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ARMENIANS IN LATE OTTOMAN RURAL KESARIA/KAYSERI

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In the late Ottoman period, many smaller towns, villages, and hamlets were inhabited exclusively or partly by Armenians, in the region of Caesarea/Kesaria/Kayseri in historic Cappadocia.¹

In these settlements, Armenian life had diverse forms, but they were inescapable for the observer at the end of the nineteenth century until 1915. A rapid look at the map shows how densely settled the region was.² Armenians had been present in Caesarea for centuries. At the end of the nineteenth century, they numbered about 20 percent of the local population.³ All places inhabited by Armenians were not of the same age. Some had been founded in ancient times, others in the Middle Ages, and still others as recently as the eighteenth century. Historians must emphasize that no place in any of the Ottoman *vilayets* stood

¹ How can one justify the use of *Caesarea* in Latin or *Gesaria* in Western Armenian when writing about *Kayseri*, a place where Turkish was the predominant language, regardless of religious divides? The deliberate anachronistic touch of the ancient name, which was in use in Western languages (*Cæsaree* in French) until the foundation of the Turkish Republic, is a deliberate way to emphasize the rupture experienced in 1915 in the case of the Armenians and in 1924 in the case of the Greek Orthodox, when the city was cleansed of its Christian population. The tiny Armenian presence remaining in the city can hardly be considered as evidence of continuity.

² Map, "Kesaria ev ir shrahakayke" [Kesaria and Its Environs], insert at the end of vol. 1 of Arshak Alpayachian, *Patmutiun Hay Kesario* [History of Armenian Kesaria], 2 vols. (Cairo: Kesario ev Shjgakayis Hairnaktsakan Mitutun, 1937).

³ A similar proportion is found in Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, 4 vols. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1891-1895), vol. 1, pp. 304, 307. Of the 210,732 inhabitants in the *Kayseri sanjak* (county) at the end of the nineteenth century, 23 percent were Armenian.

outside the flow of history. Some places developed while others had become impoverished and were vanishing at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴

The main sources used for this overview are the publications of some English-speaking travelers written in the nineteenth century, Father Suktas Eprikian's *Paṭkerazard bnaškarhik bararan* (Illustrated Geographical Dictionary) published at the beginning of the twentieth century, and monographs written by genocide survivors as memorial books after 1915. The importance of the major study of Arshag Alboyaġian (Arshak Alpayachian), *History of Armenian Kesaria (Pamutim Hay Kesario)*, is monumental. The author was a former executive at the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople and prepared this work in exile in Jerusalem in the late 1930s, after doing research in Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. This voluminous monograph (2,479 pages in two volumes) can be considered authoritative, given the destruction of local records and the silent dispersion of the survivors.⁵ But, in order to take into account the diversity of the local population, including the Armenians, the Archives of the Oral Tradition housed in the Athens Centre for Asia Minor Studies have also been utilized.⁶ Testimonies were methodically gathered among

⁴ Işbile was an entirely Turkish village in the nineteenth century but obviously was not in previous times, as attested by an Armenian cemetery in the vicinity and mention of the two Armenian churches in the village in the sixteenth century. The population experienced Islamization and a part migrated to Everek because of earthquakes. This small place shows how much change there was even in the most remote regions of the empire. The same village called Işpile in the documents of the CAMS is also thought to have converted to Islam according to Greek Orthodox refugees. See CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski [Talaş], interviewer, Heleni Gazi; informant, Theologos Chitiroglou (born in 1876 to a local family, in Talaş, which he left for economic reasons to Samsun in 1916. He migrated to Greece in 1922 from the Black Sea region. The CAMS agent commented: "His memories are very lively and he tells them with much eagerness to help and entertain"), interviewed on Sept. 14, 1961: "People told that they too had formerly been Christians and that they had been forced to become Turks. What happened and when, we did not know."

⁵ Verzhine Svazlyani's collection of oral testimonies is an important initiative to adding to the knowledge of the former Ottoman Armenian communities.

⁶ Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Kydatinaion 11, Athina 105 58, Greece. (www.kms.org.gr). The documents of the Archive of the Oral Tradition were gathered by and are kept at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens. They are transcripts of interviews conducted from the 1930s to the 1970s among refugees and those from the Asiatic provinces of the Ottoman Empire who were forcibly exchanged and arrived in Greece between September 1922 (after the Greek "catastrophe") and 1923.

Greek Orthodox refugees from Turkey in Greece from the 1930s to the early 1970s. They constitute a unique documentation on the former social life of present Anatolia with no known Armenian or Turkish equivalent. As will be shown, there were many analogies between the Greek Orthodox and Armenian elements. In this way, the Armenians are placed within a larger Ottoman social history.

The following text aims at offering a brief but dynamic panorama—first, of the economic life of the region and the role played by Armenians, second, of some traits of the mixed population's social life, and third, of the educational and cultural developments in the surroundings of Kesaria.

