 24 Nisan geleceği zaman hep tedirgin oluyorduk. Allahım yine geldi o dönem bir atlatsak bir bitsin. Konuşulmasın. Çünkü acayip korkuyoruz acayip rahatsız oluyoruz sıkılıyorz diken üstünde oluyoruz. Çünkü yeni yeni Hrant'la konuşuluyordu soykırımlar şeyler. Aman diyorduk başına bir şey gelecek bir şey olacak. O kadar tedirgindik ki çünkü ben takip ediyordum bu siyasi gelişmeleri yıllarca. Bunların öncülüğünü Hrant yaptı Türkiye bugünlere geldi. Bir şeyler konuşulmaya başlandı. Yani bir bedel verildi. Bedel verilmeden hiçbir yere gelinmiyormuş. Hrant'ı bedel olarak verdik ve bugünlere geldik bugün konuşulabiliyor bu konular (Sessizlik).*

Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan or the Justice and Development Party (AKP), they appreciate the positive policies of the government towards the minorities. Nevertheless they also emphasize that the pressure of the European Union compelled the government to follow such a policy. Returning of confiscated properties of associations, change in registration process of Armenian children to Armenian schools are seen as positive steps that The AKP government took.

Similar to the interpretation of the 6-7 September in 1954 during the DP government, assassination of Hrant Dink, death of Armenian soldier Sevag Balıkcı are seen as deep state's acts. Yet, the government is criticized since it does not make a fair trial. The most complained issue is impunity that those who are responsible for this crimes enjoy. Impunity of crimes against Armenians causes a permanent concern among Armenians.

Zabel: Sevag's case is very different. It has nothing to do with the government. I think the government is not responsible. If the killed is Armenian and the killer is Turk, the case is hushed up. This injures me a lot. It should be given the same penalty if the murderer was Armenian. You release the murderer. That boy will not come back but the murderer should not get away with his crime... My nephew has just came from military service, until he came we concerned a lot. He made his military service in Antep. Long term military service. We were grateful that he came safe and sound. It is because of Sevag's death. Until he came back we warned him to stay quiet, to be careful. I was so worried about my nephew and I do not know what I will do when my own son goes to army. God help me. I don't want him to go to army. It is not about short or long term. I am afraid of the environment in the military. His name reveals his identity directly.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ *Sevag apayrı. Hükümet üstü bir şey. Hükümetin işi değil bence. Ölen Ermeni öldüren Türkse bu kapatılıyor. Bu beni çok yaralıyor. Ermeni öldürse ne ceza vereceksen onu yapmalısın. Katili dışarı salıyorsun. Bu bir hakarettir. O çocuk geri gelmeyecek ama yaptığı da yanına kalmayacak... Yeğenim yeni geldi askerden o gelene kadar biz kurt döktük. Antep'te yaptı askerlik. Uzun dönem yaptı. Dedik ki şükürler olsun sağ sağlım geldi. Sevag'tan sonra böyle olduk. O çocuk geri gelene kadar aman oğlum dikkat et, sessiz ol dalaşma konuşma Ben yeğenim için bunca kortum kendi çocuğum gitse ne olacak Allah yardım etsin bana o yüzden istemiyorum. Kısa dönemi uzun dönemi yok ama etrafından korkuyorum. İsmi direkt böö yani.*

Apart from such murders, state's ongoing discrimination against Armenians is also mentioned during the interviews. Armenian names are seen as stain and they do not want to name their boys with Armenian names.

Murad: Both my mother and father have Armenian names. Mine is not. They did not give me an Armenian name since it would cause problems in the army. My sister's name is Armenian, but my name is Turkish due to the army and business life.¹⁵⁷

There is no job opportunity in state bureaucracy and this is seen as the most important proof of ongoing discrimination against Armenians in Turkey.

Murad: They taught a song to my son in the school. "I will be a police when I grow up". I said "You cannot be a police, because we cannot". We cannot be police neither we can be a prosecutor or a judge. There is not an example. It is not officially accepted but it is an unofficial rule. A friend who is a political science graduate from the Ankara University could not be state official since he is an Armenian convert. Later he went to France and convert to Christinanity again. Maybe he did not care before but he started to learn Armenian.

Yet, Turkey is still seen as their own country which they do not want to leave never. They express that they feel themselves more as a part of Turkey then Europe or Armenia.

Zabel: I went to the Netherlands after I married. As a tourist. But I also tried to understand whether I could live there if I move there. I had relatives. I also went to Armenia a lot. I love travelling. I don't have relatives there but I have friends. If I need a book they help me or vice versa. If their friends come to Turkey, they recommend me. Wherever I go in the world even to Armenia, I cannot go to fasıl. It is my favorite activity. It is important for me. Turkish classical music or folk songs on raki table, I cannot sing a folk song with them. I can sing a song from shared culture but something will be lacking. Thus, this is my land and heirloom. Thus, here is more important for me. I want to live as an equal citizen in this country who has access to the justice equally, who lives with her neighbors in peace, who gives cookies in the Easter, who eats fired meat in his/her feast. Hence, I did not leave. I do not

¹⁵⁷ *Annemin de babamın da ismi Ermenice. Benimki değil. Askerlikte sorun yaşamayayım diye koymamışlar. Ablamın ismi Ermenice, ama benim ismim askerlik ve iş hayatı yüzünden Türkçe.*

want to go. I hope that my children will not have to go abroad because I don't want to die alone. I don't want to live with grandchild longing. I don't want to go with them due to longing. I don't know what will be in the future but I want my children to live here with me in peace. I hope I will raise my grandchildren here. I hope I will see them when they are growing up. I want to witness their happiness. I could not do in the Netherlands. There are social right, you are an equal citizen but there is no life. You work for your job, you go to your house and sleep and you will work again. There is nothing social. I cannot stay in comfort. It is not like here. We are more social here. We contemplate about the country's problems here. At least for me. I will commemorate execution of Deniz Gezmiş and his friends. I love Ahmet Kaya. I listen to İbrahim or Müslüm. I listen to some songs of all. I hate Serdar Ortaç. I go to the concerts. I love Sezen Aksu, I am her fan. So do my children. I have to live this. I have many interests here. I worry with the country's problems and I am happy with its successes. I am proud of Armenia and Turkey if they success something. Come to Kınalıada in the summer and look at Armenian children there. There are children who fly flag on their bicycles. Unfortunately, what is painful is that this country does not accept them as they accept this country.

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¹⁵⁸ Ben yıllar evvel ilk evlendiğim zaman Hollanda'ya gittim. Turist gibi. Ama bir gözümle de acaba ben buraya gelsem tutana bilir miyim diye baktım. Akrabalar vardı. Ermenistan'a çok gittim seviyorum gezmeye. Akrabam yok ama dostlarım var. Kitap lazım olursa kaynak olarak oradan bulurlar onların deri olur beni ararlar. Bir tanıdıkları gelirse korku içindedirler beni önerirler. Dünyanın neresine gidersen git ben Ermenistan'da bir fasıl yapamam. En sevdiğim şey. Benim için önemli bu. Rakı sofrasında sanat müziği ya da türkü, bozlak okuyamam onlarla. Onlarla ortak kültürümün şarkılarını söylerim ama bir yanım eksik kalır. O yüzden burası benim toprağım ata yurdum. O yüzden burası benim için daha önemli. Ben bu ülkede bu ülkenin eşit bir vatandaşı gibi haklarımı adaletimi eşit şekilde alacak, komşumla huzur içinde yaşayacak, paskalyada çörek ikram edecek, onun bayramında onunla birlikte oturup kavurma yiyecek bir hayatı seviyorum. O yüzden gitmedim. Gitmek istemiyorum. Umarım çocuklarım yurtdışına gitmek zorunda kalmazlar çünkü ben tek başıma ölmek istemiyorum. Torun hasretiyle yaşamak istemiyorum. Onlara hasret kalıp onlarla gitmek istemiyorum. Gelecek ne getirir bilmiyorum ama dilerim çocuklarım benimle birlikte huzur içinde burada yaşarlar. Ben torunlarımı burada büyütürüm. Onların hayatlarına tanık olurum. Mutluluklarına tanık olurum. Sonunda da burada toprağıma kavuşamazdım. Hollanda'da yapamazdım. Sosyal haklar var eşit vatandaşsın ama hiçbir hayatın yok. İş için çalışacaksın eve gelip yatacaksın çalışacaksın. sosyal hiçbir şeyin yok. Rahatlık batıyor sana paslanacaksın. Buradaki gibi değil. Biz burada daha sosyaliz. Ülke meselerine de kafa yoruyoruz. Benim için öyle. Ben 6 Mayıs'ta anacağım onların asılmasını. Ben Ahmet Kaya severim. Yeri gelir İbrahim de dinlerim Müslüm de. Hepsinin bazı şarkılarını. Ben Serdar Ortaç'tan nefret ederim. Sanatını yapan insanların konserlerine giderim. Ben Sezen Aksu delisiyim fanatığıyım. Çılgınca peşinde koşuyorum şimdi de çocuklarım. Ben bunu yaşamalıyım. Benim burada ilgi alanım çok fazla. Ben kapalı kutu gibi aman bana kimse bulaşmasın diyen bir Ermeni değilim. Ülkenin sıkıntılarıyla sıkılan sevinçleriyle mutlu olanım. Ermenistan bir başarı kazanınca da Türkiye kazanınca da gurur duyuyorum. Kınalıada'da yazın milli maçta siz gelin Ermeni çocukların

The past stories darken the expectations about the future. But my interviewees emphasize that neither compensation nor punishment can cure them. They say that they only want to be understood.

Zabel: I cannot call you to account. I cannot call anyone else to account. But I want you to understand me. Even if they give me the properties of my grandparents, I cannot spend that money. Because my grandfather lived with this pain and died with longing. Can you spend his money? I cannot even buy a toast with it. He died with pain. Tell me that you understand me. I can only relieve if you share my pain. Otherwise, I become furious. ¹⁵⁹

Elbis: They say that we want compensation. Understand me, respect me. I muddle on. What can I do with compensation? I don't need compensation. Understand me, respect my pain. Relieve my distress. ¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed how some major events that took place in recent history are represented in the narratives. By so doing, I showed the repercussions of these events in the local settings such as in villages and within families. It seems that after the Armenian community in Anatolia collapsed with the genocide, surviving Armenians became even more vulnerable to their

halini görün. Bisikletin önüne bayrak asıp gezen çocuklar var. Ne yazık ki bunların kabul ettiği kadar bu ülke onları kabul etmiyor. Acı olan bu.

¹⁵⁹ *Ben sana da hesap soramam ona da soramam. Ama senden şunu beklerim. Beni anlamamı o kadar. Diyelim ki dedemin serveti bana verildi. Burası kadar para diyelim. O paradan ben ekmek yiyemem bir dilim tost yiyemem. Çünkü acıyla yaşamış dedem hasretle ölmüş. Yiyebilir misin onun parasını? Acıyla ölmüş. Seni anlıyorum de. Bunu benimle paylaştığın zaman ben hafifliyorum ancak. Ama sen paylaşmadığında ben daha da hırslanıyorum.*

¹⁶⁰ *Tazminat için diyorlar ya. Beni anla bana saygı duy. Ben zaten kendimi iyi kötü kurtarmışım. Ben ne yapayım. Bana ne. Tazminata ihtiyacım yok. Beni anla bana saygı duy. Acıma saygı duy. Acımı hafiflet.*

neighbors and to the state. Therefore, the 1915, in the narratives, express both the end of the community and the beginning of a new life for the survivors. The confiscation of Armenian properties whose primary purpose was creating a national bourgeois class was one of the main themes almost in all narratives that I collected. Confiscation has continued after the genocide as well: sometimes their Kurdish neighbors forcibly took over their properties; sometimes the state did so, for example, in the form of the wealth tax. Confiscation does not only mean the loss of property. It also means, to Armenians, the loss of history as all these confiscated houses, lands and so on are the places where their and their ancestors' experiences and memories are embodied.

In addition to the 1915 and long-lasting process of confiscation, DP's victory in 1950, the events of 6-7, the 1963-1964 events in Cyprus, the debut of ASALA and the assassination of Hrant Dink emerge in the narratives as crucial events affecting Armenians deeply. When the DP ruled the country, my interviewees claim, Armenians enjoyed a relative freedom. This period, however, ended up with the September 6-7 events and the conflict in Cyprus. The emergence of ASALA and the assassination of Hrant Dink created mixed feelings among Armenians. These events, on the one hand, made Armenians feel more threatened, but on the other hand, made the genocide and other catastrophes to which Armenians were exposed a publicly spoken issue.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I analyzed life story narratives of Anatolian Armenians who currently live in Istanbul. Local identity, gender, class emerged as main sociological parameters that shape the way life stories are constructed. Furthermore, interviewees' interpretations of recent history and their political stance have an immense role in the formation of these life stories. This thesis, in a way, discussed how Anatolian Armenian identity is constructed in the present in Istanbul where a highly heterogeneous Armenian community lives.

In the third chapter, I explored the role that the 1915 plays in the construction of life stories. The 1915 stand as the origin of familial histories as due to the genocide many Armenians today cannot trace their genealogy in the pre-1915 era. The 1915 also symbolizes the end of a culturally and economically wealthy Armenian community. The narratives also signify that the 1915 is not simply a date that points to a specific time in history but an era in which they still live. That is to say that, to my interviewees, the 1915 both made a rupture between the generations and divided the history into two opposite eras but also has continued and still continues now in many senses. Also due to the struggle that they had to undertake their whole lives, I would suggest, the Armenian identity has come to be associated with resistance. That said, however, gender, class and local identity largely determine the form of struggle they undertake. I showed that women represent themselves in their narratives as natural born-rebels against the family and the state. While women who were born in Istanbul tell their life story as a story of struggle for the Armenian identity, women who

were born in Anatolia and later migrated to Istanbul say their struggle is against their fathers and husbands for their own and their children' rights as well as against the state. In other words, in the former the emphasis is on the struggle against the state, in the latter, however, is on the struggle against their family. This difference stems from the fact that the former are more educated and work in relatively better jobs so that they feel familial pressure less.

Men however do not tell their life stories as personal struggles for their identity but rather as part of a collective struggle for socialism. They, therefore, identify with a political party or a movement. Men's stories are also marked by a change which makes their narratives a story of development. The majority of men attribute this change to their entrance to the Private Surp Haç Tıbrevank High School where they met with the idea of socialism. Furthermore, while in their narratives of the past, both men and women stress their struggle for their identity or socialism, they represent future as dark and frightening. The fact that the crimes against them remain unpunished makes them concern about their children's future. Many said they did not prefer to give their children Armenian names not to make their identity publicly readable. The difference between the narratives of the past and future lies in the difference between what they themselves have experienced and what kind of a life that they think their children should have. To put it differently, for them, being Armenian necessitated a constant struggle so that Armenianness was associated with resistance. Yet they do not desire their children too experience Armenianness in the same way.

In the fourth chapter, I analyzed three important themes that were repeated in the narratives: conversion, marriage and migration. All these experiences are told as survival tactics in an environment where being

Armenian necessitates a constant struggle. For many interviewees, conversion is acceptable only if it is a tactic. In Anatolia where they had lived before migrating to Istanbul they did not have any other options except conversion. And yet, in Istanbul where there is an Armenian community having institutions, they remark, they can reconvert to Christianity. If they do not so, it means that conversion was not tactical but real, which contaminates Armenian identity.

Marriage is another survival tactic for Armenians. Marriage is narrated either as a sacrifice or a price for freedom. It is seen as a tactic which enables Armenians to protect their identities. Migration is also told as a part of a struggle that the narrators were born into. Rather than being a story of progress and modernization, it is narrated as another survival tactic in Anatolia. They remark that it was an ultimate option if they rejected to convert to Islam or marry Muslims. Otherwise, they would have faced economic pressure, threat of abduction, social exclusion or death.

In the fifth chapter, I showed how major events and political transformations in the recent history of Turkish Republic were experienced by Armenians and in local settings. The confiscation of Armenian properties is seen by the interviewees as a continuous practice both by legal means and by force. Yet the confiscation resulted in not only material loss for Armenians but also erasure of their experiences and memories inscribed on these properties such as lands and houses. In addition to confiscation, The Democrat Party's election victory, events of 6-7 September, and the emergence of ASALA and assassination of Hrant Dink are the most recurring events in the narratives

affecting Armenians deeply. These phenomena are told in a way if they influenced whole Armenian society in Turkey similarly.

This thesis concerned a topic which has so far received little to no attention. Perhaps because of this reason, I would suggest, this thesis that can be considered a first attempt to get into the topic raises many important questions for further academic research. For example, my research was mostly done with middle-aged people and the elderly. Yet what would young generation of this community who were born into an atmosphere where knowledge about the past is more accessible via multimedia think about the recent history, their familial past and their own life? Furthermore, as seen in this thesis, a homogenous Armenian identity is depicted as ‘hardworking’, ‘honest’, and ‘rebellious’, when the narrators compare themselves with other ethnicities. On the other hand, social class and local identity of the narrator also differentiate his/her narratives from others. Based on class and birth-place, narrators differentiate themselves from other Armenians with different backgrounds. Their relationship with different communities such as Assyrians or relations among different communities within Armenian society is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, we would ask: How local identity does diversify the perceptions of ‘the other’ within Armenian community? To what extent does social class shape the self-representation of Armenians vis-à-vis different Armenian communities in Istanbul? Lastly, as seen again in this thesis, since the 1915 is still seen as an ongoing date, life stories are indeed told as stories of struggle. Therefore, it should be noted that while what is told is to demonstrate the struggle they made, there should be also untold and silenced stories that a researcher has to take into account. The time that they

lived as Muslims undoes the stories of struggle and resistance. Thus, a further investigation on Islamized Armenians and their experiences in Anatolia can give us a more comprehensive picture of the post-1915 in Anatolia.

APPENDICES

A. Transcription of Interview with Krikor (Turkish)

Can: Nerede ne zaman doğdunuz? Bu şekilde başlayabiliriz.

Krikor: 1941 yılında Amasya'nın Gümüşhacıköy ilçesinde doğdum. Annem Merzifonluydu babam. Çocukluğum Gümüşhacıköy'de geçti. İlkokulu bitirdim orada. Ortaokulda buraya geldim. 3 kardeşlik. Bir makale yazdım sana yollarım. Çocukluğumuz babalarımızın ayrı büyükannelerimizin ayrı hikâyeleriyle geçti. Büyükannelerimiz 1915'i yaşamışlardı onları anlatırlardı. Babalarımız da 20 kura askerliği ve varlık vergisi. Bu tür hikâyelerle büyüdük. Bu hikâyeler bizi daha sonra ne olmuşu araştırmaya yöneltti. Okudukça bu ülkede farklı alt kimliğe sahip toplum olarak başımıza neler geldiğini öğrendik. Biz babalarımızdan büyüklerimizden işittiklerimizi doğrudan doğruya bize anlattıklarından öğrenemedik. Kendi aralarında konuşurlardı. Biz içeriye girince susarlardı. Bizi yansıtmak istemezlerdi. Büyükannem vardı Merzifon Fransız Kolejinde okumuş kültürlü bir kadın. Biz çok çektik Allah düşmanımıza çektirmesin. Siz bu kötü günleri unutun bizden hiçbir şey öğrenmek istemeyin derdi. Benim kuşağım da yine azınlık karşıtı politikaların hala devam ettiğini gördük. 6 7 Eylül olaylarını yaşayan kuşağıyız. 15 yaşındaydım İstanbul'a geldiğim sene. 6 7 Eylül hem Ermeniler hem İstanbul'daki diğer azınlıklar için dönüm noktası oldu. Şimdi 1923'e kadarki süreçte Anadolu ve Trakya'daki Rumlar ve Ermeniler yok edildi. 1934'de Trakya'daki Yahudiler yok edildi. Ama İstanbul'dakiler kaldı. 1950'lilere kadar olan süreçte de Anadolu'daki Ermeniler İstanbul'a geldi. Resmi ideolojinin gereği olarak İstanbul'daki azınlıkların da yok

edilmesi gerekiyordu. Cumhuriyet'in ilk yıllarından itibaren meslek ve seyahat kısıtlamalarıyla başladı. Ticaret kısıtlamalarıyla başladı ve fiili uygulamalarla başladı. İşte 20 kura askerlik, varlık vergisi. 6 7 Eylül, 64 sürgünü. Ondan sonra sıra vakıflara mülksüzleştirme süreci başladı. Vakıfların mallarına el konuldu. Biz umudumuzu hep koruduk çünkü biz bu ülkenin vatandaşlarıydık. Biz dışarıdan gelmemiştik. Atalarımızın topraklarıydı burası. Çocuklarımıza hep bunu telkin ettik. Benim kızım avukat, GS Üniversitesi mezunu. Bitirince "Baba ben hâkim savcı sınavlarına gireceğim" dedi. Kızım girme dedim. Neden? Kızım seni hâkim savcı yapmazlar. Baba ben hukukçuyum öyle bir yasa kanun yok. Kızım yasa yok ama olamazsın. Olamazsın. Sonradan kızım ne demek istediğimi anladı. Türkiye'de şuanda Alevi kimliğiyle bir vali Kürt kimliğiyle bir vali var mı? Geçen buraya Bulgaristan göçmenleri federasyonundan bir bey geldi. Oradaki Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisinden söz ettik. Koalisyon ortağı. 4 bakan var. Vali var mı var. Polis var subay var. Burada yok ama. İttihat ve Terakki'den bu yana devletin resmi ideolojisinde bir değişiklik yok Biz özellikle 70li 80li yıllarda o karanlık kötü 12 Eylül öncesi dönemde ve ASALA terörünün devam ettiği dönemde çok sıkıntı çektik. Adeta yokmuşçasına yaşadık. Sokağa çıkmaya çekindik. Tanıdığımız kişilere isimlerimizi söylemeye çekindik. Piyasada sahte isimlerle iş yapmaya başladı arkadaşlarımız. Tabelalarda isimlerini indirdiler. Bu süreçlerden geçtik. Hala o korku içimizde devam ediyor. Bugün Anadolu'da artık Ermeni kalmadı. Kayseri'de Diyarbakır'daki son Ermeniler ölüyor. Bir zamanlar nüfusun yüzde 20sini oluşturan bir halk artık yok. Şuan biraz AKP iktidarında Cumhuriyet döneminde bizlerden esirgenen bazı şeyler haklar verildi. AKP'li

değilim CHP'liyim. Vakıflarımızın tasarrufuyla ilgili haklarımız verildi.

1974'te yargı kararıyla vakıflarımızın mülklerimiz elimizden alındı. İki sene önce kanun gücünde kararname çıkartıldı ve azınlık vakıflarının mülklerinin iadesi ile ilgili. Tamamı değilse bile net olarak bize ait olduğu ispatlanan mülkler geri verildi. Bir o kadar önemli olanda eldeki mülklerin tasarrufu mümkün değildi. Okulların çatısı akıyor tamir edemiyordun. Kiliseyi onarmak istiyordun yapamıyordun. İzin alacaksın ta Ankara'dan. Devreye azınlık tali komisyonu girecek oradan icazet çıkacak. Şimdi orada arsası varsa yapabiliyor. Cumhuriyet döneminde hep verici olmuşuz. Hep bizden alınmış haklarımız kısıtlanmış. Ama şuan bir nebze de olsa bu iktidar bize kapı aralamış ama nüfus kalmamış. Rumlar 1000 civarında biz 45000 Yahudiler 15000 bir o kadar Süryani. Yani Türkiye'deki azınlıklar şuan 1000'de bir değil. Biz azınlığız demiyorum biz azıcık olduk diyorum Azıcık olmak yok olmanın başlangıcıdır. Şimdi kodlama mevzusu çıktı.

Almanya'daki Türkler kodlansaydı başta Erzurum'daki üniversite ayağa kalkardı burada Radikal yazdı geçti gitti.

Can: Krikor Bey çok güzel çerçeve çiziyorsunuz ama çocukluğunuzdan başlasak. Sizin ev hayatınız, şehrin neresindeydiniz? Çocukluk arkadaşlarınız kimlerdi.

Krikor: Şimdi bizde köy yaşantısı yoktu. Şehirliydik ve şehirdekiler zanaatkârdı. Demirci, terzi, fırıncı, arabacı, berber, semerci, nalbant. Hepsi kasabadaki Ermenilerin elindeydi. 40'lı yılların sonu. Evimiz bağımız tarlamız vardı. Tarlada çiftçilik yapmazdık. Ortakçı dediğimiz eker oradan mahsulün yarısını bize verir yarısını kendine alır kış boyunca una dönüştürür evde bizzat kendi pişirirdi. Bizim oradaki yaşantımız belli bir bölge

içindeydik. Kasabanın bir tarafında Alevi bir tarafında Sünni mahallesi vardı biz ortadaydık. Kasabadakilerle komşuluk ilişkilerimiz çok iyiydi Alevi olanlarla da Sünni olanlarla da. Komşuluk ilişkilerimiz çok çok iyiydi. Gündüzleri kadınlar beraberdi. Sokaktaki çocuklar beraber oynardık. Devletin bize uyguladığı ayrımcılık politikasını biz oradaki yaşamımız boyunca komşularımızdan görmedik o bölgede. Burada da aynı şeyi söylerler. İkili ilişkilerimizde, arkadaşlıkta komşulukta devletin uyguladığı baskı ve şiddeti görmedik.

Can: Aileniz 1915'te de Amasya'da mı yaşıyormuş?

Krikor: 1915'te de oradaymış ailem. Benim babamın babası 1914'te, sana bir hikâye anlatayım çok önemli kullanırsın. 1914'te seferberlik ilan ediliyor ve dedem askere alınıyor. Babam dedem askerdeyken doğuyor ve dedem askerden dönmüyor. 1915 tehciri denilen olay başlıyor. 15 yaş altındaki erkek çocuklar ve kadınlar hariç herkesi götürüyorlar. Daha sonra 15 yaş altına düşürüp tekrar götürüyorlar. Dedem askere gitmiş bir daha dönmemiş. Biz biliyoruz ki 1915 süreci başladığında askerdeki Ermeniler de yük hayvanı gibi, silahsızlandırılarak ölene kadar kullanılıyor. Bizim orada güzel bir evimiz vardı ahşap konak. Baya konaktı çünkü o zaman aileler genişti. Babam askerden dönmüyor. Yıl 1914 15 gibi. Emval-i Metruke'yi biliyorsun. O değişik amaçlarla çıktı ama esasta 1915'te gönderilen Ermenilerin geride kalan mallarına el koymak sen vatan hainisin sen yurtdışına kaçtın senin evin hazineye kalacak. Bu ev de geliyorlar mal müdürlüğünden. Askere gitti bu asker kaçağı. Eviniz hazineye geçecek ve geçiyor hazineye. Evi boşaltın. O zaman evde büyükannem onun annesi ve babam yaşıyor. Babam tek çocukmuş çünkü dedem askere gidiyor ve

dönmüyor. o arada bir aile dostu Müslüman biri diyor ki gidin bir askerlik şubesinde bakın. Gidiyorlar bakıyorlar ki oraya kayıt düşmüş: Kafkasya Cephesinde o 90 bin kişinin öldüğü Sarıkamış'ta dedem ölmüş şubeye öyle geliyor. Askerlik şubesinde o bilgi var. O bilgiyi alıp mal müdürlüğüne gidiyorlar. Bizimkiler de daha evi boşaltmamış. Bizim evde bir piyano vardı o tarihte dedem piyano çalarmış. Piyano bize gitsin diyor mal müdürü gelin tapunuzu alın. Piyano oraya gidiyor. Babam diyor ki küçükmüş 7 8 yaşında olabilirmiş ağladım diyor çünkü çocukken o da çalmaya başlamış. Piyano gidiyor evin tapusu geri alınıyor. Aradan zaman geçiyor 10 15 yıl ben çocuktum aklım eriyor. Mal müdürünün tayini çıkıyor başka yere. Babam diyorlar ki sizin evden buraya piyano geldi, o piyano ahırda duruyor. O sizin eve yakışır ben onu satacağım burada kimse almaz bilmez. Sizin eve yakışır. Neyse gelin münasip şekilde onu alın. O zaman orada nakit para olmaz. İşte buğday tarladan üzüm bağdan geliyor. Kapalı ekonomi. Ne kadar? Şu kadar. Ben daha okula gelmemiştim. Babam büyükannemle tartışıyor. Senin birikmiş paran vardır ver de gidip piyanoyu alalım. O da diyor ki yok kefen paramdan başka bir şeyim yok diyor. Babamla büyükannemin o tartışmalarını çok iyi hatırlıyorum. Ben demek ki o zaman daha ilkokul çağındayım. 50'li yıllar. Küçük bir bağımızı vardı. İki tane vardı da teki küçüktü. Babam dedi o küçük bağı satalım. Babaannem dedi o babamdan kaldı sattırmam mattırmam sonuçta babamın dediği oldu o bağı sattılar kaç liraya sattılar bilmiyorum ama o piyanoyu aldılar geldi eve. Adam piyanoyu almış ama o kültür yok ki atmış bir köşeye. Sonra ben İstanbul'a geldim. Merzifon'dan dayılarım büyükannem buraya gelmişlerdi. Orada Ermeni kalmamıştı Topal Osman'da dolayı. Geldiler. Evimizde bir de tarlada

bulunmuş bir heykel vardı evin bahçesinde. Roma ya da Bizans devrinden kalma. Ben İstanbul'a geldikten sonra bizim Gümüşhacıköy'e bir müze yapıyorlar. Babama gelip demişler ki piyano ve o heykeli müzeye bağışla. Babam bana oradan mektup yazdı oğlum böyle böyle diye. Baba dedim heykeli ver ama piyanoyu verme. Orada benim bir arkadaşım bir abim kamyoncu vardı onu buldum. Ona haber saldım. Dedim İstanbul'a ilk yük buluşunda o piyanoyu buraya getir. Piyano geldi hala da evimde duruyor (Güler). 70'li yıllarda oldu bu... Film konusu gibi... İçinde 1915'e gidenlerin malları emval i metruke var.

Bir de bizim orada Anadolu'nun birçok yerinden farklı olarak Topal Osman var. En son Atatürk tarafından Ankara'ya çağrıldığında büyük taarruza katılması için 47. Alay ile beraber çağırıyorlar. O güzergâhta Samsun'dan Vezirköprü Merzifon Sungurlu 1915'ten kalan Ermenileri 1921'de ahşap evlere doldurup yakıyor. Büyükannem yaşıyor bunu.

Can: Onlar nasıl kurtulmuş?

Krikor: Gümüşhacıköy'den geçmemiş ama.

Can: Dolayısıyla sizinkiler Topal Osman'dan sonra da orada yaşamaya devam ediyorlar?

Krikor: Devam ediyorlar. Nasıl ediyorlar? Orada el tezgâhlarıyla dokuma işi yaparlardı. Kilise cumhuriyet döneminde 20li yıllarda yıkılmış. Devlet tarafından. Ee ben geçen sene Merzifon'a gittim. Orada 3 kilise varmış tekinin yüksek duvarları duruyor. Onun içine okul yapmışlar. İkinci kilisenin üzerinde "Merzifon Ermeni Kilisesi Diyanet Vakfı Kültür Merkezi

Restorasyonu” tabelası vardı. Üçüncü kilisenin yeri kalmamıştı. Kiliseler 1915’te tahrip edilmiş. Mülkler evler sahiplenilmiş. Kiliselerin yıkılışı cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarında olmuş. Belli bir tarihe kadar yıkılmış sonra kaderlerine terkedilmiş.

Can: Siz ilkokula orada gittiniz?

Krikor: Evet orada gittim ilkokula ortaokula. Çok az Ermeni vardı iki üç aile. Ahşap bir konaktı. Eski kilisenin yüksek duvarlarıyla çevriliydi. Ben sonradan öğrendim. Üç arkadaşlık okula giden Ermeni. O tarihlerde din dersi zorunluluğu yoktu. 50’den evvel mi yoktu? 50’den sonra Demokrat Parti ile geldi. Üç arkadaşlık. Din dersinde öğretmen bizi dışarı çıkartırdı. Biz de din dersinde avluda beklerdik. Çok üzerdi bizi o olay. Çocuklar dışarı çıkınca “gâvurlar derse girmiyor” derdi. Biz de kilisenin taş yüksek duvarın altında mahzun mahzun beklerdik. Sonradan ben hatırlıyorum programda din dersinin olduğu günlerde okula gitmek istemezdim. Zorla babam biraz sertti gideceksin okuyacaksın derdi. Hala daha onu unutamam. Bizim oradaki Ermenilerden bir farkı da şuydu. Eskiden de öyleymiş. Bizim evde piyano olması da bunu gösteriyor. Babam ut çalardı. Piyano da çalardı. Bütün evlerde bir çalgı aleti çalan vardı. Keman, kanun, klarnet. Her evde müzik vardı. Hele büyükannem anlatırdı ki onun babası İstanbul’dan müzik öğretmeni getirilirmiş. Samsun’a yaylı arabayla müzik öğretmeni gelirmiş. Türk müziği sanat müziği Oradan Amasya’nın diğer Anadolu illerinden bir farkı daha vardı. Mesela ben çocukken Türk Halk müziğini bilmezdim. Kasabada düğünlerde falan ut cümbüş kanun klarnet çalardı. Saz ve davul zurna yoktu. Amasya’da Türk Sanat müziği her yerde hâkimdi. Sanırım bu şehzadeler şehri olmasından kaynaklanıyor. Çocukluğumda hatırlarım karlı

havalarda el feneriyle komşulara giderdik. Bizde içki içilirdi. Küçük bakraçtan arkadaki ya da mahzendeki küpten bir bakraç şarap alınır. Kavurmayla falan etlik yapılırdı. Yer sofrası gelir. İçmeye başlarken ev sahibi udunu eline alırdı. Babam hangi enstrümanı çalıyorsa onu yanında götürürdü. Orada meşk yapılırdı. Türk müziğini çok severiz halen. Bunlar Ermeni ailelerdi. Bu gelenek sırf Ermenilere aittir. Müslümanlarda bu yoktu.

Can: Müslüman komşularla aranız nasıldı?

Krikor: Çok iyiydi. Çok çok iyiydi. Oradan buraya geldikten sonra da o dostluk hep devam etti. Ben erken geldim ama annem ve babam 70’li yıllarda geldi. O zamana kadar oradalardı. Ben geçen sene oraya gittiğimde eski evimizi babamın dükkânını bulduğumda komşular etrafımı sardılar. O kadar gururlandım ki. Bir komşu kadın geldi: Bu elbiseyi annen dikmişti bana. Bizde sanatkârdır herkes. Evdeki kız o işi bilir. Bizde mesleklere karşı özel yetenek vardır. “Bu elbiseyi Belçuk Hanım dikmişti annen dikmişti. Evde daha da var. Giderken bakır tenceresini şunu bana vermişti. Onun bende hakkı çoktur. Nerede kalıyorsun gel bizde kal. Öğretmenevinde kalıyordum. Oo olmaz gel bizim çocuklar gitti bizde yalnız kaldık. Yukarıda boş oda var olmaz öyle şey gel bizde kal. Ben onca yıl olmuş oradan kopmuşum gelmişim kimi tanırım. Ortaokuldaki arkadaşımı bile tanımam. Turistik gezi yaparım dedim ama tam tersi oldu.

Can: Sizinkiler vefat etmeden geldiler neden?

Krikor: Onlar yaşlandılar, biz buradayız. Artık Ermeniler de kalmamıştı. İş imkânı da kalmamıştı.

Can: Kaç kardeşsiniz?

Krikor: Ben en büyük çocuğum. Benden küçük erkek kardeşim var. Arada kız kardeşim var. Kız kardeşim Ankara'ya gitti evlenip.

Can: Okumaya Tıbrevank Lisesi'ne mi geldiniz?

Krikor: Hayır. Gelince Vefa Lisesi'ne başladım. Ortaokulu orada bitirdiğim için Ermenice bilmiyordum. Beni almadılar oraya Türkçe konuşuyordum. Ermenice konuşuyorlardı ama kırık Ermenice. Cümlelerin yarısı Türkçe yarısı Ermenice. Anlarım ama konuşamam. Babam da öyleydi. Büyükannem bilirdi, babaannem bilirdi. Anneannem hem Ermenice hem Fransızca bilirdi. Orada bir kültür kırılması da olmuş. Anadolu'da ciddi bir kültür kırılması olmuş. Ermeniler sanatkar insanlar güzel sanatların mesleklerin her dalında kendilerini ispat etmişler. 1915'te bu anlamda Anadolu'da bir kırılma oldu. 1955'te de İstanbul'da böyle oldu. En az 500 yıl İstanbul Anadolu'dan farklıydı. Anadolu'dan göçlere kapalıydı. Ancak Padişah fermanıyla gelebilirdi insanlar. Çoğunlukla da Ermeniler sanatkârlar getirilmiş Van'dan getirmiş Topkapı'ya Kayseri'den getirmiş kapıya. Hep kapılara yerleştirilmiş. İstanbul'da bir kent burjuva kültürü oluşmuş. İstanbul kültürü İstanbullunun birden fazla dil bilen, operaya giden Pera'ya giden. Masa. Yemeyi içmeyi bilen. İçki adabı, çatal bıçak kullanmayı bilen. İstanbul halkı bu. Ama 6 Eylül ve 60 sürgünlerinden varlık vergisinden 20 kura askerlikten sonra gitmeyenlerin beli tamamen kırıldı ve birden toplu olarak İstanbul'u terk ettirildiler. 60 bin Rum 24 saat içinde 20 kilo altın 22 Dolar ile hudut harici edildi. Giden insanlar 500 yıllık kültürü beraberinde götürdüler. Kendilerinden sonraki kuşaklara iletme şansı bulamadılar. Hala yaşlı

görürüm sağda solda benim ustam Ermeni'ydi Rum'du der ama o kuşak birden gitti naklemedi. O sarayları yapan Balyanlar'ın kuşağı o bilgiyi devralmadan gitti. 1915 Anadolu'da diyalektik bir kırılmaysa 6 Eylül'de İstanbul'da kültür kırılması oldu. O günden sonra İstanbul kültüründen bahsedilemez oldu. Yeşilköy'de oturuyorum. İnsanlar “Varoşlar sahile geliyor oraları kirletiyor” diye veryansın ediyorlar internet sitesinde. Onlar gelmesin diye. Oraya yazı yazdım. Nasıl gelmesin. İstanbul'da bir kültür kırılması oldu. Sen Yeşilköy'de oturuyorsun. Muhtar afiş asmış: Köpekleriniz sokaklarda pisletmeyin diye, kaldırıma çıkıp arabayı park ediyorsun. Yeşilköy'de oturuyorsun bunu yapıyorsun kent kültürün yok. Varoşlarda oturanın günahı yok. Kent kültürüne sahip olsa onu yapmaz. Donla denize giriyormuş girecek elbette. Almanya'ya gittiklerinde de onu yaptılar. Türk imajını zedelediler. O kültürü verememişiz. Ben ilk geldim 56'da. Dayımlar dedi ki oğlum ütüsüz pantolon boyasız ayakkabıyla dışarı çıkma. Hele Beyoğlu'na sinemaya gideceğim dur oğlum giy ceketini elbiseni öyle git. O günün kültürüydü o. Bugün öyle bir şey yok. Ama kılık kıyafetimiz uymasa bile kent kurallarını biliyoruz. Görme özürlüler için sesli bir de. Kimsenin dinlediği yok. Kent kültürü yok çünkü hemen olmaz birkaç nesil sonra.

Can: Siz gelince Vefa Lises'nde yatılı mı okudunuz?

Krikor: Hayır burada büyükannem vardı dayımlar vardı onların evinde kaldım. Beyazıt'ta Kumkapı'ya giden yokuşta tek oda evde yaşıyorduk. Amasya'dan göç edip oradaki evi satıp burada küçük ev aldı. Anadolu'dan İstanbul'a gelenlerin ilk durak yeri Kumkapı olmuştur. Adeta toplanma merkezi olmuştur. Orada küçük küçük odalar küçük tek katlı evler. Bir aile

için yapılmış küçük evin her odasında bir aile. Tutunanlar işini yoluna koyanlar Bakırköy'e Kurtuluş'a giderdi.

Can: Nerede vaftiz oldunuz?

Krikor: Orada oldum. Her sene bir şey gelirdi İstanbul'dan papaz. Orada oldum. O papaz her sene geldiğinde o sene vaftiz olacakları ederdi bizim evde büyük olduğu için. Sonra kaydım çıktı kilise nikâhım burada oldu. Çocuklarım burada oldu. İlk kez kiliseye burada gittim. Ermenice dua bilmem. Dini bütün biri de değilim.

Can: Vefa Lisesi'nde hiç sıkıntı yaşadınız mı?

Krikor: Vefa lisesinde zorluk çekmedim bir iki Ermeni vardı. Anadolu'nun pek çok yerinden insanların geldiği bir yerdi. Üniversiteye gitmedim. 30 yaşında evlendim. İş hayatına okula giderken, o zamanlar Cumartesi günler okul olmazdı. Çarşamba öğleden sonra olmazdı. Ayakkabıcı yanına giderdim. Sonra askerden geldikten sonra gene çalıştım ayakkabıcıda tezgâhtarlık yaptım. Ermenilerin yanında çalıştım. Bakırköy'de dükkân açtım butik. Sonra değişik işlerde çalıştım. Bilgisayar oyunları sattım. Askerden geldikten sonra siyasetle uğraşmaya başladım. Eski Türkiye İşçi Partisi'nde. Behice Boranların Mehmet ali Aybar'ların 64 senesi partinin kuruluşu. O günden bugüne politikanın içindeyim. 22 yaşında gittim askere İzmir'de. İki yıl soldu. Sıhhiye eriydim. Er olarak yaptım.