Economic Life

Despite myths that stubbornly survive, Armenians were not all well-off *sarafs* (moneychangers) or traders. The economy of the region could not sustain a large bourgeoisie. The area was predominantly agricultural and achieved self-sufficiency only after the 1860s. Surplus crops were marketed mostly in Kesaria while manufactured items had to be imported. The road network re-

trophee' in Smyrna) and 1925 (at the end of the compulsory exchange of the Muslim population of most of Greece against the Greek Orthodox population of Turkey as prescribed at Lausanne in January 1923). Needless to say, these sources have their biases as any document used by social scientists. The informants had to rely on personal and collective memories, which could be highly changeable as influenced by the ethnocentric atmosphere in the Greek national state whose citizens they had become. The very project of *Melipo Merlier* (a woman's name) may have been to constitute in retrospect a vigorous Hellenic Asia Minor within the Ottoman Empire. But even if some interviewers had nationalist leanings, most files do not contain a single transcript. Some files were constituted over the years with some time having passed between two interviews. (The personal information gathered about the informants is not equally precise over the years, as is obvious in the quotations in this article). Interviewing a refugee in the 1930s and possibly the same person in the 1950s or the 1970s often produced varying accounts. Even if the interviews were supposed to be structured in the same way, some space was left for freer expression under the title "Miscellaneous." But the main point in support of these documents is that they are an unmatched fund of views, details, and personal information by firsthand witnesses about the social life in the Asiatic regions of the Ottoman Empire. The very bulk of information collected and their internal dissonances allow a critical approach to these documents. As specialists of oral history argue, such testimonies provide access to an area of human life long maintained at the margins of historiography and diversify the social categories that contribute to the process of history writing.

mained primitive and impeded the development of trade. The region was plagued with bandits, making travel hazardous. Early travel guides describe Caesarea/Kesaria as follows:

It is the principal commercial mart in the central part of Asia, and its inhabitants are remarkable for enterprise and activity, and are found following their pursuits in the remotest corner of the empire. Of late years the importance of the place has declined, owing to the insecurity caused by the Kurds, and to the increased navigation of the Black Sea, which has drawn the commerce from the direct line overland to Smyrna. Its bazaars, however, are most extensive, and are well supplied with foreign goods, chiefly Manchester cottons and Austrian quincalleries [hardware].⁷

Some Armenian writers tend to exaggerate the economic advancement of Armenians in places such as Tomarza,⁸ where the bazaar was in the best part of the town, comprising about ninety shops.⁹ But it is true that a number of Armenian shopkeepers developed connections with southern Anatolia, Cilicia, and even Beirut at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁰ The active and successful layer of the Armenian population did not hide the existing economic disparities. The majority of the Ottoman Armenian population was made up of poor stock breeders and peasant farmers. Even Tomarza is described as a "poor village" and a mostly agricultural place. Although almost everyone in Everek

⁷ *Handbook for Travelers in Turkey in Asia including Constantinople* (London: John Murray, 1878), p. 410.

⁸ Tomarza was located eight hours on foot from Kesaria/Kayseri. Before the genocide, it had about 1,000 homes and was the seat of an Ottoman *mihdatir* (administrator). Its surroundings were made of Turkish and Aîshar villages. There was no trace left of a Christian Orthodox life in the town. The population of Tomarza was almost entirely Armenian in 1914, while at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Armenians made up only three-quarters of the population.

⁹ CAMS, KP 137-138, Aykosten [Orthodox *mahalle* of Everek], interviewer, Than. Kostakis; informant, Laz. Charziistanbolidis (born in 1863 to a local family in Aykosten. His father was an Orthodox priest), interviewed on Oct. 27, 1956, "Tomarza": "It was an Armenian village with Turks. There were no Christians [the informant means Greek Orthodox Christians, whom he considered as the only real ones]. It too belonged to Közlepe. It even had a small gendamerie station. It was six hours away from Everek, 17 miles/27 kilometers, to the northeast. It had a large, very old, Armenian church . . . Tomarza was the most important village in the district of Közlepe."¹⁰

¹⁰ Alpayachian, *Patmutiun Hay Kesaria*, vol. 1, p. 860.

(Evereg) and adjoining Feneşe (Feneseşe) owned a house with a vineyard and garden, there was a steady flow of emigration of some thirty to forty inhabitants every year, because of the lack of adequate economic opportunities for young men. Shoemakers from Everek-Feneşe were renowned in Constantinople. Some places experienced a dramatic economic development through remittances of the *bandukhts* (sojourners).¹¹ One such village was Germir, which because of its location was not a lively marketplace and had only limited agricultural possibilities.¹¹ Emigration of men was very high beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. They migrated to Constantinople, Smyrna, Samsun, even Russia or Mosul as tailors, weavers, bricklayers, or masons. Greek Orthodox neighbors had the same experience: "All the young shoots of Germir were in Akdağh Maden, in Yozghat, in Constantinople, in Alexandria, in Cairo, in Russia. In all places on Earth, there were people from Germir."¹² The same informant stressed the analogy between the economic life of Armenian and Greek inhabitants of Germir: "The Armenians of the village used to work as we did. They would go to Smyrna, to Constantinople, where they were traders and craftsmen. Their families stayed in the village, and they sent them money. Their women knit rugs, vests, and socks."¹³

These migrations had an impact on local life. To illustrate this fact, one can point out the case of Chomakhlu.¹⁴ Its earliest immigrants to the United States, while still less than ten in number and with meager financial means, founded in 1906 the Chomakhlu National Educational Union (Chomakhlu Azgayin

¹¹ Germir had a mixed population. At the beginning of the twentieth century, there were 120 Armenian, 450 Greek Orthodox, and 330 Turkish homes.