Can: İsminizden dolayı sıkıntı yaşadınız mı orada?

Krikor: Yaşamadım ama orası çok entesan bir yerdi. Ben oraya gittim sıhhiye birliği İzmir'deyim. Hava kara deniz bütün askerler sıhhiye eğitimi yapıyor.

Bizi çağırıldılar. Kısa boylu bir tabip albay vardı. Yeni gelen erlere isim soruyor. Babamın ismi Matyos'tu. Bana geldi sıra. Bizi ayırdı. Bizi orada karargâha aldı. Beni istihbarata aldı. Şimdi mümkün değil Ermeni'nin istihbarata alınmasın. Sonra öbürkölere baktım. Vangel diye bir çocuk. Onu kendine şoför yaptı. Hrant diye bir çocuk hiç unutmam Ordu'dan onu kendine kumandan postacısı yaptı. Baktım ki orada kalıcı birliktekilerin hepsi gayrimüslim. Niye o öyle yaptı o albay? Onlara güvendiği için mi işi daha iyi yaptıkları için mi bilmiyorum ama çok çok rahat ettik orada.

Can: Kaçlı yaşlarda evleniyordu insanlar? Müslüman Ermeni arasında evlilik olur muydu?

Krikor: Olmazdı. Bir erkek askerden geldikten sonra ilk iş evlenmek olurdu çünkü orada meslekler babadan oğula geçerdi. Askerden gelir gelmez evlenir baba mesleğine geçilirdi. Benim kuşakla beraber İstanbul'a gelince yüksek tahsil süreci başladı. Dolayısıyla böyle ortaokulu bitiren çocukların hepsi benden sonra İstanbul'a geldi. Burada ilkokulu bitirip gelenler Ermeni ilkokuluna başladı.

Can: Amasya'da din değiştirip Müslümanlaşan oldu mu?

Krikor: Benim dönemimde olmadı. Zamanında olanlara da zaten gâvur Ahmet derlerdi. Bizim orada bir tane vardı...(Sessizlik) Ben size bir şey söyleyeyim mi? Dedim ya anne tarafım Merzifonlu diye. Şimdi 1915'te önce erkekleri götürmüşler sonra geride kalanlara demişler ki Müslümanlığı kabul ederseniz kalacaksınız. Bir kısmı Müslümanlığı kabul etmiş. Kalmışlar onlar. Annemin babası sonradan Müslümanlığı kabul edip gitmeyenlerden. Sonradan annemin kimliğinde din kısmında Müslüman yazıyordu.

Benimkinde de din kısmında Müslüman yazıyordu. Annemin ismi Zekiye yazıyordu. Normalde Bercuhuydu. Sonra mühür vardı. Şu şu mahkeme kararıyla Zekiye Bercuhi olarak değiştirildi diye. Annemin nüfus kağıdında baba ismi ne yazıyordu biliyor musun? Muhtedi Adil, Dönme Adil. Yapraklı nüfus kağıdında. Yanarım yanarım onu saklamadığıma. Dönsen de o damgayı yemişsin bir kere yani. Babamda yazmıyordu. Babamınki de Müslümandı haa. Onlar da değiştirmiş sonra. Türkiye’de 1915’ten sonra kalan aileler iki türlü kalmış. Bir din değiştirerek öbürü de her şeyi göze alan komşunun hayırseverin yardımıyla. Bizim orada 1915’te dönenlerin orası Samsun bölgesi İngiliz işgal bölgesi. İngilizler 1918’te İngilizler geldikten sonra Samsun Ordu Fatsa, Havza Merzifon o bölge 1918’de Müslümanlığı kabul ederek dönenlerin eski kimliğini iade etmişler. Ama ondan sonra 3 yıl sonra Topal Osman geldiğinde hepsini büyük bir bölümünü yakmış. Bizimkiler de geri almış. Üç yıl Müslüman olup geri almışlar. Annemin o kimliği dedem dönmemiş. Muhtedi Adil olmuş ve Hristiyanlığa dönmemiş. Sonuna kadar öyle gitmiş. Dayım da annem de orada değiştirmişler. Artık o evlendikten sonra, ben de doğduktan sonra. Benim yapraklı nüfus cüzdanımda o damga vardı. Ben doğduktan sonra değiştirmiş. Zekiye silinmiş eski ismini almış ben doğduktan sonra. Annemin ismi Bercuhi olmuş ama baba ismi mühtedi Adil kalmış.

Can: O zaman sizin oradaki tüm Ermeniler o süreci sizin gibi mi yaşamışlar?

Krikor: Tabi tabi ama hiçbir zaman pratik etmemişler. İşte yaşam onları buna zorlamış. Şimdi de Anadolu’da böyle çok var. Bana çok kimse geliyor.

Buraya gelir. Tanırım tanımam işi içi gelir. İşte ben anlarım bir şey

söyleyecek. Kendini rahat hissederse kimse işitmeyecek gibi der ki benim büyük annem Ermeni dönmesi biz kılıç artıyız. Biri girince hemen susar.

Can: (Ben annemin babaannesini anlatıyorum)

Can: Eşinizle nasıl tanıştınız?

Krikor: Çalıştığım yerde tanıştık. Bahçekapı'da bir ayakkabı mağazasında tezgahtardım o da karşı dükkanda kuaförde tezgahtardı. Böyle dükkân komşusuyduk. Ermeni'ydi. Öyle tanıştık. Sonra anasından babasından usulen evlendik. Gedikpaşa kilisesinde 1971'de oldu nikâhımız. İki kızım oldu. Bakırköy'e taşındık 40 küsur yıldır buradayız. Amasya'dan gelirken evi bağı bahçeyi sattık. Annem babam için zor oldu. Hatırlıyorum ağlayarak ayrıldılar oradan. Ben askerden dönünce gelmiştim. Babam oradaki malları satacağı zaman bana haber verdi gel paraları al diye. Günübirlik gittim o zaman. Hatırlıyorum hala. Babam ve annem çok üzgündü. Oradan ayrılmak onlar için çok zordu. Evimiz konaktı. İki sene evvel gittiğimde evimiz yıkılmıştı. Yanda bir inşaat yapılırken yıkılmış. Bir de tescil etmişler binayı eski eser diye. Alan da eski haline uygun olarak yapmamış öyle arsası duruyordu. Domates salatalık falan ekmişler. Hepsi dümdüz olmuş. O zaman ki ölçülerle kıyaslayamıyorum ama iki katlıydı 7 oda vardı. Düğünler hep bizim evde olurdu. Gözüme büyük gözükürdü.

Can: Siz ilk geldiğinizde özler miydiniz memleketinizi?

Krikor: Şimdi ben hala. Ben çok az rüya görürüm. Çok çok az rüya görürüm. Ben rüya görürsem çocukluğumu hatırlarım. Bisikletle gezdiğim sokakları evimizi. Hep oraları görürüm. Benim eşim çok rüya görür, film gibi görür.

Ben görmem. Görsem orayı görürüm. Bunu nasıl yorumlarsın bilmem. Evimiz caddede idi. Trafik mrafik yoktu. Çocuklarla dokuztaş oynardık bisikletimiz vardı. Eski dökük bisikletleri tamir ederdik. Bahçemizde çat çat eski ıvır zıvır şeyler doluydu. Marangozluk işlerine hevesliydim onlarla uğraşırdım. Dediğim gibi hep orayı görürüm. Demek ki kişiliğimizle bütünleşmiş. Şimdi anadil nedir? Anadil rüyaların dilidir. Ana dil konuştuğun dil değil rüyaların dilidir. Benim rüyalarımın dili hem Türkçedir hem de doğduğum yerdir.

Can: Ermenice öğrendiniz mi sonradan?

Krikor: Okuma yazma değil ama konuşmayı bilirim.

Can: Varlık vergisinde çocuk muydunuz?

Krikor: Varlık vergisi İstanbul'a vurdu. Anadolu'daki insanın neyi olacak ki. Benim o konularda çok yazılarım var... 6 7 Eylül olayları o zamanki sol görüşlü aydınlara yükletildi. O bir provokasyon biliyorsun.

Can: Peki siz Amasya'da duydunuz mu 6 7 Eylül'ü?

Krikor: Tabi tabi gazeteler de geliyordu. Geriliyor korkuyorduk.

Hatırlıyorum babam hemen beni gazete almaya gönderdi. Radyodan işittik ajanstan. Babam filan yerden gazete al ve saklayarak getir demişti.

Can: Başka bir şey soracağım. Orada olanları bilip orada yaşamaya devam ediyorsunuz?

Krikor: O korku hep var ama nereye gideceksin? O korku hep var. Ama komşuna güveniyorsun ama devlete güvenmiyorsun. Komşudan bana zarar

gelmez diyorsun. O komşuluk ilişkisinden Ahmet Bey'den bana zarar gelmez diyorsun ama devlet kapısından çekiniyorsun korkuyorsun. Çalıştığım yerde patronun babası vardı şöyle derdi: "Beylik çeşmenin önünden geç susuzsan bile beylik suyundan içme." Devlet kapısından geç zorunluysan bile kapıdan içeri girme. Yani devletle barışık değildik biz. 1890'lardan Hamidiye alaylarından itibaren. O çeyrek asırda bir renk yok edildi.

Can: İş hayatında bir sıkıntı yaşadınız mı?

Krikor: Hayır yaşamadım. Ben Ermeniler içerisinde şanslıyım. Belediye başkan yardımcılığına kadar yükseldim. Partiden ziyade başkan yardımcısının anlayışı. Çünkü başkanlar genelde parti programı dışına kendi siyasi ve yönetim anlayışını belediyeye yansıtan başkanlık sistemi. 3 Ermeni 1 Süryani Belediye meclisi üyesi arkadaşımız var burada. Müdürümüz var. Bu belediye Türkiye standartlarının çok ötesinde. En yetkili kişiyim. 22 birim bağlı bana. Herkese eşit davranırım. Bakırköy'deki cami külliyesinin cemaati buradaki Rum Süryani kilisesi belediyeye eşit mesafede. 3 dönemdir meclis üyesi 2 dönemdir başkan yardımcısıyım. 15 yıldır. 10 yıldır başkan yardımcısıyım.

Can: Nasıl başladınız?

Krikor: Askerden gelince TİP'e girdim. Öteden beri siyasetle biraz fazla içli dışlı oldum. 80 öncesi ve sonrası partiler kapatılınca önce DSP kurucusu sonra SDP sonra CHP açılınca CHP. Ama benim asıl siyasi duruşum eski TİP'tir. Ben Mehmet Ali Aybar'ın Behice Hoca'nın öğrencisi gibi görürüm. Ve sol terbiyemi de hep korumaya çalışırım. CHP ile birçok konuda

uyuşmam herkes beni bu kimliđimle tanır. Yaşam tarzı halindedir kimliđim.
Ermenileri temsilen burada bulunmuyorum. Siyasetin içinden geliyorum.

Can: Eklemek istediđiniz başka bir şey var mı?

Krikor: Arnavutköy’de bir Rum kilisesine düđüne gittik. Kız Ermeni damat
Rum. Gördüğüm en büyük güzel kilise. Sonra öğrendim ki 1914
salnamesinde 6000 Rum yaşıyormuş orada. Belli zaten çok büyük. Orada
enteresan bir şey var. Sokađa açılan kapıda belediye etkinlik yapmış stantlar
falan kitaplar falan. Ve müzik platformu kurulmuş. Etnik müzik. Rumca.
Ara sıra Yahudice Ermenice. Çođunlukla Rumca. Sanırım biraz da düđüne
jest olsun diye. Kiliseye girdik. Kilisede bir baktım Rum cemaati yok. Kimse
yok. Orada sordum. Dediler ki 14 kişi kalmış orada. Çođunluğu kız tarafı da
Ermeni Sivaslı Malatyalı Arapgirli. Bizimkiler ađırlıktaydı. O konuyu bir
yazıya döktüm. Konuyu Türkçe Konuş Vatandaşa getirdim. Bir zamanlar o
sokaklarda Türkçe konuş vatandaş sloganları. Rumca gazete almama.
Otobüste şurada burada insanlar tartaklanır. O günlerde bir arkadaşımı
Yunanistan’da bir tanıdığı evlenmiş. Kız buraya turist rehberi Türkçesini
geliştirmek için gelmiş. Kız dedi ki annem İstanbul’a gelirken sakın ha
gittiğinde sokakta Rumca konuşma dedi. Şimdi orada o müziđi duyunca o
aklıma geldi. İnsanlar o korku ile oradan gittiler. Bir zamanlar o kuşakların
büyüklerine Rumca konuşma diye bađırılıyordu. Şimdi Rumca şarkı
söyleniyor ama Rum yok.

B. Transcription of Interview with Krikor (English)

Can: When and where were you born? We can start from this point.

Krikor: I was born in Amasya's district Gümüşhacıköy in 1941. My mother was from Merzifon and my father was from Gümüşhacıköy. I grew up in Gümüşhacıköy. I finished the primary school there. I came here when I started to secondary school. We were 3 siblings. We listened to our father's and grandmothers' stories during our childhood. Our grandmothers witnessed the 1915 and told it. Our fathers told the Twenty Classes and wealth tax. We grew up with those stories. Those stories made us to search what happened. As we read, we learned what we witnessed as a different identity in this country. We did not learned those stories from what our fathers told us, rather we learned them. They did not want us to learn. when they talked each other. They silenced when we entered. My grandmother studied in Merzifon French College, she was an educated and cultured woman. She said "We suffered a lot, I would not wish that on my worst enemy. Forget those bad days, don't want to learn anything about it". We grew up with those advices but my generation witnessed that those policies against minorities continued. My generation witnessed the continuation of policies against non-Muslims. We witnessed the September 6-7 events. I was 15 years old when I came to Istanbul. September 6-7 was the turning point for both Armenians and other minorities in Istanbul. Until 1923, Greeks and Armenian were exterminated in Anatolia and Thrace. Jews in Thrace were exterminated in 1934. But they remained in

Istanbul. Armenians came to Istanbul from Anatolia until the 1950s. Official ideology dictated the annihilation of minorities in Istanbul. From the beginning of the republic, it was manifested through the restrictions on [non-Muslim's] profession and travel. It started with restrictions on trade and de facto applications. Twenty classes, wealth tax, September 6-7, the 64 exile. Then dispossession of foundations started. Properties of foundations were seized. We protect our hope always because we were citizens of this country. We did not come from abroad. It was our ancestors' land. We suggest this to our children. My daughter is lawyer, she graduated from the Galatasaray University. After her graduation, she said that she wanted to take prosecutor exams. I said "Don't take this exam". Why? "They do not let you to be prosecutor or judge." "Dad, I am lawyer and there is no such a rule or regulation". "There is no law but you can't. You cannot." My daughter understood what I meant later. Is there any governor with an Alevite or Kurdish identity in Turkey? A man from Bulgarian federation came here recently. We talked about the political party, Right and Freedoms Party there. It is a coalition partner. They have 4 ministers. They have governor, they have police and soldier. But there is not here. There is no change in state policy after the Committee of Union and Progress. We suffered a lot during that dark and bad pre-12 September era and ASALA terror in 1970's and 1980's. We lived as if we did not exist. We bewared of going out. We bewared of telling our names to people we met. Our friends started to use different names in business. They changed their name on signboards. We experienced this. We still have

the same fear. Now there is no Armenian in Anatolia. The last Armenians in Kayseri and Diyarbakır are dying. The people who once composed the 20 percent of the population is not there now. Some rights that were not given to us during the republic are given by the AKP government. I support CHP, not AKP. Our rights on foundations' properties are given. They confiscate our properties in 1974 with a law. They made a new law two years ago and it was about the return of minority foundations' properties. Not the all, but those properties that we can prove that they belong to us are returned. The use of properties was also limited. The schools' roofs are ruined but you could not repair it. You wanted to repair the church but you could not. You should have permission from Ankara. The minority commission should intervene and permit the change. Now, it is possible to do these changes. We were generous during the republic. We gave a lot and they limited our rights. This government made up with us but there is no Armenian population now. The Greeks are around 1.000, we are 45.000, Jews and Assyrians are 15.000. I mean the proportion of minorities in Turkey is less than one per thousand. I don't say that we are minority, I say we are few. Being few means to be extinct. Now, there is the issue of coding. If the Turks were coded in Germany, the university in Erzurum would react firstly. Only *Radikal* made news and it is forgotten.

Can: You draw a good frame for the subject. How about your childhood? Your life in house? Where were you in the city? Who were your friends?

Krikor: We did not have a village life. We lived in city and we were the artisans in the city. Blacksmith, tailor, baker, carman, barber, horseshoer. All

those were done by Armenians in the city. It was the end of 1940's. We had house, vineyard and land. We did not farm. There were sharefarmers who farmed and gave us the half of the production. They made flour and cooked it in their houses. We were living in a distinct space there. Alevis were living in one side and Sunnis were living in the other side of the city and we were in the middle. Our relations were very well with both Alevi and Sunni neighbors. Our relations with neighbors were very well. The women were together during the day. The children played together in the streets. We did not witness the discriminatory policies that the state used against us from our neighbors. The same is said here too. We did not experience the oppression and violence that the state used in our relations with neighbors and friends.

Can: Was your family living in Amasya during the 1915?

Krikor: Yes, my family was there in 1915. I will tell you a story, you can use it. In 1914, it was declared mobilization and my grandfather was conscripted. My father was born when my grandfather was in the army and my grandfather did not come back. So called 1915 deportation started. They brought everyone except boys under 15 years old and women. Then they decreased the age under 15 and brought again. My grandfather joined the army and never came back. We know that they used Armenians, who were disarmed, as beasts of burden until they died in the army. We had a beautiful house there (Amasya), wooden mansion. It was a mansion because families were larger in those times. My grandfather did not come back, it was 1914 or 1915. You know Emval-i Metruke. Its aim was different and it was used to confiscate properties of Armenians who were deported. It was said "You are a traitor. You escaped abroad and your properties will belong to the treasury.

They came to this house from fiscal directorate. “He joined the army, he is deserter. “Your house will belong to the treasury” and it was. “Leave the house”. My grandmother, her mother and my father were living there. My father was only child because my grandfather did not come back from the army. A Muslim neighbor said “Go and look at in a recruiting office”. They went and learned that my grandfather died in Sarıkamıs where 90 thousand soldiers died in Caucasus front. There was that information in the recruiting office. They went to fiscal directorate with this information. They were still living in the same house. There was a piano, my grandfather played the piano. Fiscal directorate said “Bring the piano and I will give you the deed back. The piano was sent there. My father said that he was a little child, 7 or 8 years old, and he cried because he also started to play piano. Piano was sent and they had the deed again. Then time passed and after 15 years old – I was a child I can remember – fiscal directorate was appointed to another city. They told my father that “We have a piano which came from your house, it is in the barn. We will sell it but nobody knows its value here. Come and buy it”. There was no cash money in that time. Wealth came from the farm and grape from the vineyard. Closed economy. I was not a student yet. My father discussed with my grandmother. “You have money, give me some money and I will bring the piano back”. And she said that she had only shroud money. I remember that they discussed about it. Maybe I was primary school student. 1950s. we had a small vineyard. We had two but one of them was small. My father wanted to sell it. My grandmother said “No, it was my father’s. I don’t sell it”. In the end, my father sold it and bought the piano back. That guy took the piano but he did not have that culture, he left it there.

Then I came to Istanbul, my uncles were here. In Merzifon, no Armenian remained because of Topal Osman. The came here. In our house's garden there was also a statue. It was Roman or Byzantium. After I came to Istanbul, they founded a museum in Gumushacikoy. They came and said to my father "Grant the statue and piano to the museum". My father sent me a letter to explain what happened. I said him to give the statue but not the piano. I had a friend who was a truck driver. I wanted him to bring the piano to Istanbul. The piano came and it is still in my house (Laughs). It was 1970's. It is like a film story. It has both the properties of deported people in 1915 and Emval-i Metruke law.

Different from the rest of Anatolia we also have Osman the Lame. Atatürk called him to go Ankara to participate the Great Offensive with the 47th troop. He brought into wooden houses and burned all survived Armenians from 1915 in that route from Samsun to Vezirköprü, Merzifon and Sungurlu in 1921. My grandmother witnessed it.

Can: How did she survived?

Krikor: He did not pass through Gümüşhacıköy.

Can: Then, your family continued living there even after Osman the Lame.

Krikor: Yes, they did. How did they do it? There were people who weaved through handloom. The church was demolished in 1920s. By the state. I went to Merzifon last year. There were three churches, the walls of one of them are still there. They built a school within it. There was a signboard on which it was written "Cultural Center Restoration of Merzifon Armenian Church

Religious Foundation” on the second church. There was nothing from the third church. The churches were destroyed in 1915. The properties and houses were confiscated. The churches were demolished during the first years of the republic. They were destroyed and later doomed.

Can: Did you start the primary school in Amasya?

Krikor: Yes, I went to the primary school there. There was few Armenians, two or three families. It was a wooden. It was surrounded by the high walls of the old church. I learned it later. We were three Armenian friends in that school. The religion lesson was not obligatory. This obligation came with the Democrat Party. We were three friends. The teacher get out of us from the religion lesson. We were waiting in the yard during the religion lesson. This upset us a lot. The children said “*Gavurs* do not attend the class” after the course. We were waiting near the high stone walls of the church innocently. I remember that I did not want to go to the school when there was religion lesson on the program. My father was rigid and said “You will go and study!” I do not forget it. The difference of Armenian in Amasya is that...It was the same in the past. The piano in our house also proves it. My father played lute. He played piano. There were musical instruments in all houses. Violin, zither, clarinet. There was music in all houses. My grandmother told that her father brought music teacher from Istanbul. Music teacher came to Samsun by spring cart. Turkish classical music. There was a difference between Amasya and other cities in Anatolia. For instance, I did not know Turkish Folk Music when I was a child. They played lute, mandolin, zither, clarinet in the weddings. There was not saz and shawm and drum. Turkish Classical Music dominated everywhere in Amasya. I think the reason is that

it was the city of princes. I remember that we visited the neighbors in snowy days with torches when I was a child. We drank alcohol. We took a bucket of wine from the vault. We cooked fried meat. They prepared floor table. The host played lute when they started to drink. My father brought his instrument with him. They made music there. We still love Turkish classical music. Those were Armenian families. This tradition belongs to Armenians only. The Muslims did not have this tradition.

Can: How was your relations with Muslim neighbors?

Krikor: It was nice. Very nice. This friendship continued even after we came here. I came early but my father and mother came in 1970's. They stayed there until that date. When I visited there last year and found our old house and my father's shop, the neighbors surrounded me. I was very proud. A female neighbor said that "Your mother sewed this dress for me. Everybody artist in our community. The girl in the house has know how. "Ms. Berçuk sewed this dress, your mother sewed it. I have more in the house. ", "She gave me her copper pot before she leaved. I owe her a lot". "Where do you stay? Come and stay with us." I was staying in the teacher's house. "No, you cannot. Our children have gone. Come and stay with us. We have a room in the upstairs, come and stay with us". It was a long time that I came to Istanbul and I did not remember anyone. I even do not remember my friend from the secondary school. I wanted to make a touristic visit but it was different.

Can: Why did your family come to Istanbul before they died?

Krikor: They were old and we were here. There was no Armenian there.
There was no job opportunity there.

Can: How many sibling do you have?

Krikor: I am the oldest one. I have a brother who is younger than me. I also have a sister. My sister went to Ankara after she married.

Can: Did you studied in Tibrevank High School?

Krikor: No, I started to the Vefa High School. As I started to the secondary school in Amasya I could not speak Armenian. They did not accept me to the Tibrevank because I spoke Turkish. They spoke Armenian but it was not perfect. The half of the sentence was Armenian and the rest was Turkish. I understand but I cannot speak. So does my father. My mother's mother and my father's mother spoke Armenian. My mother's mother spoke both Armenian and French. There was also a cultural break. There was a serious cultural break in Anatolia. Armenian who were artisans proved their talent in all crafts. There was a break in 1915. It was the same in Istanbul in 1955. Istanbul was different from Anatolia for at least 500 years. It was closed to migration from Anatolia. People could only came by the sultan's permit. Mainly, Armenian artisans from Van or Kayseri were brought to Topkapı. There were settled in Topkapı etc. There emerged a city bourgeois culture in Istanbul. Istanbulite people spoke more than one language, they went to opera in Pera. Table. They knew how to eat and drink. Alcohol culture, know how to use folk and knife. It was Istanbul people. I think the survivors were damaged more after 6 September, exile in 1960, capital tax, twenty classes and they were forced to leave Istanbul. 60.000 Greeks were expelled in 24

hours and they were allowed to take only 20 kg gold and 22 Dollars. They brought a 500 years culture with them. They did not have opportunity to transmit this knowledge to the next generation. I still see old people who said that their masters were Greeks or Armenians but that generation had gone and had not transmitted their knowledge. The Balyan family who built those palaces left the country without transmitting their knowledge. If the 1915 was a dialectical break in Anatolia, 6 September was the break in Istanbul. After that date, the Istanbul culture disappeared. I live in Yeşilköy. On websites, people complained that the slum dwellers picnicked in the seaside and polluted it. Why should not them come? There was a cultural break in Istanbul. You live in Yeşilköy. The chief post papers on which it is written “Don’t let your dogs pollute the streets”. You park your car on pavements. You live in Yeşilköy but do all these. You do not have a city culture. Slum dwellers do not have any mistake. If he/she has city culture, he/she would not do this. “They swim with underpants”. They did the same when they migrated to Germany. They damaged Turkish image. We could not give that culture. I came to Istanbul in 1956. My uncles said “Son do not go out without unironed pants and dirty shoes”. If I went to Beyoğlu, they said “Take your jacket”. It was the culture. There is not such a culture now. We know the city rules even if we do not wear well. It is audible for visually impaired people. Nobody took it seriously. There is not a city culture because it needs more time.

Can: Did you study on boarding school in Vefa?

Krikor: No, my grandmother and uncles were living here and I stayed with them. We lived in a one-roomed house on the way to Kumkapı in Beyazıt.

She sold her house in Amasya and bought a small house here. The first place that people came Istanbul from Anatolia was Kumkapı. It was like a concentration place. There were small rooms and small houses. There were families in all different rooms in a house. Those who could earn money went to Bakırköy and Kurtuluş.

Can: Where were you baptized?

Krikor: I was baptized there (Amasya). A priest came from Istanbul every year. I was baptized there. This priest baptized all children in our house since it was large. Then, I was registered and my church wedding was organized here. My children were born here. I cannot pray in Armenian. I am not a religious person.

Can: Did you have any difficulty during your education in the Vefa High School?

Krikor: No, I did not. There were two Armenians in Vefa High School. It was a school where many students came from different parts of Anatolia. I did not go to university. I married when I was 30 years old. I started working when I was student. There was not lesson on Saturdays. There was no lesson Wednesday afternoons. I work with a shoemaker. After I came from military service, I started working again, I was salesclerk in a shoe store. I worked with Armenians. I opened a shop in Bakırköy. Then I worked at several different works. I sold computer games. I also started to be interested in politics after I finished military service. In the old Turkish Workers' Party. It was founded in 64 by Behice Boran and Mehmet Ali Aybar. I am in politics

since that day. I went to the military service in Izmir when I was 22 years old. It lasted two years. I was aid man.

Can: Did you have any difficulty there because of you name?

Krikor: No, I did not but it was a very strange place. I went to Izmir for medical company. All soldiers had medical training there. They called us. There was a short doctor colonel. He asked the names of new comers. My father name is Matyos. It was my turn. He separated us. He took us to the camp. He took me to the intelligence service. It is not possible for an Armenian to enter the intelligence now. Then I looked at the others. There was Vangel. He made him his driver. He made Hrant who was from Ordu his postman. I realized that all were non-Muslim in permanent unit. Why did he do this? I don't know if he trusted us or not but we were very comfortable there.

Can: When did people marry in Amasya? Was there intermarriage in Amasya?

Krikor: No, there was not. The first thing that a man did after coming from the military service was to marry because the occupation transmitted from father to son there. As soon as they finished their military service they married and started their fathers' job. With my generation, higher education started with coming to Istanbul. Thus, all children who finished secondary school came to Istanbul after me. They started to Armenian schools here.

Can: Was there anyone who converted to Islam in Amasya?

Krikor: There wasn't when I was there. The converts were called "gavur" Ahmet. There was one when I was there... (silence) Can I tell you something? As I said before my mother is from Merzifon. They took the men before 1915 and said to the rest "If you accept Islam you can stay here". Some of them converted to Islam. They stayed. My mother's father is one of those who converted to Islam and stayed. It was written Islam on my mother's identity card. It was written Islam on my identity card too. My mother's name was Zekiye on her identity card. But actually it was Bercuhi. There was a seal. It was written that her name was changed from Bercuhi to Zekiye by the court decision. Do you know what was written in my mother's identity card for her father's name? "Convert Adil". On the old identity card. I regret that I did not keep it. Even if you convert, you are stigmatized. It was not written "convert on my father's card. His religion was also Islam. They converted too. There were two kinds of families who could stay in Turkey after 1915. The first group stayed by conversion. The second stayed with the help of their neighbors... Our city (Gümüşhacıköy) was the place of converts. Samsun region was occupied by Britain. After the British came in 1918, they converted back to their old religion in Ordu, Fatsa, Havza, Merzifon. But 3 years later, Topal Osman burned the majority. My grandparents took them back. They remained Muslim during 3 years. My mother changed her identity card. My grandfather did not convert back to Christianity. He became "Convert Adil" and remained Muslim. He remained like that until he died. My uncle and my mother changed it there. My mother changed it after she got married and after I was born. There was that seal on my old identity card. She changed after I was born. Zekiye was deleted and she started to use her old name, Bercuhi after I was

born. Her name became Bercuhi but her father's name remained "Convert Adil".

Can: Did all Armenians experience the same process as your family there?

Krikor: Sure, but they had never practiced Islam. Life forced them to do this. There are many people in Anatolia. Many people come to me. Here. Whether I know them or not, they come for their business. I can understand that she will say something. If she feels comfortable, she says "My grandmother was an Armenian convert. We are "kılıç artığı"¹⁶¹. If someone else comes, she stops speaking.

Can: (I told my mother's grandmother's story)

The second meeting

Can: How did you meet your wife?

Krikor: We met where I was working. I was salesclerk in a shoe store and Bahçekapı and she was working in a hairdresser which was on the other side. We were store neighbors. She was Armenian. We met. Then we married according to the traditions. We married in the church in Gedikpaşa in 1971. We have two daughters. We moved to Bakırköy and we have been living here for 40 years. We sold house, vineyard, and garden when we came from Amasya. It was difficult for both my mother and father. I remember that they cried when they left Amasya. I went there when I finished the military service. My father informed me when he decided to sell the properties and

¹⁶¹ 'Kılıç artığı' means 'sword's wastes' in Turkish, it is publicly used to define the Armenian survivors after the genocide.

wanted me to take the money. I went there for one day. I still remember. My father and mother were very sad. It was very difficult for them to leave Amasya. Our house was a mansion. When I went there two years ago, I saw that our house was demolished. It was demolished when another building was constructed next to it. It was officially registered as historical monument. The new owner did not restore it. They planted tomatoes and cucumber. The land was smooth. I cannot compare it but it was a two-story house with seven rooms. All weddings were organized in our house. It was very large for me.

Can: Did you missed Amasya when you came to Istanbul?

Krikor: I am still... I have few dreams. I have very few dreams. If I dream, I see my childhood. I saw the streets where I biked and our house. I see there always. My wife has many dreams, like movies, I do not. If I have a dream, I see there. I do not know how you can interpret this. Our house was in the street. There was no traffic. We played nine stones, we had bicycles. We repaired old bicycles. We had old and useless things in our garden. I was interested in carpentry. As I said I only see there in my dreams. This means that our identities were integrated with the place. What is the mother tongue? Mother tongue is the language of the dreams. Mother tongue is not the language you speak but dreams' language. My dreams are both in Turkish and about the place I was born.

Can: Did you learn Armenian later?

Krikor: I do not know read and write but I can speak.

Can: Were you a child during the capital tax?

Krikor: The capital tax influenced Istanbul. What could people in Anatolia have? I have many articles on this subject. The leftist intellectuals were accused of the 6 7 September. It was a provocation as you know.

Can: Did you hear the 6 7 September in Amasya?

Krikor: Of course we did. There were the newspapers. We were tensed and scared. I remember that my father wanted me to buy newspaper. We heard it from the radio. My father said “Buy a newspaper and bring it secretly”.

Can: I will ask you another question. You know what is going on there (Istanbul) but you continued living there.

Krikor: That fear was always there but where can you go? There was always fear. You trust in your neighbor but you do not in the state. You think that your neighbor do not harm you. You think that Mr. Ahmet does not do anything to you but you are afraid of the state. My boss’s father said that “Pass through the prince’s fountain but do not drink it”. Pass through the state’s office but don’t enter even if you have to do. Which means we were not at peace with the state. Since the Hamidian Cavalry in 1890s. In that quarter, a color was exterminated.

Can: Did you have any problem at work place?

Krikor: No, I did not. I was lucky among the Armenians. I even became deputy mayor. Rather than the party, it is the mayor’s understanding. Because the mayors can bring their understanding of politics and governance even if it is opposite to its party’s attitude. There are three Armenians and an Assyrian alderman. We have a chief. The municipality’s policy is beyond the

standards of Turkey. I am the most authorized person here. There are 22 units under my control. I treat everyone equally. The distance between the municipality and mosque and Greek and Assyrian Churches are equal in Bakıköy. I was alderman for 3 periods and I am deputy mayor for 2 periods. For 15 years. I am deputy mayor for 10 years.

Can: How did you get into politics?

Krikor: After my military service, I joined TİP (Workers Party of Turkey). I have always been into politics. When the parties were closed in the 80s, I first was in DSP (Democratic Left Party), then SDP (Socialist Democracy Party), then CHP (The Republican People's Party), when CHP was founded. But I actually my political stance is close to the old TİP. I consider Mehmet Ali Aybar as a student of Behice Boran. And I try to stick to the leftist ethics. I do not agree with CHP on many things and everybody knows me as such. My identity is embedded in my lifestyle. I am not here representing the Armenians. I have always been engaged in politics.

Can: Do you want to add anything else?

Krikor: No... We went to a wedding at a Greek Church in Arnavutköy. The bride was Armenian and the groom was Greek. After that I found out that 6000 Greeks were living there according to the annual of 1914. It was obvious that the community was big. There was something interesting. The municipality organized an event, there were book stands, etc. and there was a place to play music. Ethnic music in Greek. Sometimes in Armenian, in Hebrew. Mostly in Greek. Partly because it was a gesture for the wedding. We entered into the church. I realized that there was no Greek

community. No one. When I asked about it, I was told that 14 people left. Majority was the bride's relatives. Armenian from Sivas, Malatya, Arapgir. Ours were the majority. Then I wrote about it. I brought the issue to the discussion of "Citizens speak Turkish". Once upon a time at that streets, slogans of "Citizens speak Turkish". Nobody buying Greek newspapers. People being beaten by others in the buses, etc. On one of those days a relative of a friend of mine got married in Greece. The bride came here to improve her Turkish for tour guiding. The girl said that her mother advised her not to speak Turkish in public. When I heard that music there, that is what came to my mind. People left this place because of that fear. One upon a time the elder of that generation were shouted at not to speak Greek. Nowadays, Greek songs are sung but there is no Greek around.

C. Transcription of Interview with Satenik (Turkish)

Can: Dođup büyüdüğünüz yerden, çocukluğunuzdan ve ailenizden başlayabiliriz.

Satenik: Annem babam vefat ettiler ama Adıyaman'da doğup büyüdüler. Babam eskiyi çok anlatırdı bana dedesini yaşadıklarını. Dedem sanırım soykırım zamanı 5 6 yaşındaymış bir Kürt ağanın yanında yanaşma olarak kalıyor. Sevmişler onu. Çobanlık yapmış. İşte delikanlı olunca sonra onu Süryani bir kızla evlendirdiler. Ben yıllarca düşünüyordum hem babaannem hem anneannem Süryani kızları. Ben yıllarca düşünüyordum Adıyaman'da Süryani ne arıyor diye. Çünkü ben hep Mardin Diyarbakır'da yaşıyorlar sanıyordum. Babaannemim kimsesi kalmamıştı. Çok güzel bir kadındı boylu poslu iri kemikli zümrüt yeşili gözlü. Hep merak ederdim neden kimsesi yok akrabası yok. Sonrasında öğreniyorum ki babaannem de kılıç artığı sonra birisi büyütüyor. Sonra dedemin o Kürt Ağa onları evlendiriyor ikisi de Hristiyan diye ve onlar evleniyorlar ve babam doğana kadar o ağanın yanında kalıyorlar. Sarkisti ismi sonra M. Süleyman Muhtedi Süleyman diye değiştirdiler. Sonra o isim başımıza ne sorunlar açtı. O Serkis Süleyman yıllar sonra bize ne sorunlar açtı bilinçli yapılan sorunlar uygulamalar. Babam doğana kadar o köyde kalıyorlar. Sonra kendi köyelerine gidiyorlar. Demdin ailesinden kimseyi bilmiyoruz. O dönemde dedem Ermenice konuşuyordu demek ki o dönemde dedem okuyordu. Ya da ailesinden Ermenice duymuştu biliyordu. Yabancı değildi. En azından adının Sarkis olduğunu biliyordu. Sarkis ismi benim için çok önemlidir ben torunuma muhakkak Sarkis ismini koyacağım. Ben o Sarkis ismi için de çok mücadeleler verdim. Şöyle şimdi babamın kimliğinde mecbur baba ismi

yazacak. M. Süleyman yani muhtedi Süleyman diye yazar. Babam o kimlikle bir tapu çıkartıyor ev yapıyor kendisine. Yıllar sonra babam vefat ediyor biz o evi satacağız nüfus kayıtlarında Sarkis M. Süleyman diye geçiyor. Tapuda deniyor ki Sarkis yazıyor burada ne alakası var bunu düzeltereksiniz diyor. Nasıl düzeltereksiniz? Mahkemeye düzeltereksiniz. Adam ölmüş gitmiş ama hala ismiyle uğraşiyor nüfus. Madem ismini değıştirmişsin Sarkis'i yıllar sonra nereden çıkarıyorsunuz. Madem bunun ismini değıştirip yeni isim verdiniz neden tekrar bunu çıkartıyorsunuz? Sonra öğreniyoruz ki bunu 80 döneminde çok uygulamışlar. Kasıtlı yapılan bir uygulama evleri satamamışlar diye. Tabi biz kalktık mecburen mahkemeye verdik. Bütün kayıtlara Sarkis'i geçirdim ben de. Madem bu ismi silmediniz ve zaten gerçek ismi oydu o zaman Sarkis yaşasın. Madem siz bu kadar problem yapıyorsunuz asıl ismiyle kalsın. İki buçuk sene sürdü mahkeme. Biz o evi satacaktık paranın yarısını almıştık iki buçuk sene bekledi o anlaşma. Mahkeme sonuçlandı. Kayıtlara Sarkis olarak geçti sonra biz satışı yaptık.

Can: Dedeniz çocukken Hristiyan mıymış?

Satenik: O Kürt Ağanın yanında Müslümanlaşmıştı. Sonra dinine dönmedi dönemedi. Müslümanlığı benimsedi. Oruç tutuyordu. Benim babam da artık kendini biliyordu delikanlı olmuştu o zaman kadar oruç tutuyordu. Çok enteresan. Hristiyan olduklarını biliyorlar ama o ağanın yanında ismi değışti kimliği değışti her şeyi değışti.

Can: Babaanneniz nasıldı biliyor musunuz?

Satenik: Onun hakkında yok o işte Süryaniydi onu biliyoruz başka bir şey bilmiyoruz ama anneannemin tarafı orijinal Süryani. Adıyaman'ın Venk

köyünde yaşıyorlar Metin ailesi. Hıristiyanlıklarını devam ediyorlar ama orijinal Süryani tam değiller. Yarı Süryani yarı Ermeni. Anneanneleri Emine orada.

Can: Annenizin babası?

Satenik: O da Ermeni Adıyaman'ın bir köyünden. Onu da birisi büyüttü ama karışık dayım daha iyi bilir. Muhtedi olmuş. Din değiştirmek zorunda kaldılar köyde. İsmi Garabetken Karabit yaptılar. Öyle

Annem ve babam Adıyaman'da doğdular. İki popüler ailenin en büyük çocuklarıydı onlar. Onlar da evlendiler. Biz şimdi yabancı ile evlilik olmuyor. İççe dönüyor. Aynı köydenler. Orbiş köyünden. Gerger'in Orbiş köyü. Zazaca konuşuyorlar. Anadilleri Zazaca. İsimleri Türkçe. Babam Mamoydu. Mahmud. Benim babam sanatkardı. Marangozdu. Usta sanatkardı imalat yapardı. İş sebebiyle köyün dışında çalışırdı şehirlere giderdi. O dönem yeni evlilerken Mardin'e göç etmişler annemin dayıları Süryani oldukları için oraya göç etmişler çeşitli sebeplerle. Benim babamlar da oraya gidip 4 yıl orada yaşamışlar. Mardin'in Kaletmeran köyü. Darülferazana yakın. Oraya gidince babam Hıristiyan oluyor tekrar. Yeni evlenmişler. 30 yaşında yoktur. Babam kendi kendine okuma yazma öğretti. Oradaki Süryani rahip ona İncil veriyor. Onu bir gecede okuyor babam. Vaftiz oluyor. Dini bilgisi olsun diye. Sonra annemle dini nikah kıyıyorlar.