¹² CAMS, KP 85-88, Germir, interviewer, Heleni Gazi, informant, Paisios Kernintzoglou (born in 1886; the information he provided was deemed serious and credible by Sophia Dondolinou, CAMS agent. The interviewee completed his primary education in Germir and left for Constantinople at the age of fourteen), interviewed on Oct. 11, 1957, "Information about the Emigration History."

¹³ CAMS, KP 85-88, Germir, interviewer, Sophia Dondolinou, informant, Paisios Kernintzoglou, interviewed on Nov. 20, 1954, "Inhabitants" and "Armenians."

¹⁴ Chomakhlu or Chomable was an Armenian-speaking village founded in the eighteenth century. See Arts G. Kalfayan (Galafian), *Chomakhlu* (New York: Chomaklou Relief Society, 1930). English trans., Krikor Asadourian, *Chomaklou: The History of an Armenian Village* (New York: Chomaklou Compatriotic Society, 1982).

Krtasirats Mfuitium).¹⁵ It is impressive that the first collective step of these migrants was to invest in education at home, promoting the foundation of schools for boys and for girls in their native village, one of each in the upper and lower quarters so that in the winter neither snow nor cold would prevent children from attending school. No doubt, the influx of economic assistance from the United States promoted new emigration to North America. These immigrants became new members of the Educational Union. But this "Golden Age" lasted only from 1906 to 1915, when their world was destroyed. The example of Chomaklu is not isolated, Armenians from Everek-Fenese migrated to Constantinople and Smyrna, but also to Egypt after British colonial rule was imposed there (1882). Similar phenomena of emigration and remittances were to be found almost everywhere in the region.¹⁶

Economic success of some families ensured a special fame to some places. An example is the so-called Pera of Caesarea, Talas,¹⁷ a predominantly Greek Orthodox settlement 3 miles/5 kilometers to the south of Kesaria. The small town was located on a hill made of gray-green volcanic porous stone. Greek masons from Rhodes who had imported the Italian medieval style of their

¹⁵ There were many analogous associations among Greek migrants to Constantinople to help the locals still in the village. For instance, Greeks who emigrated from Germir to Constantinople founded an association that managed the properties belonging to the Greek Orthodox community of Germir to finance the church and the school in the village: CAMS, KP 85-88; Germir, interviewer, Sophia Dondolinou; informant, N. Bostantzoglou (born about 1880), had never left his village before 1924. He received primary education in his village and was brought up in the love of Greece. He was deemed a very good informant by Sophia Dondolinou, interviewed in 1951, "Emigration" and "Places of Emigration." He stated: "An association of Germir Greek Orthodox in Constantinople with the strange name 'Commander of the Oil Lamp or Harmony' took care of the revenues brought in by those real estates, like some of those we owned in Adana, too."

¹⁶ In 1908, the youth of Tomarza started leaving for work in the United States. As a result, every month, 700-800 Turkish gold pounds came to the village, triggering some economic development thanks to this seasonal or temporary (a few years) emigration.

¹⁷ Talas or Moutalaski in Greek was located only one hour on foot from Kesaria. In 1913, the total population was reported to be 3,000 houses, among which were approximately 1,500 Greek Orthodox, 900 Armenian, 280 Turkish, and 20 Protestant homes. Talas proper was made of upper and lower quarters. The inhabitants of Upper Talas were almost entirely Armenian and Protestant. All local people spoke Turkish.

island and then to inner Anatolia were the original builders.¹⁸ Talas was renowned for its bountiful vineyards, gardens, and orchards and was endowed with abundant water. The families of the prominent Kesarian businessmen, Gulbenkian and Khoubesserian, had dwellings in Talas.¹⁹ These families promoted Armenian education there by founding schools from the 1850s onward. But even in this privileged place, up to 80 percent of the male population migrated at least temporarily to larger, distant locations to make a living.²⁰ The pretty stone-built houses were empty in the summer. Talas was also a major center of rug production. Many families could only support themselves literally with the help of their daughters' hands. But this occupation also harmed the health of the girls and women and hindered their receiving an adequate education.²¹

¹⁸ W. J. Childs, *Across Asia Minor on Foot* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1917), p. 183.