Can: Anneniz o sırada vaftiz olmuş mu?

Yok. Köydeler ama Hıristiyan olduklarını biliyorlar ama dini bilmiyorlar. Sadece farklı olduklarını biliyorlar. Çünkü kilise yok. Din adamı yok.

Toplum yok nereden bilsin nasıl öğrensin. Mardin’de vaftiz oluyorlar.

Nikahlanıyorlar. Babam en büyük olduğu için köyden gelen tüm kardeşlerini Hıristiyanlığa çekiyor. Öncülük yapıyor. Kimliğini korumak için mücadele ediyor. Hepsini. Deyrulzafaran kilisesi sayesinde oluyor bu. Hepsine öncülük yapıyor.

Can: Anne tarafınızı biliyor musunuz? Onlar Hristiyan mı?

Tabi tabi 5 tane teyzem var. 2 tane dayım var. Teyzemin bir tanesi Ermeni cemaatinde Almanya’da. İki tane teyzem Adana’da Müslümanlık yapıyor. Yapmak zorundalar.

Can: Müslümanla mı evlendiler?

Yok. Hayır hepsi Ermenilerle evlenmişti. Dedem hepsini bizden olan insanlara verdi. Ama buldukları çevre dolayısıyla mecburen Müslümanlık yapıyorlar korkudan.

Can: Vaftiz olmadılar mı?

Vaftiz oldular. Hepsi vaftiz olmuş. İsimleri hepsi Türk isimleri. Hiçbirimizde şey. Yok. Benim babam. Hee. Mardin’e gidiyorlar orada 4 yıl kalıyorlar.

Orada Zazacayı bile unutuyorlar neredeyse. Hep Arapça konuşuyorlar.

Mecburen duya duya onu benimsiyorlar. Ermenice bilmiyorlar. Daha sonra köye dönüyorlar. Birkaç sene kalıyorlar. Bu sefer Malatya’ya gidiyor babam. Meşhur Hrant’ın kaldığı gavur mahallesinde. Marangoz yine. Usta zanaatkar atölyesi var. Malatya’da o dönem 6 kar yapıyor. Kar kış. Yaşam çok zor. İş yapamıyorlar. Çok zor hayat koşulları o zaman. Daha sonra İskenderun’a gidiyor babam.

Can: Çocuklar ne zaman doğuyor?

Ben 9 numarayım. En sonum. Benden öncekilerin hepsi Malatya'da bir tanesi Adıyaman'da köyde doğuyor en büyük abim. Mardin'de doğan yok. 5 kız 4 erkek. Bugün 4 tanesi hayatta. 1 erkek 3 kız. Bebekken hep vefat etmişler. Hastalıktan iğneden. Daha sonra o gavur mahallesinde yaşıyorlar. Güzel bir Ermeni toplum var o zaman. Çok çok güzel bir ortamları var. Hatta daha sonra İskenderun'a göç ettiklerinde annem 2 sene ağlıyor biz niye Malatyayı ortamımızı bıraktık diye. Ama o zaman 74 senesi. Bir göç de var Malatya'dan. İstanbul'a göç ediyorlar. İstanbul'dan da Avrupa'ya Amerika'ya göç ediyorlar.

Can: Neden göç ettiklerini biliyor musunuz?

Ortam artık bozuldu. Rahat değillerdi. Öyle anlatıyorlardı. 74te annem bana hamileyken İskenderun'a göç ediyorlar. Çünkü babam İskenderun'a gidiyor iş dolayısıyla. Yine işleri bozuluyor. 6 ay kar var. İş yapamıyorlar küçük çocukları var. Hayat şartları zor. İskenderun da Akdeniz iklimi olduğu için Paskalya bayramında dutlar olmuş. Dut yaprağı açmış ki Malatya'da Haziran'a kadar ağaçlar yeşermiyor. Kar var. çok hoşuna gidiyor. Paskalya döneminde ağaçlar nasıl yaprak açar. Orası nasıl sıcak bir yer ki hoşuna gidiyor yani. Daha sonra İskenderun'a gidince orada kendi atölyesini açıyor. Tabi benim büyük abim de var. O da ona yardım ediyor o dönem. Orayı çok seviyorlar sıcak olduğu için kar olmadığı için. Akdeniz iklimi. O dönemde kendi akrabalarımız da var Adıyaman'dan İskenderun'a göç eden. Murad Abiler de var. Tabi ben hatırlamıyorum çocuğum. Ben 74te İskenderun'da doğdum. Yine orada Ermeni cemaati içerisindeydik ama orada Ermeni

kilisemiz vardı. Ben Ermeni kilisesinde büyüdüm. Babam çok imanlı biriydi. Annem de babam da. Hıristiyanlığa 4 kolla bağlıydılar. Çocuklarını da o şekilde yetiştirdiler. Hepimiz vaftiz olduk bebekken. İsimlerimizin hepsi Türkçe çünkü hep gurbette yaşadık biz. Öyle öğretmişlerdi babama. İsimlerle kendini teşhir etme. Türk isimleri koy ki sıkıntı yaşamayınlar. Ama asla kimliğimizi inkar etmedik. Çünkü babam bana yıllarca şey öğretti. Asla kendi kimliğini inkar etmeyeceksin. Kafanı da kopartsalar asla kimliğini inkar etmeyeceksin derdi babam. Ve ben bunu hala uyguluyorum. Babam bana öyle öğretti ben de çocuğuma öyle öğretiyorum. Belki biz daha ılımlı bir çevrede yetiştik diye. İskenderun'da gayrimüslim çoktu. Rumlar vardı. O dönem İskenderun Hatay biraz daha ılımlı bir yerdi. Mozaik vardı orada. Çeşitli halklar bir arada yaşıyordu ve Türkiye'nin en rahat yeriydi yıllarca. Şimdi biraz bozuldu Antakya. Orada bir cadde var havra kilise cami sinagog hepsi aynı yol üstünde ve insanlar birbirine çok saygılı şekilde yaşıyor. Kimse kimseyi dışlamıyor kimse kimseye karışmıyor. Herkes diğerinin inancına saygılı Hatay öyle bir bölgeydi bizim doğu gibi değildi. Belki biz ondan rahattık. Yani hiç kendimizi saklama gereği duymadık. Ben şeyde büyüdüm mesela İskenderun'un ... yaylasında. Biz orada bir tek evdik düşünebiliyor musun bir tek evdik. Ve biz babam orada 3 tane kız yetiştirip gelin etti. Ve biz orada yalnızdık. MHPlı bir çevre ve herkes de bizi biliyordu. Bizim Ermeni olduğumuzu Hıristiyan olduğumuzu Pazarları kiliseye gidiyorduk haçımızı takabiliyorduk kimse bizi rahatsız etmiyordu. Ama bizi sevmiyorlardı. Biz hissediyorduk. Kimse bizden hoşlanmıyor kimse bizimle normal ilişki kurmuyor. Evimize gidip gelmiyorlar. Yani böyle bir ötekisin bunu hep böyle hissettiriyorlar ama en ufak bir şey ihtiyac

duysalar mesela bir çuvaldız bir kazan biliyorlar ki anneme gelip isterlerse onlar çünkü bizde mevcut. Bir oklava ekmek sacı çünkü Anadolu kültüründe biz bakır kazanlar kullanıyorduk. Onlar lazım oldu mu gelip annemden isterlerdi. Çünkü onların yoktu biliyorlardı ki annem onları boş göndermeyecek işlerini görecekti. Yani çok enteresan bizi sevmiyorlar bizimle ilişkileri yok ama bir şeye ihtiyaçları olursa hemen bizim kapımıza geliyorlar. Böyle enteresan bir ilişki vardı aramızda.

Can: Siz nüfusta Müslüman mı görünüyorsunuz?

Yok. Hepimiz Ermeni görünüyorduk. Bir tek benim kimliğimi çıkarırken Gerger'de amcam utanmış. Benim şişko bir amcam vardı Gerger'de. Herkes tanırdı herkes severdi saygı duyardı. namı da şişko Ömerdi. Saygın biriydi ama nüfusta da gayrimüslimliği sıkıntı yaratır diye nüfus memurunu da tanır küçük yer Gerger kaymakamı tanır. Bana nüfus cüzdanı çıkaracak işte. Tabii alışkanlığı islam yazarlar ya görüyor ama bu da itiraz etmiyor "bu da böyle olsun" diyor. Bütün annem babam kardeşlerim hepsinde Ermeni yazıyordu kimliklerinde o dönemde bir tek benimkinde İslam yazıyordu. Neyse ben birgün şeye gitti. İskenderun'da ikinci sınıfa kadar orada yaşıyorduk. Oradaki okullarda daha çok gayrimüslim olduğu için Ortodokslar Süryaniler Ermeniler. Oradaki çocuklar o okullarda çok olunca din dersine katılmıyorlardı. Biz oradan biliyoruz ki ablalarım da katılmıyordu. Ama ben ikinci sınıfta oradan ayrıldık biz. Babam ev yaptı. İskenderun'un yaylasına Sarımazı'ya. Orası da nezih bir yer. İskenderun sıcak oluyor cehennem sıcaklığı. Orası yayladır. Çamlıktır. Yüksek. Orası serin olduğu için insanlar oraya yazları gidiyorlar. Babam da orada ev yaptı bize biz oraya taşındık. Orası da küçük kasaba gibi bir yer. Ben orada okula gidiyorum.

Zannediyorum ki İskenderun'daki gibi uygulama gibi gidip öğretmene dersem ben din dersine katılmak istemiyorum ben Hıristiyanım dersem ben katılmayacağım. Şimdi gittim ben öğretmene 3. Sınıftaydım. Öğretmenime dedim ki babam bana dedi yani söyle öğretmenine. Ben de o zamanki aklımla gittim dedim ki öğretmenim ben Hıristiyanım din dersine katılmak istemiyorum öğretmen de dedi ki kimliğini getir bana. Ben de tamam dedim. Kimliğimi götüreceğim ama kimliğimde İslam yazıyor. Ben nasıl ispatlayacağım ona? Ablamınkini de götürdüm öğretmene. İspatlamak için ama o günkü aklımı düşünüyorum. Ben 10 yaşındayım. İşte bak öğretmenim benim kimliğimde İslam yazıyor ama aha bu da ablam onun kimliğinde Ermeni yazıyor. Benimki yanlış olmuş. Kendimi nasıl ispatlamaya çalışıyorum. Ne kadar komik bir durum ya. Öğretmen bile şaşırarak diyecek ne kadar çelişkili birinde İslam yazıyor birinde başka. Öğretmen tamam dedi. Derse girmeyen tek çocuk olacağım. Bu sefer şimdi hemen tabi okula yayıldı anında yayıldı. Öğretmen beni korudu aslında. Dedi kızım sen hemen şey yapma dersten çıkma. Dışarı çıkma dedi. Dışarı çıkarsan tepki toplar. Gene derste kal. Sen bir şey ezberleme bir şey yapma. Sadece dinle dedi. Ben tabi o sırada 3 tane Arapça dua ezberlemiştim bile. Neler öğrendiğimi halen unutamıyorum. Sübhaneke öğrendim. Elham öğrendim. Kulhuvallüehad öğrendim. Halen unutmuyorum. Hala çakır çakır ezberledim. Ve griptim hasta yatağında ezberledim. Şimdi bile düşünüyorum çok garip. Öğretmenim benimkinde İslam yazıyor ama ben aslında Hıristiyanım ama bak ablamınkinde böyle yazıyor. Kendimi ispatlayacağım diye nasıl çırpınıyorum. Nasıl komik bir duruma düştüm.

Can: Babanızinkisi de cesaret isteyen bir şey ama.

Ama babamdan aldık bize o cesarete. ‘Asla kendinizi inkar etmeyeceksiniz’. Çünkü babam şeyine çok düşkündü. Kimliğine çok düşkündü. Bize anlatıyordu tek tek o geçmişte ne yaşamışlardı. Annem de öyle. İlk bana o siyasi düşünceyi annem vermişti zaten 12 yaşında..

Sonra çocuklar öğrendi Hıristiyan olduğumu. Hemen öğrendiler. Küçük yer. Demek ki öğretmenle konuşurken duymuşlar. Hemen böyle bir de bir tek ben varım. Tavır aldılar. Alay etmeler. *Gavurmuşsun sen. Nereden geldiniz? Uzaydan mı geldiniz?* Sonra erkek çocukları toplanıyordu. Evimiz böyle karşı mahalle gibi. Ben hep okuldan çıkar koşa koşa eve giderdim. O mahalleye ilk giden ben olurdum. Kimse beni geçemiyordu. Beni geçebilmek için şey yapıyordu çocuklar. O niye hep birinci? Biz gidelim falan. Sonra erkek çocuklar benim yolumu kesip beni dövmeye kalktılar. Birkaç sefer beni dövdüler. Ben eve ağlayarak geldim. Kız çocuğum. 10 12 yaşlarında etrafımda toplanıyorlar. Sen gavurmuşsun sen şeymişsin. Nereden geldiniz? Siz niye kiliseye gidiyorsunuz? Böyle dışlamalar. Ben iki sefer dayak yedim eve geldim. Babam dedi kızım sen neden ağlıyorsun senin elin yok mu? Sen neden dövmüyorsun dedi. Babam bana arka çıktı cesaret verdi. Sen de döveceksin dedi. Seni döven olursa sen de döveceksin bir daha dayak yiyip eve gelmeyeceksin dedi. Erkek gibi yetiştirdiler beni aslında. Sonra ben onları dövdüm. Çünkü babamdan cesaret aldım ya babam dedi senin elin yok mu sen onlar döv dedi. Babam marangozdu ya bana böyle bir çanta yapmıştı bavul gibi. O tahta bavullar var ya. Çok güzel bir çanta yapmıştı. Verniklemişti. Kulpu da vardı. Kitaplarımı onun içine koyuyordum. Biz onunla büyüdük. Onla gidip geliyorduk. Herkesin ki plastik çanta benim tahta bir bavulum var. Ama babam üretebileceği her şeyi yapıyordu bizi.

Çantamız çeyiz sandığımız camekan böyle. Her şeyimizi babam yapıyordu. Sonra o çocuklar beni dövme kalktıklarında ben o tahta bavulla bir dönüyordum böyle kafalarına. Tak tak tak (güler) yani hiç unutmuyorum. Ondan sonra hiç dayak yemedim. Dayak yemedim ben dövdüm

Can: Hep yaylada mı kaldınız?

Hep orada kaldık çünkü bizim evimiz vardı orada. O sırada ablam vardı. En büyük ablam o dönem evlendi Malatya'ya gitti. Nişanlıydı zaten oraya taşındılar. İstanbul'a göçtü sonra. Karşıda oturuyorlar. İkinci ablam vardı benim bir büyüğüm. Ortancamız. O genç kızdı. Bize şey öğretildi. Asla bir Türk'e bakmayacaksın. Aşık olma gibi bir durumunuz olamaz sizin. Bu bizim beynimize kazılır genç kızken. Normal insanlar gibi kendi yaşlılarına aşık olma durumu yok. Baştan kapanıyor bizim yolumuz. Biz asla öyle bir şey yapamayız. Zaten seçeneğimiz de yok. Onun için bizden birileriyle evlenmemiz gerekiyor. Ablam bir Türk'e aşık olmuştu. İşte annemin ağzını yokluyor. Böyle bir şey olsa ne düşünürsün. Yabancı biriyle olsa ne düşünürsün? Annem dedi ki ben seni dilim dilim doğrarım yine vermem dedi seni bir Türke. Şimdi ben de küçüğüm yeni yetişiyorum 12 13 yaşlarında. Şimdi onlara olan şey. Demek ki benim için de aynısı geçerli. Ben hiç öyle bir şeye cesaret edemezdim. Baştan bizim yolumuz kapanıyordu. Asla bir Türk'e aşık olmayacaksın. Böyle bir evlilik olamaz. Öyle bir şey düşünmeyin bile. Aklınızdan geçirmeyin. Sonra tabi ablam da evlendi. İzmire gitti. Süryani biriyle. Süryani Hıristiyan. Kökeninde var birşeyler. Sonra ben evlendim 17 yaşında. Kendi akrabamızla. Uzaktan bir akrabamız. Adıyaman'a gelin gittim. Sonra çocuk doğurdum. Bize seçme şansı verilmedi. Hepimiz yanlış evlilikler yaptık. Aman bizden olsun. Bizim

insanımız olsun diye olmayacak kişilerle evlendik. Yanlış evlilikler yaptık. Nedir aman yabancıya gitmesin bizimki olsun. Bizimki olsun da benim bir büyük ablam iki üç yıl önce boşandı 25 yıllık evlilikten sonra geçinemedi geçinemedi başından beri yanlıştı. Beni hasta bir adama verdiler. Bana sormadılar bile. Benden 22 yaş büyük bir adama verdiler. Nedir Ermenidir. Bizim insanımızdır. İnsanın bu şekilde hayatı da kararabiliyor. Çünkü seçme şansımız yok. Bu da soykırımın başka bir boyutudur. Nedir senin akrabandır. Başka insan yok seçme şansın yol senin. Beyin tümörü vardı. Ve beni bile bile onunla evlendirdiler. bile bile. bana söylemediler. Yaşının Büyük olmasının dışında rahatsız bu adam. Ve nöbet geçiriyordu. Bayılıyordu pat pat. Bana söylemediler bile. Ben evlendikten 3 ay sonra Almanca'da Türkçe'ye çevrilmiş doktor raporlarını gördüm. Benim başımdan aşağı kaynar sular döküldü. Beni bile bile ateşe attılar. 17 yaşında. Benim ailem yaptı ve seçme şansımız olmadığı için bunu yaptılar. Bir Türk beni kaçırmamın diye yaptılar. Bir Türk beni almasın diye. Aman bizim kızını kimse kaçırmamın başına bir şey gelmesin. Evlendirdiler beni. Sonra çocuğum oldu sonra 4 yıl sonra pat diye öldü. Almanya'daydım. Ve biliyorlar. Bana söylemediler. Hayatım en büyük hatasını yaptım bu evlilikle. Bir daha da evlenmedim. Eşim öleli 20 yıl oldu bir daha evlenmedim

Can: Adıyaman'a gidince alıştınız mı?

Satenik: Hayır. Kahta tarafına gittim. Hiç alışamadım ben. İğrenç bir hayattı. Cehennem bir hayattı. Ben orada Hıristiyan kültürüne göre büyüdüm. Paskalyalar kutluyorduk noeller kutluyorduk. Christmaslar kutluyorduk. Bir Hıristiyan kültürü vardı bizde. O havayı biz soluyorduk evde. Adıyamana

gittim. Tamamen ayrı bir ortam. Tamam benim akrabalarım ama ben o akrabaları görmemiştim. Hiçbirini bilmiyordum.

Can: Nasıl yaşıyorlardı?

Satenik: Tamamen Müslüman gibi yaşıyorlar. Pazar günleri ben kiliseye gitmeye alıştım. Pazar günü orada öyle bir şey yok. Nasıl bir boşluğa düştüm. Çünkü imanlı bir insandım ben. İnançlı bir insan ve biz özel din dersi gördük kilise bünyesinde. Ayrıca şanslı hissediyoruz kendimizi. Böyle bir ortamda büyü sonra git Müslümanların içinde. Tamam, akrabalarım ama beni açabilecek hiçbir şey yok. Benim yaşamımı devam ettirebilecek hiçbir şey yok. Ne bir sosyal ne bir dini çevre var. Oruç tutuyorlar şey yapıyorlar. Müslüman gibi yaşıyorlar. Şey yapıyorlar. Bundan 20 yıl önce Kahta iğrenç bir yerdi. Bakma şimdi Adıyaman'da kilise var. Şimdi hepsi Hıristiyanlığa döndüler. 20 yıl önce yaşanacak bir yer değildi. Bizi sokağa çıkartmıyorlardı. Ben İskenderun'da büyümüşüm. Saçım başım açık. Kot pantolon giyerim kısa etek giyerim. Öyle modern yaşıyorduk. Ben Kahta'ya gittim. Benim kot pantolon giymem yüzünden kıyamet koptu. Bir de gelinsin. Ben 17 yaşındayım ama gelin pozisyonundayım. Gelin ve eş ve aynı zamanda anne kimliğim var. Bir de o ortama uyma zorunluluğum var. O yobazlığa. Aman Bakırcıların gelinisin aman şöyle yapamazsın. Ama ben kendim çocuğum. Sokakta top oynuyordum beni evlendirdiler. Böyle acayip bir kimliğin içine girdim.

Can: Babanız mı istedi evlenmenizi?

Babam istemedi Gerger'deki şişko amcam istedi. Ben çok ağladım çok şey yaptım kimse beni dinlemedi. Kimse beni dinlemedi. Biz karar verdik bu

senin için uygundur sen de buna uyacaksın dendi bana. Adıyaman'da 1,5 yıl yaşadım. Sonra Almanya'ya gittim. Almanya'da eşim oradaydı. Orada yaşamıştı yıllardır. Onunla gittim orada doğum yaptım. Eşim orada öğretmendi Almanya'ya gitmeden önce Adıyaman'ın köylerinde. Almanya'da birahanesi vardı. Sendika başkanlığı yapmıştı. Öyle. Sonra orada da yaşadık. Orada da düzen kurduk ev yaptık. Adıyaman'da da ev kurmuştuk. Sonra oraya gittik ev kurduk oğlum orada doğduEvet en güzel ödülüm o. O zaman Almanya'da bir buçuk yıl kaldık sonra Türkiye'ye geldik. Çünkü doktor orada da kalmasını şey yapmıyordu. Hava değişimine ihtiyacı vardı. Tabi Kahta'da evimiz var. Sonra geldik. 3 ay sonra tekrar gitti. Bu sefer eşimin ailesi Almanya'da yaşamamı istemiyor ben yaşamak istiyordum orada. Çünkü onların bir takım hesaplarına ters geldim. Eşim işte orada yıllarca şey yaptığı için malulen emekli olmuştu. Hatırı sayılır bir emekli maaşı veriyorlardı ona. Yıllarca da kız kardeşinde kalmıştı orada. O maaşı güzel güzel alıyorlardı. Şimdi ben orada kalırsam o maaşı alamayacaklar. Benim de orada kalmam onların çıkarlarına ters düşüyor. Benim pasaportumu elimden aldılar. Yırttılar parçaladılar ben Almanya'ya dönmeyeyim diye. Eşim de o sırada Kahta'da. Tabi hasta olduğu için sağlıklı düşünemiyor. Bakıma muhtaç. Ben ona bebek gibi bakıyordum. Hem bebeğim vardı hem ona bakıyordum. Bu da ayrı bir dram benim için. Ailesinin yaptığı ayrı bir dram benim için. 17 yaşında gelmişim. Hasta bir adamla evlenmişim bir de çocuk doğurmuşum. Üstüne sürekli baskı görüyorum. Sen bu adamı hasta ediyorsun şey ediyorsun. Sürekli bir iftira atmalar dışlamalar. Halbuki biz akrabayız. Onların isteği dahilinde evlendirdiler beni. Çok yakın akrabayız biz. Sürekli bir iftiralar. Öyle bir

şeyler diyorlar ki ben mi yaptım bunları ben nasıl düşünürüm böyle.

Çocuktum ya. 17 yaşında ben 18 olmadan anne olmuşum. Kendi kendime hayret ediyordum ben mi bunları yapmışım. Ben nasıl böyle bir şeyi düşünmüşüm yapmışım. Yıllarca ben bu tramvadan kurtulamadım biliyor musunuz? Yani diyorlar ki örnek sen bu adama fazladan ilaç veriyorsun zehirliyorsun. Ya benim çocuğumun babası ya. Ki melek gibi bir insandı karıncayı incitmeyecek bir insandı. Ve ben seviyordum artık eşimdi kocamdı. Artık yuvamı kurmuşum nikahlı kocam çocuğumun babası. Yani sürekli iftiralar sürekli nifak sokmalar. Topluma şey göstermeler. Ben benlikten çıktım ve çıkarlarına ters düşüyorum diye yaptılar bunu. En sonunda yaptılar yapacaklarını. Pasaportumu aldılar elimden. Eşim rahatsızlandı çok hastalandı. Artık Türkiyede tedavisi yok bakamazlar yapamazlar. E ben gidemiyorum. Tek başına uçağa bindirdik gönderdik onu. Pasaportum yok gidemiyorum. O zamanlar çocuğum Adıyaman gibi bir yerdeyim. Şimdi olsa giderim çıkartırım yani. Başımın çaresine bakarım giderim. Kimseye ihtiyacım yok derim orada da evim var burada da. Pasaport bile çıkartamıyorum. Adıyaman gibi yerdeyim. Küçük çocuğum var. Kahta'dan Adıyaman'a bile gidemiyorsun. 20 yıl öncesi. O kadar ilkel şartlar var ve ben düşünemiyorum. Adamı tek başına gönderdik. Orada 3 ay tek başına kaldı hastanede. Kız kardeşi ilgilenmedi. 3 ay tek başına ve en sonunda doktor gün vermiş. Şu kadar yaşar 2 hafta 3 hafta yaşar. Sonra geldi 3 hafta sonra vefat etti.

Daha sonra eşimi kaybettikten sonra İskenderun'a babamgile döndüm. Babam hayattaydı. Orada 4 yıl kaldık. Annem babam. Abim vardı abim de o dönem istanbul'a yerleşti ailesiyle. Aynı evde annem babam ben Fırat

yaşadık. 4 yıl babam yaşadı. Son dönemleriydi. Hastaydı. Babam vefat etti orada 1 yıl sonra da biz İstanbul'a geldik. Annem yazları gidip kalıyordu. Evimiz vardı. Bozmadık orayı. İstanbul'a geliş sebebim: Eşim vefat etti. Ben o gece karar verdim İstanbul'a geleceğim. Çünkü İstanbul'a gidip gelirken ablaman çocukları ermeni okuluna gidiyordu. Benim böyle kimliğime bir düşkünlüğüm vardı her zaman. Özümü koruma içgüdüm. Babam böyle öğretti böyle gördüm. Belki de. Her zaman böyle bir farklılık vardı bende. Kimliğime karşı düşkünlük. Ama bir tek bende vardı. Kardeşlerimde yoktu. O gece karar verdim ben. Orada okuduklarını Ermenice ders gördüklerini öğrendim ne kadar hoşuma gitti. Ben o sırada Ermenice bilmiyorum. Adıyamanda yaşıyorum o dönem. Eşim vefat etmemişti daha. O dönem karar verdim. O baskılı dönemde karar verdim. Hayatımla ilgili kararları ben verebilirim. Kimsenin kontrolünde değilim artık ben. 20 yaşındayım ama anne olmuşum hatta dul olmuşum. Artık kararlar benim elimde. Kimse karar vermez benim adıma. Ben öyle istiyorum öyle olacak. Özgürlüğüme bir nevi kavuştum aslında. Dört yıl İskenderun'da bir mücadele gene verdim. Ev parası biriktirdim. Yoksa İstanbul'a gelemezdim. Dört yıl sıktım kendimi. İstanbul'a yerleşeceğim çünkü hedefim var. Ermeni okulunda okutacağım Fırat'ı ha bu dönemde Fırat'ın kimliğinde de İslam yazıyor. O dönem mahkeme kararı ile din değiştirmenin öncülüğünü ben yaptım. İskenderun'dayım. Babasının kimliğinde de Hıristiyanlar ama toplu İslam yazıyor. Benimkinde sorun yok. Ermeni görünüyor. Doğan çocuk direkt babanın dinini alıyor ya. O dönem karar vermişim Ermeni okulunda okutacağım ama İslam yazarsa nasıl okutacağım? Patrikhaneye yazdım. Kağıt aldım oradan. Vaftiz belgemiz de var İskenderun'da yapmıştık. Dava

açtık Kahta'da. Nüfus Kahta'da ya. Mahkeme ile değiştirdik. Mahkeme sadece din hanesini silebiliyor. Sen kişisel olarak başvurup yazdırıyorsun şu dini istiyorum diye. O da ayrı bir sıkıntıydı. Mahkeme kararını almışım nüfusa gitmişim. Nüfusa diyorum ki Hıristiyan yazacaksınız. Hayır yazmayacağız diyor. "Hayır yazmayacağız" diyor. Ne demek diyorum ya. artık gözüm açılmış. Beni artık kimse tutamaz. istediğimi yapacağım. Ben mahkemeye vermişim. Çocuk 3 4 yaşında daha. Kuralı da biliyorum prosedürü de biliyorum. Silmiş. Sen diyorum buraya Hıristiyan yazacaksınız diyorum. Hayır diyor yapmayacağım. Bir saat içerisinde Kahta'ya yayıldı ki bir kadın gelmiş. Çocuğunun dinini gavur yazmak için kıyameti koparıyor.

Can: O sırada sizin nüfusta da mı İslam yazıyordu?

Hayır ben değiştirmedim çünkü benim kökenimde zaten Ermeni yazıyor sadece kimlikte İslam yazıyor o evlenince değişti zaten. Evli yazınca Hıristiyan da yazdı. Onda sıkıntı yok. Ama çocuğunkinde İslam yazıyor. Kocamlar kökünde Ermeni ama nüfusta İslam yazıyor.

Sonra işte baya bir diretiler. Yazmayacağız. Temyize göndereceğiz. Nüfus müdürü benimle baya çatıştı. inat değil mi pislik değil mi? Diyorum ne münasebet ben sana mahkeme kararı getirmişim sen bunu sileceksin. Kapı gibi mahkeme kararı sen buna uymak zorundasın. Yok diyor benim bunu temyize götürme hakkım var. Bu kararı bozma hakkım var diyor bana. Canı istemiyor. Bana zorluk çıkartıyor. Ondan sonra Adıyaman Valiliğine götürdüm mahkeme kararını onaylattım. Ondan sonra sıkıysa yapma. 1 hafta uğraştırdılar beni. Neyse biz onu hallettik falan sonra işte kimliğini değiştirdik İstanbul'a taşındık ev aldık. Bir yıl geç geldik. Ermeni okulunda

okuyacaktı. Bir yıl anaokuluna gitmesi gerekiyordu Ermenice öğrenmek için. Yollayamadık. Çünkü ev aldık 1 yıl geç geldik. Ama geldik. Zeytinburnu'na geldik. İlgilenen kimse olmadı ne kardeşlerim ne amcalarım. Birisinin vasıtasıyla. Eşimin amcaoğlu vasıtasıyla. Bir ev bulduk yeni bir ev. Sıfırdı. Ama Zeytinburnunda numunelik biz yaşadık yıllarca. Çünkü bilemedik bizimkiler toplu yaşıyor işte Bakırköy Yeşilköy gibi yerlerde. Ben hiç bilmiyordum ki Zeytinburnunda numunelik ben yaşayacağım. Çünkü İstanbul'u bilmiyorum. Yani evim olsun diye geldik ama kimse benimle ilgilenmedi. Param var ama kardeşim bile ilgilenmedi benimle. Ablam ilgilenmedi. Üsküdar'da yaşıyor orada da Ermeni okulu var. Düşünüyorum da nasıl oluyor nasıl böyle yapabiliyorlar çünkü ben İstanbul'un hiçbir semtini bilmiyorum. Geldik orada aldık. Bir de benim şey sorunum vardı. Hep müstakil evlerde yaşamışım Anadolu'da güzel evlerde. Gidip te burada bodruma giremezdim. Tek şartım bodrumda yaşamamaktı. Zeytinburnu'nda dublex ev aldım. Geniş teraslı beş odalı. O dönemde kuzenim Bakırköy'de bodrumda 6 milyara ev almıştı ben 6250ye mi ne aldı. 200 metrekare dublex. En üst kat. Çok güzeldi ama çevre yok toplum yok. Geldik yerleştik. Oğlumu Ermeni okuluna verdim. Evi alırken ben İskenderun'dan gidip geliyordum. Hiç ablalarda kalmadım. İskenderun'dan taşındım direkt evime geldim. Annem de var yanımda. 9 sene annemle birlikte Zeytinburnu'nda yaşadık sonra annem de vefat etti. Sonra kaldık Fırat'la tek başımıza. Ama amacıma ulaştım. Ermeni okulunu bitirecek sonuna kadar. Liseyi bitirdi mezun oldu. Kumkapı Bezciyan sonra Sahakyan ermeni lisesine gitti Samatya'da.

Can: Siz Fırat okurken ne yapıyordunuz?

Çalıştım. Bir deri firmasında çalışıyorum 12 yıldır. Hep aynı yerde. İşimde yükseldim en üst şeye geldim. Sekreter olarak başladım şimdi ithalat yapıyorum. Almanya'da Almanca öğrendim ama şimdiki işimde kullanmıyorum. O zaman orada Almanca öğrendim. Kahta'ya gittik Zazaca zaten biliyorduk ama konuşamıyorum. Kahta'da Kürtçe öğrendim. İstanbul'a geldik Ermenice öğrendim. Fırat'la birlikte ders aldım birinci sınıfta. Ben de özel ders aldım. İkimiz beraber başladık. 4 yıl evdeydim ama. Çünkü annem gidip geliyordu. Hep yanımızda değildi. Bir de inattı. Ben hep evde oturup kalamam sen çalışırken çocuğa bakamam. Mecburen evde oturdum. Fırat 4. Sınıfa geldi 10 yaşına geldi. Ne zaman ki kapı açmayı öğrendi. Ben işe başladım. O da ayrı bir sıkıntıydı. İşim yakındı eve 7 dakika.

Can: Nasıl buldunuz iş?

Süryani bir firma bizlerden. O kadar uzun süre çalışacağımı hiç düşünmemiştim. Birkaç ay çalışır çıkarım diyordum. 12 yıl kaldım (güler). Çok memnunum güvenli bir yer. Temiz dürüst insanlar. Karşılıklıdır herhalde. Bir iş yerinde o kadar yıl kalmak mucizedir. Kendi evim gibi. Olabilecek en yüksek seviyeye de geldim. İşi öğrendim çekirdekten yetiştim. Fırat saat 4 te geliyordu. Onun çayını termosu koyuyordum ocakla uğraşmasın diye. Keki böreği masanın üzerindedir. Folyosunu kaldırıyordu tabağına koyuyordu. çayını koyuyordu ikinci kahvaltısını yapıyordu. Ben telefonla kontrolünü yapıyordum. Geldin mi geldim. 6da da ben işten çıkıyordum geliyordum. Yani 2 saat. Televizyon seyrediyordu. 1 saat yalnız kalıyordu. Onu da ikide bir telefonla kontrol ediyordum. Ne yapıyorsun kimseye kapıyı açma kimseye şey yapma. O şekilde öyle öyle büyüttük. Ama bizim okullarımız çift dikiş olduğu için Türk bayramları Ermeni bayramları

bir sürü tatilimiz oluyordu bizim. O tatil dönemlerimiz işkence oluyordu. Onu da alıp götürüyordum işe. Bırakacak kimsem yok çünkü. Aklım evde kalacak çocuğu tek başına bırakmam evde. Annem her zaman yanımda değil. Birgün iki gün kime bırakacaksın? Annem bazen ablama bazen dayıma gidiyordu. Çoğu zaman İskenderun'da kalıyordu gelmiyordu 6 ay. İstanbuldan nefret ediyordu. Evini çok seviyordu. Bahçesi meyve ağaçları var. Yaprak topluyor turşu yapıyor sirke yapıyor. Üzümleri incirleri var. Orayı çok seviyordu. İstanbul'a gelmek istemiyordu benim gelmeme karşı çıkıyordu ne var İstanbul'a gidiyorsun diye. Öyle öyle Fıratı büyüttük binbir rezillik binbir sıkıntıyla.

Can: Almanya'da kiliseye gider miydiniz?

Tabi. Ermeni cemaati vardı. Teyzem vardı orada. Orada aktifti. Orada da gitmiştim. Gittiğim her toplumda hemen kilise buluyordum.

Can: İstanbul'a gelince nasıl sosyalleştiniz?

Okul vasıtasıyla. Okul aile birliğinde etkindim Fırat'ın okulunda. Haftanın 2 3 günü gidiyordum. Kadın kolları vardı oraya da gidiyorduk. Vartapetten ders aldım 3 ay bir yerde 6 ay bir yerde. Sonra Fırat'ın dersleri derken öyle öyle öğrendik. Sonra tekrar başladık. Altı yedi yıl sonra tekrar yoğunluk verdik. Bu birkaç aydır tekrar yoğunluk verdim. Samatya'da bizim rahip veriyor. Haftanın belli bir günü. Kurs gibi veriyor ama benim seviyem yükseldi. Bana hitap etmiyor. Bana pratik edebileceğim bir yer lazım. Ermenistan'a gittiğimde çok güzel oldu bir haftada bile acayip ilerlettim. Farklı ama gene de anlatabiliyorsun. Beni anlıyorlardı batı doğu farkı var ama gene de anlaşabiliyorsun. Ama birgün çok güzel konuşacağım. Sırada

sadece ve sadece tek bir amacım var onu yapacağım. Çok güzel Ermenice konuşmak. Bu yaz başka bir amacım vardı onu gerçekleştirdim: Araba kullanmak. Arabam olsun istiyordum. 6 aydır bir arabam var.

Can: Emeklilik ne zaman?

Emeklilik diye bir durumum yok. Fırat ne zaman okulu bitirirse o zaman emekli olacağım. 1 yıl kaldı. 1 yıl sonra emekliyim özgürüm (güler). Çok boş oturamam. Gerçi ben bir şeyler bulurum. Sabah 6'da kalkıyorum sahilde yürüyüş yapıyorum. Mart'tan beri hiç durmadan yürüyorum. Kendime yapabileceğim en büyük iyilik sabah yürümek. 2.5 km gidiyorum 2,5 km dönüyorum.

Can: Benim soracaklarım bu kadar sizin var mı eklemek istediğiniz?

Böyle işte. Kimliğimiz bizim için çok önemli. Torunumun ismi kesinlikle Sarkis olacak. Böyle tek bir vasiyetim var oğluma. Dedemin ismini koyacak.

(Ses kayıt cihazını kapattıktan sonra Satenik Müslüman akrabaları hakkında konuşmaya başladı ve ben tekrar ses kayıt cihazını açtım)

Satenik: Bir akrabam beni torununun sünnetine davet etti otelde. Bilmem ne. Bilmem ne otelinin bilmem kaçınca katında torununun mevlit törenine beni davet ediyor. Eşimin amcasının kızı ve biz aynı soyadını taşıyoruz. Şok oldum ya dedim sen ne diyorsun ya. Torununun beni mevlidine çağırıyorsun, vaftizine değil. Müslümanlaşmışsın. Tamam herkesin inancı kendine ama sen bana göre yanlış taraftasın ve sen bana bunu dayatıyorsun. Gelemem dedim yani. Gelmeyeceğim dedim. Sesini çıkarmadı. Hatta yanında amcamın kızı var onlar toplu halde yaşarlar. Hepsi de kiliseye gider hepsi de inançlı

insanlar o bir tane içlerinde Müslümanlık yapıyor. Dedim neden buna toplumsal baskı yapmıyorsunuz neden bunu dışlamıyorsunuz? Niye hepiniz birleşmiyorsunuz?

Can: Kocasından dolayı mı acaba?

Evet ama kocası da Ermeni. Müslümanlığı tercih etmişler ve hala devam ediyorlar. Kimse sizi zorlamıyor İstanbul'da tamam memlekette baskı vardı. Ama İstanbul'da toplu halde yaşıyorsun. Senin çevrendeki tüm akrabaların kiliseye gidiyor sen neden katılmıyorsun? Neyin korkusu neyin sıkıntısı? Kimse seni taşlamıyor kimse sana baskı yapmıyor. Memleket gibi değil artık yani. Korku yok yani. Niye hala bir de çok normal bir şey yapıyormuş gibi bizim yüzümüze sokuyorsun?

Can: Fırat Müslüman biriyle beraber olsa?

Satenik: Asla. Zaten küçüklüğünden beri ona beyninine yerleştirdim asla öyle bir şey yapmaz. Asla. Çünkü nasıl ki benim ailem benim beynime yerleştirdi. Asla birine bakmayacaksın asla öyle birine aşık olmayacaksın evliliği zaten hiç düşünme. Çünkü biz yapamıyoruz. Çünkü bizim bir geleceğimiz yok bir Müslümanla. Çünkü bizim hiçbir şeyimiz uymuyor. Hiçbir şeyimiz. Ne yaşama bakışımız ne inancımız ne kültürümüz. Hiçbir şeyimiz aynı değil. Hiçbir şekilde uyuşamayız bu halkla. Kinden dolayı değil. Bizim yaşama bakışımız aynı değil. Değerlerimiz kültürümüz hiçbir şeyimiz aynı değil. Bir sürü çatışmalar var. Yapan yok mu var. Günümüzde çok var. Yüzde elliye geçti neredeyse Türklerle evlilikte. Hiçbiri de mutlu değil. Hepsi hüsrarla sonuçlanıyor. Çünkü ileride çocuk olacak hangi tarafı

öğrenecek. diyorlar ki klasik çocuk büyüsün hangi tarafı tercih ederse. Ortak bir kültür yok. Sonu yok yani. İmkansız bir şey.