¹⁹ Greek Orthodox witnesses confirm the local importance of the Gulbenkian family. They were mainly *jeht*-traders (*jeht* is a yellow weed, obtained from a plant, *reseda luteola*). CAMS, KP 94-101, [Talas], interviewer, Christos Samouilidis; informant, Michail Yiavroglou (born in 1899 to a local family in Talas, which he left for economic reasons to Kahraman in 1914 for one year and to Constantinople in 1918 for two years. In 1921, he was deported with the other Greek Orthodox males. He reached Greece via Syria in 1924. He was an alumnus of the local Greek Orthodox high school in Zinjidere. The CAMS agent rated him a good and willing informant), interviewed on Oct. 20, 1957. "The Gulbenkians were the most important [jeht] traders. They themselves exported to foreign countries. They had storage facilities in Constantinople, at the Katifoghlu Khan, close to the Post Office. They stored thousands of okas [oka = 2.75 pounds/1.25 kilograms] and sent them abroad."

²⁰ This was also true of the local Greek Orthodox men. Cf. same informant, in same file, same document CAMS, KP 94-101, "Economy": "Some 70 percent of men were traders in the emigration. That was the major economic source. From fourteen years of age, children would emigrate to Constantinople, Smyrna, Karaman, Mersin, Adana, Beirut, Sansun, Seleucia, and a few to Iconium [Konia]. They would go and work in their father's or their relative's shop."

²¹ Analogous statements were made in Greek testimonies, despite much nostalgia and pride of being originally from Talas. CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski, interviewer, Chara Lioudaki; informant, Symeon Sinistoglou (born in Constantinople in 1903 to a family from Talas, educated first in Constantinople in Greek Orthodox and Catholic high schools and then graduated from the Polytechnic Institute in Zurich). The CAMS agent rated him a willing informant who loved his fatherland, though his actual contacts with Talas are not explicit, interviewed in Oct. 1961, "Emigration to Constantinople" and "Reasons and times of expatriation": "The truth is that all these villages were extremely poor and therefore they had to emigrate."

Disparities could explain some of the friction between Everek and Fenese, twin rural villages.²² Everek possessed a large bazaar, called Yoghurt bazare with some 150 shops, "all in Armenian hands," as Alboyajian has noted. This hostility almost became commonplace and was echoed in the Armenian press at Constantinople. Everek was even experiencing its first industrial take-off until it was snipped in the bud in 1915. Greek Orthodox testimonies reinforce the higher social position of Armenian traders and shopkeepers in Everek: "In Everek there was a large market, some forty-two villages used to come and buy there. It was a rich marketplace which Everek Armenians held in their hands until 1915-16."²³ Another witness confirms this: "At Everek, there was a big marketplace. . . . Most of the shops were owned by Armenians, a few by Turks, and very few by Hellenes. Most of the trade was in the hands of Armenians."²⁴ To appreciate these testimonies one has to know that Greek Orthodox refugees did not lose any opportunity to praise their former successes in their lost homeland. The acknowledgement of the achievements of individuals belonging to another group is not common. In this case, the Armenian economic supremacy was perceived as encompassing all sectors: "There were only Armenian craftsmen. Whenever we wanted a craftsman in our village [Aykosten], we

²² The twin villages of Everek (1,000 Armenian homes) and Fenese (700 Armenian homes) were situated several hours south of Kesaria and about seven hours north of the Taurus Mountains and Zamanti River on the edge of Cilicia. There was also an adjacent Orthodox village: Hayios Konstantinos in Greek, Aygosten in Turkish, and Hornenots in Armenian, (400 houses of mixed Orthodox and Muslim population). Alboyajian asserts that the Orthodox and Muslims were much alike in their ways and behavior. The Turkish part of Everek was Develi (500 houses), the only name to be found today on Turkish maps. The sanjak was called Develi-Karahisar.

²³ CAMS, KP 137-138, Aykosten [Orthodox *mahalle* of Everek], interviewer, Sophia Dondolinou, informant, Kostas Stavridis (born in 1908 to a local family, in Aykosten, which he did not leave before 1924, that is during the compulsory population exchange. Sophia Dondolinou deemed him a willing informant with a fairly good memory despite his young age when he was expelled from his native place), interviewed on June 6, 1958, "Markets."

²⁴ CAMS, KP 137-138, Aykosten [Orthodox *mahalle* of Everek], interviewer, Heleni Gazi, informant, Iordanis Alexandridis (born in 1882 to a local family, in Aykosten, which he did leave temporarily for stays in Constantinople and left permanently in 1924 during the compulsory population exchange. Heleni Gazi could not communicate directly with him because she knew no Turkish. She described the situation as if only the local Greek Orthodox had shops and were in control of trade), interviewed on Feb. 22, 1957.

called an Armenian. We had no Hellenic craftsman. . . . The Armenians were medical doctors and pharmacists, too. They used to study in Constantinople and come back to Everek."²⁵

Family Life

Sources describe the crudeness of the way of life in these areas. Many traits of family life in the Armenian community undoubtedly resembled those of other communities, be they Turks or Greek Orthodox. The importance of the patriarchal system is always emphasized. But on the other hand, the absence of men who had to leave their birthplace to make a living in Constantinople, Smyrna, or even North America left women alone in many places to tend to the fields and look after the children at the same time. Populations largely deprived of men still generally sustained patriarchal structures, *nahapetutian*, a phenomenon that observers of surviving Armenian populations in Syria, Lebanon, or even in a Parisian suburb could confirm. Women were often veiled in the Armenian rural communities of Kesaria, as were the Greek women. All women of the working class wore something similar to a *yashmak* that covered their mouth and hair.