Can: Hrant Dink hakkında ne düşünürdünüz?

Satenik: Ben İstanbul'a ilk geldiğimde Agos yeni çıkmıştı. 1996'da Nisan ayında çıkmıştı. İkinci sayısını okudum ben o zaman üye oldum İskenderun'da. İskenderun'da her hafta gelirdi bana postayla o dönemde. İstanbul'a gelmişim ablama. Böyle bir gazete çıkmıştı. Ablamda okudum. O kadar hoşuma gitti ki. Bir bölümünde Ermenice var. Ermenice ders. Bir sayfası tarihten bir bölge tarihi veriyordu. Tesadüf Adıyaman'ın Keferliş köyünü vermişti. Orada yatılı bir bölge okulunun olduğunu 2000 öğrencisi olduğunu çünkü dedemin oraya gittiğini biliyorum bağlantı yaptık. Çok hoşuma gitti. Agos'tan ben çok şey öğrendim. Bir yıl boyunca geldi bana Agos. Annem rahmetli korkuyordu bu Ermeni gazeteyi alma başımıza iş açar. Ben her hafta bekliyordum ki Agos gelecek. Ben onun her tarafını okuyordum. Boş bir yer bırakmıyordum. Çünkü başka yapacak bir şey yok İskenderun'da. Agos sayesinde ben 1 yılda sanki 10 yıldır İstanbul'da yaşıyormuş gibi hemen adapte oldum. Çünkü bütün kültürü ne yapılması gerektiğini bayramlarda neler yapılır şu tarihte neler yapılır her şeyi öğrenmişim ve ben uyumda asla zorluk yaşamadım Agos sayesinde. Hrant'ı ben çok iyi tanıyordum. Çünkü yazılarını yıllarca okudum. O kadar severek okuyordum ki. Sanki bütünleşiyorsun o insanla. Ama fiziki olarak tanışamadım. Çok çok seviyordum. İstanbul'a gelince de Agos'u aldım. Çok iyi tanıyordum o insanı. Öldürüldüğünde de büyük bir şok yaşadım. Ben sanki o cenaze bizim evimizden kalktı. O kadar etkiledi beni. Hiçbir şey beni o kadar etkileyemezdi. Ben kocama ağlamadığım kadar Hrant'a ağladım. O

kadar üzüldüm. Çünkü birçok şeyimi ben Hrant sayesinde öğrendim.

Kimliğimi Agos sayesinde öğrendim. Agos bana çok şey kattı İskenderun'da kaldığım o dönemde. Yani benim hayatımda dönüm noktası oldu Agos.

Can: Hrant Dink'in öldürülmesi hayatınızda değişikliğe sebep oldu mu?

Satenik: Korktuk daha bir korktuk. Daha bir korktuk. Demek hala bizi öldürebiliyorlar. Demek hala biz hedefteyiz. Hala unutmuyorlar. Hala öldürülüyoruz biz. O korkularımız canlandı. Hrant'ın bütün programlarını dinlerdim. Siyaset Meydanına çıkardı 1'e 3'e kadar dinlerdim. Ve biz o 24 Nisan geleceği zaman hep tedirgin oluyorduk. Allahım yine geldi o dönem bir atlatsak bir bitsin. Konuşulmasın. Çünkü acayip korkuyoruz acayip rahatsız oluyoruz sıkılıyoruz diken üstünde oluyoruz. Çünkü yeni yeni Hrant'la konuşuluyordu soykırımlar şeyler. Aman diyorduk başına bir şey gelecek bir şey olacak. O kadar tedirgindik ki çünkü ben takip ediyordum bu siyasi gelişmeleri yıllarca. Bunların öncülüğünü Hrant yaptı Türkiye bugünlere geldi. Bir şeyler konuşulmaya başlandı. Yani bir bedel verildi. Bedel verilmeden hiçbir yere gelinmiyormuş. Hrant'ı bedel olarak verdik ve bugünlere geldik bugün konuşulabiliyor bu konular (Sessizlik) Tabi Süryani Asuri soykırımını hiç bilmiyorduk. Onlar hiç konuşulmuyordu bu ülkede. Biz yıllar sonra öğrendik. Çünkü Süryani tarafı da beni ilgilendiriyor. Babaannem anneannem Süryani olduğu için. Yüzde elli Süryani ırkımdan geliyorum bunu da önemsiyorum ben. Tamam Ermeni kimliğim ağır basıyor ama bu da bir gerçek. Yüzde ellim Süryani. Mesela Süryani'ye karşı bir önyargım vardı benim onu kırdım kendi içimde aştım. Mardin'e gittim. Mardin'in her yerini gezdim. Süryani kültürünü inancını mimarisini öğrendim. Süryanileri araştırdık. Hiç de eften püften bir halk olmadıklarını

öğrendik. Kendilerine has bir dilleri alfabeleri var. O da benim için guru verici bir şey. Ermeni halkı da Süryani halkı da eften püften bir halk değil. Kendilerine has bir dilleri alfabeleri var. İnançları var. Bence bunlar bir ayrıcalık bir renk. Hatta hiç unutmuyorum biz Fırat'la da Mardin'e bir gezi yaptık. Gittik inceledik manastırlar kiliseler. Fırat lisedeyken tarihten proje ödevi hazırlaması gerekiyordu. Ne yapayım Ermenileri yapayım. Yok dedim başına iş açma. En iyisi Süryanileri yapalım.

Can: Ermeni lisesinde okumadı mı?

Evet ama tarih dersini Türk biri veriyor. Biz Süryani güzel bir CD hazırladık efektler falan güzel bir CD hazırladım kursa gitmiştim o zaman. İnancından mimarisinden şarabından kiliselerinden güzel bir ödev hazırladık. Yüz üstünden yüz aldık. Okumaktansa canlı görmek daha çok etkiliyor insanı. O duvarlar o motifler. Daha bir etkileniyorsun. Bir de şey var onu da söylüyeyim. Fırat'ı Ermeni okuluna gönderdim. Benim gibi 12 yaşında değil daha bir büyüdüğünde anlatmak isterdim ben. O da benim yaşadığım şeyleri yaşamasın istiyordum. Kabus olarak kafasında kalsın istemiyordum. Birgün Fırat ikinci sınıftaydı galiba okuldan eve geldi. Mama dedi biz ne kadar kötü bir milletmişiz biz bütün Türkleri öldürmüşüz. Dedim kim söyledi sana onu? Öğretmenim söyledi. Ne söyledi sana? Ermeni okulunda sosyal öğretmeni Ermeni öğrencilere bunu öğretiyor. Asker kökenli Türk. İkinci sınıftaki 8 yaşındaki çocuğa. Düşünebiliyor musunuz? Bütün Ermeniler haindi bütün Türkleri öldürdüler. Ermeni okulunda bir de bunu öğretiyor. O çocuğun yaşı psikolojisi bunu kaldırabilir mi bunu öğretiyor. Gittim tabi ki okula şikayet ettim müdüre. Dedim benim çocuğuma nasıl böyle şeyler öğretir hem de bu okulda. Türk okuluna göndermedik ki bazı şeyleri yaşamasın dışlanmasın

etkilenmesin diye. Ermeni okulunda nasıl yapar böyle şeyi. Müdür kıvırdı yok bizim hocamız böyle bir şey yapmaz. Baş ağrımamın diye. Tabi cesaret edemiyor. Biz bunu yaşadık düşünebiliyor musun. Çocuk okuldan eve gelir gelmez diyor ki biz ne kadar kötü bir milletmişiz tüm Türkleri öldürmüşüz. Orada çocukların beynine nefret aşılanıyor.

Can: Kimlikte isminiz ne?

Nurten. Ben kendim seçmedim Satenik'i. Bir aile dostumuz vardı Mardinli. İstanbul'a geldiğimde onlar bizimle ilgilendiler. Çok katkıları oldu kendi kültürümüzü burada öğrenirken. Onlara gidip geliyorduk. Aile dostumuzdu. Onlar dediler Nurten neymiş dedi. Senin ismini Satenik yapalım dedi. Çünkü İstanbul'a gelen çoğu insanın ismini bizim gibi değiştiriyorlar. Yeni bir ortama girince seni artık herkes öyle tanıyor. Dedim Satenik olsun. Yeni açmış gül demek. İşte şimdi herkes Satenik olarak tanıyor. İş ortamında Nurten'im yine. Kimliğimde de Nurten. Satenik'i de artık benimsedik.

Can: Fırat'ın başka ismi var mı?

Fırat'la da ayrı bir davamız var. Çok rahat durmadık biz. Ben Fırat'a Almanya'da çok farklı kimsede olmayan bir isim koymak istedim. O zaman Kürtçe isimler çok revaçtaydı Adıyaman'da. Kimi Çiya kimi Sidar diyordu. Şiran. Böyle güzel isimler modaydı. Ben de Dijwar ismini koydum. Aslında ben Almanya'da ... gazetesinde PKK'nın bir yayın organından görmüştüm. Çok hoşuma gitmişti. Dijwar keskin sert anlamına geliyor. Ama yıllar sonra öğrendim ki aslında bu Ermenice bir isimmiş. Ermenice öğrenirken bu kelime karşıma çıktı. Ermenicede aynı anlamda sert keskin zor. Ben bu ismi koydum. Tabi w başımıza çok işler açtı. Almanya'da bütün kayıtlara Dijwar

diye geçti. Türk konsolosluđuna gideceđiz ki kaydettirelim kimliđi yok çünkü. Türk konsolosluđu dedi ki bizim alfabemizde w yok biz bu ismi kaydedemeyiz. Yasak o dönem Kürtçe isimler. Kürtçe biliyoruz ama Ermeniceymiş. Mahkemeye verdik mahkemeye deđiştirdik. Banka davasındaki avukatı tuttuk. Mahkeme o ismi siliyor sen gidip beyan ediyorsun şu ismi koymak istiyorum diye. Türkler Almanyanüfusuna liste vermişti bu isimlerden başka isim veremez Türkler diye. 92 yılında. Alman nüfus dairesi bana bir liste verdi buradan seç. 5 dakikada isim seç ona göre dava açılacak. O listede Ahmet Mehmet Tuncay Hüseyinler içinden – Türk Alman her zaman dosttu katliamı da beraber işlemediler mi? Stratejik ilişkileri vardı her zaman dosttu onlar – 5 dakika süre vermiş. Mehmet mi takacağım ben? İçimden Fırat geldi ya Murat ya Fırat. Fırat daha güzeldi hiç olmazsa nehir ismi onu seçtim. Dayatma vardı 5 dakika ve sonra mahkeme ile deđiştirdik. Dijwar içimde kaldı. Ermenicede o ismi koyan kimse yok.

Can: Kürtçeniz baya iyi

Evet mecbur kaldık. Gelin konumundaydık. Herkes arkamdan konuşuyordu. Ne konuşuyor bunlar bilmem lazım. Şey gibi kalıyorsun. Onlar da biliyorlar ki ben anlamıyorum rahat rahat konuşuyorlar. Bir de içlerinde olunca çabuk öğreniyorsun sürekli duya duya.

D. Transcription of Interview with Satenik (English)

Can: We can start with your birth place, your childhood and your family.

Satenik: My mother and father are dead but they were born and grew up in Adıyaman. My father was often telling the past and his grandfather's experiences to me. I think his grandfather was 5 or 6 years old during the Genocide. He stayed with a Kurdish agha as a handmaid. They loved him. He worked as a shepherd. When he grew up, they made him marry an Assyrian girl. Both my mother's and father's mothers were Assyrian. I thought why an Assyrian was living in Adıyaman. Because I thought that Assyrians were only living in Mardin and Diyarbakır. My father's mother was an orphan. She was a beautiful woman, tall, big-boned and with emerald green eyes. I always wondered why she was alone, an orphan. I learned later that she was also kılıç artığı, she was raised by someone. Later that Kurdish agha made them marry because they were both Christian and they lived with the agha until my father was born. His name was Sarkis, but they changed his name into "Muhtedi" (Convert) Süleyman. Later that name caused many problems. They stayed in that village. Then they went to their own village. We do not know anyone from my grandfather. My grandfather spoke Armenian, he was not foreign. At least he knew that his name was Sarkis. Sarkis name is very important for me. I am sure that I will give my grandchild that name. I struggled a lot for that name. It was obligatory that on my father's identity card his father's name should had been written. It was written Muhtedi Süleyman. My father made a house with that identity card and had its registry. After tears he dead and we wanted to sell the house but it was written Sarkis M. Süleyman in the registers. They said that "it is written

Sarkis on the deed, you have to change it". How will we change it? We sued and I changed it to Sarkis on all registers. If you did not erase that name, and his real name was Sarkis, than let him live as Sarkis. Since you make such problems, then let him stay with his own name. The case lasted 2,5 years. We were to sell the house, received the half of its price but the agreement waited 2,5 years. After the case ended, his name became Sarkis and we sold the house.

Can: When your grandfather was a child, was he Christian?

Satenik: He was Islamized when he was living with that Kurdish agha. Later he could not reconvert to his own religion. He adopted Islam. He fasted. My father also fasted until he grew up. It is very interesting. They knew that they were Christian but the name, the identity, everything changed when they were living with the Kurdish agha.

Can: What do you know about your father's mother?

Satenik: We know nothing about her, just she was Assyrian. But my mother's mother is real Assyrian. They live in Adiyaman's Venk village, Metin family. They are still Christians but they are not real Assyrians. Half Assyrian half Armenian. Their grandmother, Emine, is there.

Can: How about your mother's father?

Satenik: He was also an Armenian from a village in Adiyaman. He was also raised up by someone but it is complicated, my uncle knows it better. He converted. They had to convert in village. His surname was Garabet but they made it Karabit. My father and mother were born in village. They were the

oldest children of two important families. They married. It is not allowed to marry someone outside. We marry within the Armenian society. They were from the same village. Orbiş. Orbiş village in Gerger. They spoke Zazaki. Their mother tongue is Zazaki. Their names were Turkish. My father was Mamo. Mahmut. My father was an artisan. He was carpenter. He was an expert, he produced. He worked outside of the village, he went to the cities. When they were just married, they migrated to Mardin. My mother's uncles had migrated there because they were Assyrians. My father and mother also went there to and lived there 4 years. They were just married. My father was younger than 30 years old. My father learned literacy on his own. An Assyrian priest gave him bible there. My father read it in the same night. He was baptized. To gain religious knowledge. Then married my mother with religious marriage ceremony.

Can: Had your mother been baptized before?

Satenik: No. They were living in the village. They know that they were Christians but they did not know the religion. They just knew that they were different. Because there was no church. There was no priest. There was no society. How could they learn? They were baptized in Mardin. They married there with religious ceremony. As my father was the oldest one, he made his all siblings convert to Christianity. He pioneered. All. Thanks to Deyrulzafaran Church. He pioneered all.

Can: Do you know anything about your mother's family? Were they Christian?

Satenik: Sure. I have 5 aunts and 2 uncles. One of my aunt is in Armenian society in Germany. My two aunts are Muslims in Adana. They have to be.

Can: Did they marry Muslims?

Satenik: No, they all married Armenians. My grandfather gave all his daughters to our people. But because of fear, they have to behave as Muslims in such an environment.

Can: Were not they baptized?

Satenik: They were. They all were baptized. Their names are Turkish names. My father, ee. They went to Mardin and stayed there for 4 years. They even forgot Zazaki there. They spoke Arabic. They adopted it since they heard it. They don't speak Armenian. Then they went back to the village. They stayed there one or two years. Then my father went to Malatya. They lived the famous gavur neighborhood where Hrant lived. He worked as carpenter. He was expert and had his atelier. There was snow for 6 months in Malatya in that period. Winter and snow. The life was difficult. They could not work. Life conditions were bad in that time. Then my father migrated to Iskenderun.

Can: When were his children born?

Satenik: I am the number 9. The last one. The rest was born in Malatya, just one was born in Adiyaman's village. No one was born in Mardin. 5 girls 4 boys. Now, just 4 of them are alive. 1 boy 3 girls. They died when they were babies. Due to the illness or needle. They they live in gavur neighborhood. There was a nice Armenian society in Malatya. They had a very nice

environment. When they went to Iskenderun my mother cried for 2 years since they left Malatya. It was 1974. There was a migration from Malatya to Istanbul. They migrated from Istanbul to Europe and America.

Can: Do you know why did they migrate?

Satenik: The atmosphere has changed. They were not comfortable. They told like this. Before my birth, when my mother was pregnant they migrated to Iskenderun in 1974. Because my father had gone to Iskenderun for work. He could not work well in Malatya. There was snow for 6 months. He could not make money and had small kids. The life conditions were difficult. As Iskenderun has Mediterranean climate, there were berries during the Easter. There is not berry until June in Malatya. There was snow. My father like it a lot. "How could leafs be out in the Easter?" What a warm place, he liked it a lot. Later, when he went to Iskenderun he opened his own atelier with my oldest brother. He helped my father in that period. They loved Iskenderun a lot since there was no snow and it was warm. Mediterranean climate. We also had other relative there who migrated to Iskenderun from Adiyaman. Brother Murat was there. I don't remember because I was a child. I was born in Iskenderun in 1974. We were again within Armenian society but we had church in Iskenderun. I grew up in Armenian Church. My father was very religious. Both my father and my mother. They were good Christians. They raised their children up with religious knowledge. We were all baptized when we were babies. We all have Turkish names because we lived in foreign place. They taught my father this. "Don't show yourself with names. Give Turkish names so that they will not have problems". But we never denied our identities. My father said even they cut your head, don't deny your identity".

I am still listening to him. My father taught it to me and I teach it to my son. Maybe it is because we grew up in a warmer environment. There was a lot of non-Muslims in Iskenderun. There were also Greeks. Iskenderun was a very moderate place. There was mosaic. Several people lived together there and it was the most comfortable place in Turkey. Now it is corrupted a little bit. There is a street, synagogue, church and mosque are on the same street and people respect each other. Nobody excludes no one. Nobody intervenes with no one. Everybody respected other's belief in Hatay, it was different from the east. Maybe this is why we were comfortable there. We never hide ourselves there. I grew up in an upland village in Iskenderun. We were the only Armenian family there, can you imagine? And my father raised 3 daughter there and made us marry. We were alone there. They were members of Nationalist Movement Party and everybody knew that we were Armenian. We went to the church on Sunday, we wear cross and nobody annoyed us. But they did not love us. We felt it. Nobody liked us, nobody had a normal relation with us. They did not visit us. You are the other, they made you feel it. But whenever they needed a small thing such as a needle or a boiler, they came to my mother because they knew that we had them. Rolling pin, sheet metal for bread, in Anatolian culture we used copper boilers. When they needed those thing they came and wanted from my mother. Because they did not have those things and they knew that my mother will give them whatever they wanted. It is very interesting that they did not love us but when they needed something they came to our house. There was such an interesting relationship.

Can: Is it written Islam on your identity card?

Satenik: No, we are all Christians on registers. Only me. When my uncle was making my register after my birth, he was ashamed. I had a fat uncle in Gerger. Everybody knew him, loved him, respected him. He was called “Fat Ömer”. He was a respectable man but he thought that it could cause a problem to write Christian on my identity card. He knew the officer in the register he also knew the Gerger district governor. When he went there to take my identity card, he saw that the officer wrote Islam but he did not object to it and said “Let it be like this”. On all my family’s identity cards it was written Christian but only on mine it was written Islam. We lived in Iskenderun until the second grade. There were Orthodox, Assyrian, Armenian students in the schools. As they were a lot in number, the children did not attend course on religion in schools. My sisters did not attend and I knew it. But when I was in the second grade we left the city. My father built a house in upland Sarımazı in Iskenderun. It was a nice place. Iskenderun was hot like hell. Sarımazı was upland. It was pine grove. It was high and cooler. People went there on summer. My father built a house there and we moved there. It was a small place. I went to school there. I thought if I go and say to my teacher that I was Christian I could be exempted from the religion course like in Iskenderun. I went to the teacher. I was in the 3rd grade. My father told me to speak to my teacher. I went to the teacher and said that I am Christian and I do not want to attend religion course. He wanted me to bring my identity card but it was written Islam on my card. How could I prove him? I brought my sister’s card too. To prove, with a child’s mind. I was 10 years old. I said “It is written Islam on my card but look at my sister’s identity card, there it is written Christian. Mine is erroneous.” I tried to prove

it. What a ridiculous situation. Even the teacher could be surprised that one is Christian the other is Muslim. The teacher permitted me and I became the only student who was exempted from the course. But this spread all over the school. The teacher protected me and wanted me to stay in the class during the course. He said “don’t go out, otherwise it will create reactions. You don’t have to memorize the prayers just listen to it”. But I had already learnt 3 Arabic prayers. I did not forget whatever I learned. Sübhaneke, Elham. Kulhuvallüehad. I still remember them. I memorized it when I was ill and on bed. Still I am thinking about it. “Teacher on my card it is written Islam but on my sister’s it is written Christian”. I was struggled to prove myself. I was so ridiculous.

Can: It was also courageous what your father did.

Satenik: We received that courage from our father. ‘Never deny yourself’. It is because his [ethnic] identity was very important to him. He told us everything he experienced in the past. So did my mother. She gave me my first political thought when I was 12 years old...Then the children learned that I am Christian. They easily understood it. It was a small place. They should have heard when I was speaking to the teacher. I was the only Christian. They had a negative attitude towards me. Jeering. ‘you are gavur’, ‘Where did you come from?’, ‘Did you come from the space?’ Then boys were gathering. Our house was in the opposite place. Every time, I was running home after school. I was the first to arrive at the neighborhood. Nobody could run better than me. They were doing many things to beat me in running. ‘Why she is always the winner? Let’s run’ Then boys started to block my way. They beat me up a few times. I came home crying. I was a

girl. They were gathering around me. I was just 10 or 12 years old. ‘You are *gavur*, Where did you come from? You go to the church?’ They excluded me. I was beaten twice and came back home. My father said to me ‘Why are you crying? You have hands too. Why don’t you fight?’ My father backed me up and encouraged me. ‘You will beat them up. You will fight if someone wants to fight. You will never come to house after being beaten again’. They raised me like a boy. Then I beat them up. It is because my father encouraged me and said to me ‘You also have hands, you can beat them’. He was a carpenter and he made a bag for me which was like a suitcase. Like wooden suitcases. It was very beautiful. He varnished it. It had a handle. I was putting my books in it. We grew up with it. All children had plastic bags but mine was a wooden suitcase. But my father was making whatever he could. Our bag, our wedding chest... My dad made everything. Then when those boys attempted to beat me up, I was whirling around with that bag to their heads. Tak tak tak (she is laughing). I never forget. Then I was never beaten up again. I was not beaten up but I did beat them up.

Can: Did you stay in the upland always?

Satenik: We stayed there always because we had a house there. I had a sister. My oldest sister married and went to Malatya. She was engaged before and moved back there. Later she migrated to Istanbul. They live in Anatolian side. My second sister was a young girl. We were taught that “never look at a Turk”. You cannot fall in love. This was taught us when we were young girls. We cannot fall in love with our peers. Our roads are closed from the beginning. We cannot do anything like this. We do not have options. Therefore, we have to marry someone like us. My sister fell in love with a

Turk. She asked my mother what she would think if she marries a Turk.

“What would you think if I fall in love with a foreigner?” My mother said “I cut you into slices but do not allow you to marry a Turk. I was very little, 12 or 13 years old. I thought the same is valid for me too. I could not think something like this. Our ways were closed from the beginning. You will never fall in love with a Turk. You cannot marry a Turk. Don’t even think about it. Then my sister married an Assyrian man and went to Izmir. Assyrians are Christian. Then I married when I was 17. He was my relative. I went to Adiyaman and gave birth there. We were not given the chance to decide. We all made wrong marriages. We married wrong guys since we had to marry our people. Wrong marriages. Why? Because we should not marry foreigners. My sister got divorced two years ago. After 25 years. They could not match. It was wrong from the beginning. I married an ill man. They even did not ask my opinion. He was 22 years older than me. Why? Because he was Armenian. He was from our people. We could not decide our marriages. You cannot decide. This is another aspect of genocide. Why? Because he is your relative. There is not another guy, you cannot decide. My husband was ill. He had brain tumor. They all knew it but still forced me to marry him. He was older than me and ill. He suffered attacks and fainted. They even did not tell it to me. I saw his doctor reports after 3 months in Germany. I was shocked. They threw me into fire. When I was 17. My own family did it because we could not choose. To prevent Turks to abduct me. To protect me, they made me marry. Then I had a baby and my husband died after 4 years. We were in Germany. They knew. They did not tell it to me. It was the

biggest mistake that I have ever made in my life. I did not marry again. It has been 20 years since my husband died and I did not marry again.

Can: Could you get used to Adiyaman?

Satenik: No. I went to Kahta. I had never got used to there. It was a horrible life. It was like hell. I grew up in Christian culture in Iskenderun. We celebrated the Easter and the Christmas. We celebrated the Christmans. We had a Christian culture. We were such an atmosphere. I went to Adiyaman. It was a completely different environment. Yes, they were my own relatives but I had never seen them. I did not know them.

Can: How were they living?

Satenik: They were my relatives but they were living totally like Muslims. I used to go to church on Sundays. There was nothing. I was constantly feeling emptiness. I was very religious. I was faithful and we received a special religion course in the church. We regard ourselves lucky. I grew up in such an environment then went among Muslims. They were my relatives. There was nothing beautiful in life for me. There was nothing to continue my life there, no social or religious environment. They fasted. They lived like Muslims. Kahta was a horrible place 20 years ago. Now there is a church in Adiyaman. All reconverted to Christianity now. It was not a place to live 20 years ago. They did not let us go out. I grew up in Iskenderun. I did not cover my head. I wore jeans and mini skirt. We lived a modern life. I went to Kahta. I wore jeans and then all hell broke loose. I was a bride. I was 17 years old and a bride. Bride, wife and I was also a mother. And I had to adopt those conditions in bigotry. "You are Bakırcı's bride, you can not do this". I

was myself a child. I was playing ball in the street and they made me marry. I was in such a weird position.

Can: Did your father want you to marry?

Satenik: It was not my father, it was my fat uncle in Gerger. I cried a lot.

Nobody listened to me. It was said “We decided, this is the best for you and you will obey” to me. I lived in Adiyaman for 1,5 years. Then I went to Germany. My husband was in Germany. He had been living there for years. I went with him and gave birth there. My husband was a teacher in Adiyaman’s village before he went to Germany. He had a bar in Germany. He was also a union leader. Then we lived there. We set in our way and had a house. We did the same in Adiyaman too. Then we went there, had a house and my son was born there. He is the best prize I have ever had. We stayed in Germany for 1,5 years and came to Turkey. Because the doctor did not want my husband to stay there. He needed change of air. We had a house in Kahta. We came but after 3 months he went to Germany again. My husband’s family did not want me to live in Germany but I wanted. Because it was against their interests. My husband was retired due to disability since he worked there for years. His pension was good and his sister took it for years. They took that pension. If I lived there they could not receive the pension. It was against their interests if I stayed there. Then they took my passport to prevent me to go Germany. They pulled it to pieces. My husband was in Kahta. As he was ill, he could not be thinking clearly. He was in need for care. I looked after him as if he was a baby. I looked after my son and him. It was another tragedy for me. His family’s behavior was another tragedy for me. I went there when I was 17 years old. I married an ill man and gave

birth. Moreover I suffered oppression. "You make this man ill" They calumniate and excluded. But we were relatives. They wanted me to marry. We were close relatives. they calumniated regularly. I was a child. I became a mother before I was 18 years old. I was surprised "Did I do all they are saying?" I could not get rid of this trauma for years. For instance, they said that I was giving more pills to poison him. He was my son's father! And he was like an angel who could not hurt a fly. And I loved him, he was my husband. I set up a home, he was my husband and my son's father. They regularly calumniated me. I became a different person and they did all because I was against their interests. After all, they did what they wanted. They took my passport. My husband was very ill. But there was no treatment in Turkey for him. I could not go. He went alone. I did not have passport I could not go. I was a child in Adiyaman. I can go and have a new passport now. I can be on my own. I can say I don't need anyone, I have house both here and there. I event could not have a new passport. I was in Adiyaman. I had a baby. I could not go even from Kahta to Adiyaman.it was 20 years ago. The conditions were primitive and I could not think. We send my husband alone. He stayed in a hospital alone for 3 months. His sister did not take care of him. 3 months and his doctor gave a day to him. "He will live 2 or 3 weeks more" then he came and died after 3 weeks.

After I lost my husband, I went back to my father's house in Iskenderun. My father was still alive. We stayed there for 4 years. With my mother and father. I had a brother and he went to Istanbul with his family. We lived in the same house with my father and mother and Firat. My father lived 4 years. It was his last days. He was ill. My father died and after staying 1 more year

we came to Istanbul. My mother went in the summer. We did not sell our house there. We came to Istanbul because my husband died. That night, I decided to come to Istanbul. Because when I came to visit my sister in Istanbul I saw that her children studied in Armenian schools. My identity is very important to me. But only to me. My brothers are not like me. That night I decided. My nephews' courses were taught in Armenian and this made me very happy. I did not speak Armenian at that time. I was living in Adiyaman. My husband was still alive. I decided at that time. I decided in that oppressive period. I could decide about my life. I was not under anyone else's control. I was 20 years old and I was a mother, a widow. Now I can decide. Nobody can decide about my life. I will do whatever I want. I gained my independence. I struggled for four years in Iskenderun. I saved money. Otherwise I could not have come to Istanbul. I bear for 4 years. I was going to Istanbul because I had an aim. I wanted to make Firat study in an Armenian school. It was written Islam on Firat's identity card. I pioneered to change the religion through the court in that era. I was in Iskenderun. His father's family was also Christian but it was written Islam on their id's. There was no problem on my identity card. It was written Armenian. But the children take their fathers' religion directly. I decided that he was going to study in an Armenian school but how it will be if it is written Islam? I registered him to the patriarchate. I took a paper from there. We also had baptize paper that we took in Iskenderun. We sued in Kahta. The register was in Kahta. We changed it through court decision. The court can only erase the religion part. You have to apply personally to say which religion you want. It was another problem. I took the court decision and went to birth registration

office. I said that we wanted them to write Christian on religion part. He said “No, we won’t”. I asked how. I awakened. Nobody could prevent me. I would do whatever I wanted. I had court decision. He was 3 or 4 years old. I know both the rule and the procedure. It was erased. I said that “You are going to write Christian here”. He said “No, I won’t”. In one hour, it was spread all over Kahta that there was a woman who wanted to change her son’s religion to Christianity.

Can: It was written Islam on your own identity card?

Satenik: No, I did not change because it was written Armenian but just on my identit card it was written Islam. My husband’s family is originally Armenian but it is written Islam on registers. It changed after I married. It became Christian after they changed my status to married. There was no problem. But on my son’s card it was written Islam. My husband’s family was Armenian but it was written Islam. Then they resisted a lot. “We will not write, we will appeal it. The registers chief discussed with me a lot. It was stubbornness. I said “How dare you? I brought court decision to you and you will erase it. You have to obey the court decision”. He said “No, I have the right to appeal it. I have the right to change the decision”. He did not want it. He wanted to make difficulty. Then I went to Adıyaman governorship and made the decision be confirmed. They made me deal with it for 1 week. We solved it and came to Istanbul and bought a house. 1 year passed. He was going to go to Armenian school. He had to go to preschool to learn Armenian. We could not afford it because we bought a house. But we came, we came to Zeytinburnu. Nobody took care of us, neither my sisters nor my uncles. Thanks to my husband’s cousin we found a house. It was a new

house. But we lived in Zeytinburnu like a sample for years. We did not know that our people were living together in Bakırköy or Yeşilköy. I did not know that I was going to live alone in Zeytinburnu. Because I did not know Istanbul. We came to buy a house but nobody took care of us. I had money but even my sister did not took care of me. My sister did not. She was living in Uskudar and there was an Armenian school too. I think now and cannot understand because I did not know any neighborhood in Istanbul. We came and bought a house there. And I had a problem. I had always lived in beautiful detached houses in Anatolia. I could not live in a basement floor here. It was my only condition. I bought a dublex house in Zeytinburnu. I was large, with 5 rooms and a terrace. It was a beautiful house but there was no community. We came here. I registered my son to an Armenian school. I never stayed in my sister's house. I came and moved to the house directly. I also brought my mother with me. We lived with my mother for 9 years in Zeytinburnu. Then she died. We were alone with Fırat. But I achieved the goal. He was going to finish an Armenian school. He graduated from the high school. He went to Kumkapı Bezciyan and Sahakyan Armenian High School in Samatya.

Can: What were you doing while Fırat was in the school?

Satenik: I have been working in a leather company for 12 years. In the same company. I have been promoted and now I am in the highest position. I started as a secretary and now I am doing importation. I learned German in Germany but I don't use it in my work. I learned German there. We went to Kahta, we had already spoke Zazaki but I could not speak. I learned Kurdish in Kahta. We came to Istanbul and I learned Armenian. I took course with

Firat when he was in the 1st grade. I took private lessons. We started together. I was at home for 4 years. Because my mother came and went. She was not with us always. She was stubborn. "I can't stay at home and cannot look after your son". I had to stay at home. When Firat was 10 years old and learned to open and close the door I started to work. It was another problem. My work place was close to the home.

Can: How did you find that job?

Satenik: It was an Assyrian company, they were from us. I have never thought that I would work such a long period. I thought that I would work 2 or 3 months and quit it. I stayed 12 years (she laughs). I am very happy with it, it is a safe place. They are honest people. It is reciprocal. It is a miracle to work in the same place for such a long time. It is like my house. I am in the highest position now. I learned the job from the beginning. Firat came to the house at 4 pm. I had been preparing his tea before and keep it in a thermos. His cake was on the table. He just had to put it to his plate. He prepared the tea and made the second breakfast. I checked him on phone. "Did you arrived? Yes I did". I finished working at 6 pm and came to home. Just 2 hours. He watched the television. He was alone for just 1 hour. I checked him regularly during that hour. "What are you doing? Don't open the door anyone". I raised him in that way. But our schools have both Armenian and Turkish holidays. It was torture for us. I brought him to the work. I had no one to leave him. I could not leave him alone in the house. My mother was not with me always. Who could look after him? My mother sometimes went to my sister or my uncle. She stayed in Iskenderun also, even for 6 months. She hated Istanbul. She did not want me to come here. She loved her house.

She had a garden and trees. She picked up leafs and prepared pickle and vinegar. She had grapes and figs. She loved there a lot. She did not want to come to Istanbul and did not want me to come here. We raised Firat with such difficulties.

Can: Did you go to church in Germany?

Satenik: Sure. There was an Armenian community. I had an aunt there. She was very social. I did go to church. I found a church wherever I go.

Can: How did you socialize when you came to Istanbul?

Satenik: Through the school. I was very active in parent teacher association. I went there 2 or 3 times a week. There was Women's Branch, I was a member. I took courses from vartapet for 3 months and 6 months later. Firat also had courses. I learned Armenian. I started courses again later. I took more intense courses after 6 or 7 years. I have been studying for two months. Our priest gives courses in Samatya. Just one day a week. It is like a course but my level is high. It is not for me anymore. I need to practice. When I went to Armenia, it was a good chance. I improved it even in one week. It is different but still you can explain. They understood me. There is difference between east and west but you can understand. But I will speak very fluent one day. My only aim is this and I will realize it. To speak Armenian very well. I realized my other aim last summer: to drive. I wanted to have a car and I have car for 6 months.

Can: When will you be retired?

Satenik: Whenever Firat graduates from university I will retire. Just one year. I will retire one year later, I will be free (she laughs). I cannot sit around. I can find something to do. I wake up at 6 am and walk at the seaside. I have walked since March. It is the best thing to do for me. I go for 2,5 km and come back 2,5 km.

Can: I do not have another question. Do you want to add anything else?

Satenik: Like that. Our identity is very important for us. My grandson's name will be Sarkis. It is my only will. He will give my grandfather's name to his son.

(After I turned off the recorder Satenik started to talk about his Muslim relatives).

Satenik: One of my relative invited me to her grandson's circumcision feast in a hotel. She is my husband's cousin and we have the same surname. I was shocked. I said "What do you say? You invite me to your grandson's circumcision not to his baptism. You are Islamized! Everyone can freely choose her religion but I think you are in the wrong side and you impose it to me. I said "I can't come". She did not say anything. My cousin was with her too, they are always together. They all go to the church, they are faithful. She is the only one who is Muslim. I asked them "Why don't you put pressure on her? Why don't you exclude her? Why don't you all unite and exclude her?"

Can: Is it because her husband is Muslim?

Satenik: Yes but her husband is also Armenian. They preferred to be Muslim and still continue. Nobody forces you in Istanbul. Yes there was pressure in hometown. But you are living together in Istanbul. All of your relatives go to church. Why wouldn't you go? What is this fear? Nobody stones you, nobody puts pressure on you. It is not like in the hometown. There is no fear. Why do you do this as it is very normal?

Can: Would you permit your son to marry a Muslim girl?

Satenik: Never! I taught him when he was a child and he never does it. Never. Like my family, I taught him. "Never look at a Muslim girl, never fall in love with a Muslim girl. Never think such a marriage". Because we cannot. Because we do not have a future with a Muslim. Because we do not share anything with them. Neither our perspectives nor our beliefs or cultures. We have nothing similar. We cannot. It is not about grudge. It is about values and culture. There are many conflicts. We have many mixed marriages nowadays. It is over 50 percent of all marriages. None of them is happy. They are all failure. Because there will be children and it is difficult to decide to which side they will belong. There is no shared culture. I do not have an end. It is impossible.

Can: What do you think about Hrant Dink?

Satenik: When visited Istanbul for the first time, Agos had just been published. It was published in April 1996. I read its second issue and became its member after going back Iskenderun. I visited my sister and read it there. I liked it a lot. There was Armenian lesson page. One page was about a particular region's history. By coincidence, it was about a village called

Keferliş in Adıyaman. I learnt that there had been a boarding school for 2000 children and realized that it was my grandfather's school. I liked it a lot. I learned a lot from Agos. I received Agos for one year. My mother was afraid of having problem because of the newspaper. I was waiting for it during the week. I read its all parts. I did not leave any page unread. Because there was nothing else to do in Iskenderun. I was adapted in 1 years as if I had been living in Istanbul for ten years. Because I learned whole culture, what to do in the feasts, what should be done in special dates. I never had problem in adapting to Istanbul thanks to Agos. I know Hrant Dink very well. Because I read him for years. I read his column and liked a lot. As if I was communing with him. I have never met him personally. I loved him a lot. I continued reading Agos after coming to Istanbul. I knew him very well. I was shocked when he was killed. It was like his funeral was in our house. It influenced me so much. Nothing could influence me as it did. I cried for Hrant more than I cried for my husband. I was unhappy a lot. Because I learned a lot of things thanks to Hrant. I learned my identity thanks to Agos. I owe a lot to Agos. It was a milestone in my life.

Can: Did anything change after Hrant Dink's murder?

Satenik: We were scared, we were scared more. So they can still kill us. So we are still target. They still do not forget. We are still killed. Our fears revived. I followed Hrant's all talks. He was on television programme, Siyaset Meydanı. I watched him until 1 or 3 am. We were always uneasy before April 24th. "God, this date again came, Let it go and end. Let it not been talked. Because we are scared, annoyed, bored, on tenterhooks a lot. Because things such as genocide were just started to be discussed with Hrant.

We were scared for him. We worried a lot because I was following the politics for years. Hrant Dink pioneered those who came out courageously and Turkey came to its new period. Some subjects started to be discussed. I mean the price was paid. Without a price nothing changes. We gave Hrant as a price and came to these days. Today, these subjects can be talked (silence). And we did not know the Assyrian genocide. It was not discussed in this country. We learned it after years. Because it Assyrian side is also important for me. Both my mother's and father's mothers were Assyrians. My half is Assyrian and this is important for me. My Armenian identity overweighs, this is a fact. My half is Assyrian. I had biased against Assyrians and I overcame it. I went to Mardin. I saw all parts of Mardin. I learned Assyrian culture, beliefs and architecture. We searched Assyrians. We learned they are not a lightweight people. They have their own language and alphabet. It is very proud for me. I think this is a color. I never forget that we went to Mardin with Firat. We went there and researched monasteries and churches. When Firat was a high school student, he had to make a history project. He wanted to search Armenians but I said don't make trouble. We decided to search Assyrians.

Can: Did not he go to an Armenian school?

Satenik: yes but history course was taught by a Turk. We prepared a very nice CD for the presentation. I took a computer course before. We prepared a project on beliefs, architecture, wine, churches. We took 100 over 100. It is more influential to see rather than to read. Those wall and designs. It is more influential. There is another thing to add. I sent Firat to an Armenian school. I wanted to tell him when he is older than 12 years old. I did not want him to

experience the same things I did. I did not want him to learn this like a nightmare. One day, when he was 2nd grade, he came to home. He said: “Mother, what a bad nation we are, we killed all Turks”. I asked him who had told this to him. “The teacher said”. “What did he say to you?” A social sciences teacher teaches it to Armenian students in an Armenian school. A soldier teacher. He told it to an 8 years old child in 2nd grade. Can you imagine? All Armenians were traitors and they killed all Turks. In an Armenian school.

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Interviews:

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