Though marriage regulations were supposed to be fixed for the whole of the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire, these, too, varied within the Armenian world. Early marriages were common in Chomaklı. Girls were supposed to marry before fourteen and boys before eighteen. Brides were treated harshly in their new home.²⁶ According to Alboyajian, widows were not supposed to remarry, but in some places there were such marriages and even unions between widows and widowers, which traditionally was strictly forbidden.

²⁵ CAMS, KP 137-138, Aykosten [Orthodox *mahalle* of Everek], interviewer, Heleni Gazi; informant, Despina Kakouza (born in 1872 to a local family, in Aykosten, which she had never left before 1924. She was purposely kept illiterate by her father who was school teacher. Heleni Gazi could not communicate directly with her because Heleni knew no Turkish. However she deemed her informant helpful and gifted with quite a good memory of her former homeland, which the latter remembered with emotion), interviewed on Feb. 22, 1957.

²⁶ Kalfayan, *Chomaklı*, pp. 34-35.

Religion

In every village, there was a church or at least a chapel. Most of them were renovated or enlarged in the nineteenth century.²⁷ Church attendance was not optional and in many locations took the form of social control. If one can view religion as the core of the collective life of any group, one is equally obliged to accept that religiosity was a separate personal experience. Rites, special celebrations, pilgrimages were common to all locals. The interfaith boundaries were, at least on such occasions, looser than usually thought.

In Efkere,²⁸ near the main Surb Stepanos Church were two chapels—Surb Sargis (Surb Sarkis) and Surb Gevorg (Surb Kevork)—and to the south of Efkere a pilgrimage site on a plateau, Surb Eghia (Saint Elias). On Surb Eghia's name day, mass was celebrated, animals were sacrificed, fires were lighted, and the congregation chanted. The festival attracted "a large population of both sexes" from the surrounding villages.²⁹

In the small village of Derevenk (Derevank),³⁰ one Armenian festival was attended by Greek Orthodox Christians, too: "Every Lent Monday, the Armenians of Derevenk had a patron saint festival. We too used to go and watch."³¹ In the same village, the Greek Orthodox had a chapel, which they used without any interference from the Armenian population: "I went with my father two or three times to Derevenk, on Saint Theodore's day because it was a miracle-working church. . . . The whole church was

²⁷ These churches included Surb Stepanos in Germir, Surb Poghos-Surb Petros in Tomarza, Surb Toros in Everek and also Surb Toros in Fenese.

²⁸ Efkere was about three hours on foot to the northeast of Kesaria.

²⁹ Sukias Epikian, *Patkazarad bnashkharhik bararan* [Illustrated Geographical Dictionary] (Venice: Mekhitarist Press, 1903), vol. 1, p. 841.

³⁰ CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski, interviewer, Hermolias Andreadis; informant, Sokratis Mouratoglou (born in 1895 in Talas to a local family and had never left his village before 1922. He completed primary education at Talas and attended the Greek Orthodox high school at Zinjidere. He is an obliging man, willing to help informing about the situation of the Talas inhabitants), interviewed on Sept. 21, 1967, "Turkish villages" and "Derevenk"; "Derevenk was formerly an Armenian village [until the massacres of 1915], built in a valley. It had about 40-50 houses. It was located three-quarters of an hour north of Moutalaski. They used to shop in Moutalaski. After the extermination of the Armenians, three or four Turkish families from Moutalaski went there and settled down."

³¹ CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski, interviewer, Christos Samoulidis; informant, Isaak Kesisoglu, interviewed on Sept. 11, 1961, "Derevenk."

carved in the rock. It had paintings. The Turks damaged the paintings, but they were still visible. We used to go regularly and freely, when the Armenians were there. It was an Orthodox church. The Armenians had their own churches, separate ones. Saint Theodore was ours. It was a Hellenic church from ancient times. We, the Orthodox, visited it and made a pilgrimage there."³²

The construction of a church, its renovation or enlargement, was also a political statement in the human fabric, reminding non-Armenians, especially the Turks, of the existence and vitality of the local Armenian community. For instance, in 1895 a cupola was added to the church in Everek. These initiatives were financed through gifts from emigrant compatriots. Travelers would notice the religious vivacity of the Armenians side by side with the other groups. Vital Cuinet commented about Gernir: "The Armenians, too, have in Gernir a church recently erected and a very pretty school, where, with Turkish and Armenian, French is learned."³³ The religious edifices remaining after the destruction of the Armenians in 1915, as everywhere else, were subjected to misuse at best: "The Armenians had two churches [in Tatas] Surb Toros and Surb Astrvatsatsin—Holy Mother of God. After the Armenians were massacred, these were turned into weaving mills."³⁴

Educational and Linguistic Developments

Armenian schools were spreading throughout the regions inhabited by Armenians everywhere in the Ottoman Empire, and the surroundings of Kesaria were no exception despite the available modest resources. In the larger centers near Kesaria, like Tomarza, schools were well-known within the Ottoman Armenian sphere. The Torkomian (Torgomian) School adjacent to the Church of Saints Paul and Peter was opened in 1837, its name being changed to Sahagian in 1910, and a school for girls was also established. Tomarza even had a second school thanks to the Monastery of

³² Ibid.

³³ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 1, p. 319.

³⁴ CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski, interviewer; Hermolaos Andreadis, informant, Heleni Nikolaidou (born in 1899 to a local family, in Tatas, which she had never left before 1924. She was educated at the local primary school and had a good command of Greek. Hermolaos Andreadis rated her as an obliging and very good informant, with a good memory), interviewed on Oct. 14, 1961, "*Churches of foreign dogmas*."

Surb Astrvatsatsin. Such institutions were also found elsewhere because of the long tradition of monasticism in Cappadocia. Church structures were closely associated with educational development. The larger Monastery of Surb Karapet (Surp Garabed), 11 miles/18 kilometers from Kesaria, was a major architectural complex.³⁵ Beginning in 1888, it functioned as a teacher-training seminary for the entire region under the name Zharan-gavorats varzharan.³⁶ Parallel developments took place in the Greek Orthodox community, around the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist at Zinjidere, which was known as Flaviana.³⁷ Even small hamlets such as Tavlusun had modest schools.³⁸ In the early 1870s, about forty-five students were enrolled in the co-educational Mesropian (Mesropian) school in Tavlusun. With no more than a four-year curriculum, only a basic education could be provided. The school closed in 1901, however, because the village never recovered from the 1895-96 massacres.³⁹

As everywhere else in the Ottoman domains, the Armenian school system had to respond to the competition of missionary schools, which were present in Talas,⁴⁰ for instance, with some twenty girls enrolled at the American boarding school. The Gulbenkian family seemed to support the American Protestant presence in Talas, where it sold the missionaries a large plot of land. The quality of these institutions is acknowledged in Greek Orthodox sources, both contemporary and retrospective: "American missionaries, teachers, and medical doctors established a special complex on an admirable, airy, splendid location with large gardens. In those schools, poor children and orphans gathered even from remote villages, and the sick were placed in the infirmaries. This American center competes with the famous and older American school of Merzifun [Anatolia College] in

³⁵ Quinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 1, pp. 316-17. The author calls the monastery "grandiose."

³⁶ Hrachia Acharyan [Ajarian], *Hay gaghnikannunyan patmutyun* [History of Armenian Emigration] (Erevan: Zangak-97, 2002), p. 535.

³⁷ Ioannis H. Kalfoglou, *Istoriki Yeographia tis Mikras Asias* [Historical Geography of Asia Minor] (Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 2002) (trans. from Turkish by Stavros Anestidis; foreword by Ioanna Petropoulou), pp. 150-51.

³⁸ Tavlusun had some 120 Armenian houses in the late 1880s, but after the violence of 1895-96 this number declined dramatically to 25 by 1907.

³⁹ Apoyachian, *Pamutian Hay Kesaria*, vol. 1, p. 760.

⁴⁰ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Talas had about 800 Armenian, 900 Greek Orthodox, and 500 Turkish homes.

Marsovan].⁴¹ Greek Orthodox refugees bore witness to the Protestant missionary zeal: "These Americans were making a lot of propaganda to attract people to their religion. According to their way, they spread the propaganda. Women spoke to women, and they gave some help to the poor."⁴² These American institutions had an impact on Armenians, too. There was indeed a small Armenian Protestant community in Caesarea/Kesaria as Cuinet and other travelers noted.⁴³ Its existence was directly linked with the establishment of the American mission in 1855.⁴⁴ Another Greek Orthodox witness asserted: "In the American College, they collected Armenian orphans after the massacres of 1895-1896 in Caesarea proper. They dressed them with an apron of the same color, in order to distinguish them."⁴⁵

The development of schools in Everek-Fenese was relatively late, not starting before 1850. It was only after the appearance of Armenian Evangelicalism that a school was opened there. According to Vital Cuinet, the relatively modest Armenian school development there was more advanced than that of other groups: "The Turks have only three small schools; the Armenians three churches and three prosperous schools; the Greeks, one church, an oratory, and one school."⁴⁶

The curricula of local Armenian schools may be surprising for contemporary observers. While in larger centers, the Armenian language was a keystone of education, local conditions limited it in more modest places. For instance, an intellectual from Tomarza has written: "Turkish had a major, the first place, at school. All

⁴¹ Pant. M. Kontoyiannis, *Yeographia tis Mikras Asias* [Geography of Asia Minor] (Athens: Syllagos pros Diadosin ophelimon Vivlion, 1921), p. 139.

⁴² CAMS, KP 94, Moutalaski, interviewer, Heleni Gazi; informant, Despina Keuleoglou (Despina was born in 1898 in Talas, which she had never left before 1924. The CAMS agent said she was a simple girl from Cappadocia), interviewed on Sept. 27, 1961, "The American Protestants in Moutalaski."

⁴³ Mrs. Scott-Stevenson, *Our Ride through Asia Minor* (London: Chapman and Hall), 1881, p. 197: "the Armenian Protestant church, a square-shaped building, very ugly and very solid, having all the windows carefully covered with wire-netting; in this case, they said, to prevent the Turks from breaking them."

⁴⁴ Kalfayan, *Chomakhlu*, p. 167.

⁴⁵ Interviewer, Sophia Dondolion; informant, Anastassia Anastasiadou, interviewed in 1952. Most of the time, the Greek Orthodox refugee interviewees mentioned only the impact on their own group in retrospect, ignoring, at least at first, their former neighbors.

⁴⁶ Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 1, p. 321.

pupils knew very well how to speak and write Turkish, with much more success than Armenian. . . . Many pupils could not compose letters in Armenian; rather, they wrote in Turkish with Armenian characters."⁴⁷

Armenian authors describing the dialects in the region often speak of them as altered forms of Armenian. Alboyajian systematically refers to the dialects in a negative way. The only factor that may legitimize such linguistic forms is the presence of traces of classical Armenian, *grabar*, something which fortunately often happens since grabar is found in modern Armenian dialects. The standardization of the Western literary modern language, *asthkarhabar*, did not take place in the region of Kesaria. As a result, it was quite inescapable that the inhabitants of Tomarza, though clearly Armenian speakers, did not converse in the most elegant Western Armenian of Péra or Galata, the elite sections of Constantinople. There was thus little chance for native speakers of this region to conform to the new standard language.

The use of Armenian in everyday life was probably declining at the end of the nineteenth century, as the result of contacts with the other local communities and the outside world, as well as the fact that Armenian inhabitants of the city of Kesaria were native Turkish speakers. Turkish was simply more practical, more useful. No radical taboo prevented people from speaking and appropriating it, as happened in the post-genocide Diaspora. For instance: Tavlusun switched to Turkish in the second half of the nineteenth century, because of connections and especially intermarriages with women from Kesaria.⁴⁸ The same phenomenon occurred in Jujun, a small village close to Chomaklıu, and in the larger community of Derevenk.⁴⁹ However, the command of Armenian was an element of distinction within the Armenian

⁴⁷ Hovhannes Tomarzasasi [Torosian], *Parmutian Hay Tomarzasayi* [History of Armenian Tomarza], 2 vols. (Beirut: Tomarzasayi Parmutian Hrarakehakan Kedr. Handznaklumb, 1959-1969), p. 1901.

⁴⁸ The decline of the Armenian language in such regions is to be compared with the same phenomenon concerning dialectal forms of Modern Greek in Cappadocia, as demonstrated in Richard M. Dawkins, *Modern Greek in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1916). Practical considerations gave preference to a lingua franca, which could promote fruitful economic interaction.

⁴⁹ Derevenk, 7 miles/11 kilometers east of Kesaria, was an all-Armenian village, 70 Armenian homes in 1915, whereas in the eighteenth century it had a mixed Turkish and Armenian population.

world, though its practical value was not really that obvious. For instance, Everek pretended to speak better Armenian, that is, with fewer borrowings from Turkish, than Ferese. The Constantinople linguist, Hrachia Ayarian (Acharyan) considered speaking Turkish in the Kesaria region "a shame" and praised the educational efforts of local Armenian schools in combating this practice.⁵⁰

Politics

The Ottoman government knew how to integrate, to some extent, the local Christian elites into its administration in the nineteenth century. The influence of the reforms known as the *Tanzimat* was felt even in regions remote from Constantinople.⁵¹ Some Christian notables were members of the local *mejlis*, assemblies supposed to counsel the Ottoman administrators. For instance, Seroype Sahagian, a skillful trader from Germir, was a member of the *Idare Mejlisi* at Kesaria, and a major benefactor of the local Armenian school.⁵² Such prominent personalities were everywhere to be found in Ottoman society, combining economic success, political recognition, and beneficence at a community level.

Armenian communities enjoyed some local autonomy. For instance, Tomarza benefited from a surprising degree of self-administration under the aegis of four Armenian *ishkhans*, heads of Armenian dynastic clans or *gerdashans*,⁵³ each representing one of the town's four quarters (Upper, Monastery, Hayeg, and Central or Church). This example is a reminder that by no means was the Ottoman Empire a fully centralized or uniform state. Local compromises and arrangements continued until World War I. The four *ishkhans* were intermediaries and direct taxpayers to the Ottoman administration. As everywhere, the authority of notables was indisputable and political innovation was slow. But the Ottoman Armenians in Constantinople influenced the political functioning of provincial Armenian communities. The

⁵⁰ Acharyan, *Hay gaghakanyan pamnyun*, p. 535.

⁵¹ See Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

⁵² Alpayachian, *Pamutian Hay Kesario*, vol. 1, p. 768.

⁵³ The names of the four dynasties were Dedeyan, Kalayjian, Maghakian, Tamouzian.

Armenian regulations (granted in 1863), ambiguously known as *Azgayin Sahmanadrutium* (National Constitution) encouraged some democratization, though one has to be cautious about the extent of this phenomenon in the rural regions. Local traditions were far from being democratic. The tone of some writers casts little doubt about the authors' perception of change. The restoration of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908 is summed up this way by one writer: "The Ancient, Age-Old and Venerable gave way to the New, hurrying and rushing madly."⁵⁴

The participation of modern political parties, Hnehakian and Dashnaksutium, in the new process was certain. In 1909, the local council in Tomarza gave way to young party members to organize a special committee in charge of school matters, to ensure representation of committed people from the town's four quarters. The Kesaria region was indeed involved in the modern politicization of the Ottoman Armenian population. In many of the small places already mentioned, branches of the well-known political parties were set up in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The temporary migration to a larger center could be an opportunity to become acquainted with Armenian national ideals.⁵⁵ In February 1915, a party member Kevoik Poshayan, having returned to Everek from the United States, was killed by a bomb he was filling in his home. The mental horizons were changing. Some people far removed from their places of origin began to feel concerned about the overall developments in the empire and sought means to influence public matters in their native districts. The Armenian Apostolic Church was not exempt from this process, as some low level clergymen, along with schoolmasters, adhered to these political parties.

The deterioration of relations between religious groups, entangled in the political process of nation-building, reached a nadir in 1895-96 when massacres of Armenians were perpetrated throughout the empire. These were especially brutal in Kesaria.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Torosian, *Parmutian Hoy Tomaratsyi*, p. 1907.

⁵⁵ Aleks Grigorian and Sedrak Garakeuzian, *Hishatakaran Everek-Fenesei* [Memorial Volume of Everek-Fenesei] (Paris: Everek-Fenesei Mesropian-Rubinian Hayrenaksakan Varchutium, 1963), p. 666.

⁵⁶ CAMS, KP 45-48; Caesarea, interviewer, Sophia Dondolinou; informant, An. Kazantzoglou (unfortunately no personal data on this informant), interviewed on April 12, 1953, "Armenian Massacres (1896)": "The massacre started after noon. An infuriated crowd of Turks assailed the Armenian shops in the market.

and its surroundings, as in Everek.⁵⁷ The political establishment of Young Turk nationalism in 1908 weakened Armenian life and reinforced the migration toward Constantinople and abroad. Some communities such as Talas were spared, however, because they enjoyed local protection: "In Moutalaski [Talas], there was no massacre; a Haji Ahmet saved the Armenians. He had a mosque and a great influence in the village. He armed his sons and some of his people and he did not allow [outsidel] villagers to come in and massacre. This is how they were saved."⁵⁸

As a conclusion, this short panorama of the Armenian presence in the rural Kesaria, lying outside of Western Armenian lands proper, illustrates a world forever gone.⁵⁹ Late Ottoman Cappadocia was no idyllic paradise, not an Armenian-only linguistic world, not a pre-democratic island, and not an Armenian territory to be annexed by any national state. Armenians there were living side by side with Muslim and Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects. The many documents from the Greek Orthodox group show that its situation was very similar to that of the Armenian element. A comparison of sources from both groups reveals how silent each of them was and still is about their neighbors, despite the objective closeness in the former shared homeland.

That world was erased in 1915. Even Greek Orthodox refugees, who were often prone to ignore their neighbors of whatever creed, noticed and bore testimony of the radical changes on the spot, as the following quotation about Talas illustrates: "In the years 1915-1916, the Armenians were exterminated. They

They pulled Armenians out of their shops and would kill them in front of their door. Corpses and blood had filled the ways in the market. Among the corpses, there were forty Hellenes."

⁵⁷ Alpoxyachian, *Painnutun Hay Kesario*, vol. 1, pp. 827ff.

⁵⁸ CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski, interviewer, Heleni Karatza; informant, M. Kioseoglou (unfortunately no personal data on this informant), interviewed on June 21, 1958, "Massacres of Armenians" and "The Armenian Massacre of 1895." The information is confirmed by another document, CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski, interviewer, Chara Lioudaki; informants, Eletheria Eydokimidou and Eydokimos Eydokimidis, interviewed on Sept. 20, 1958.

⁵⁹ Acharyan, *Hay gaghtakanutyan painnutyun*, p. 531: "The region of Kesaria [Caesarea] represents ancient Cappadocia, which, since bordering Armenia, has had close relations with us."

massacred some, exiled others. The Turks appropriated their fields, their houses. This way, they became the lords of the place.⁶⁰ The few who remained were prevented by the Turkish Republic from reconstructing a collective Armenian existence in the same location. Survivors ultimately dispersed throughout the world, settling down primarily in France, the United States, and Argentina. Their erstwhile churches now stand only as converted mosques, storehouses, and stables.

⁶⁰ CAMS, KP 94-101, Moutalaski, interviewer; Hermolaos Andreadis, informant, Sokratis Mouratoglou (born in 1895 to local parents), interviewed on Sept. 21, 1967, "Local History" and "Zenith and Deterioration of Moutalaski."