

# Liminality & Memorial Practices

NEWSLETTER  
FALL 2017  
ISSUE 11

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Cover Image: Akhurian/Arpacay river and ruins of ancient bridge of Ani  
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NOTES FROM  
THE DIRECTOR



Kathryn Babayan

Welcome to the new academic year!

Over the last decade, the Armenian Studies Program at U-M has fostered a critical dialogue with emerging scholars around the globe through various workshops, conferences, lectures, and fellowships. Together with our faculty, graduate students, visiting fellows, and postdocs we have combined our efforts to push scholarship in Armenian Studies in new directions. Our interventions in the study of Armenian history, literature, translation studies, and the visual arts can be gauged by a carefully curated set of initiatives we have undertaken that will have a long-term impact on the field. I am thrilled to announce that this vision has now materialized into a volume entitled *An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion* that will be published in the Mediterranean Perspectives Series by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018. I co-edited this volume with Michael Pifer, our former Manoogian Graduate Student and 2014-15 Post-Doctoral Fellow. *An Armenian Mediterranean* represents a critical turning point in the study of Armenians. In its pages, a growing cohort of scholars chart new vistas by recasting the Armenian people as significant actors within the context of Mediterranean history, world history, and world literature. Our volume

represents the first time the Armenian Studies Program has presented these critical discussions in a monograph.

This year we continue in the spirit of engagement with neglected directions in the field of Armenian Studies. Our two Manoogian Post-doctoral fellows, Maral Aktokmakyán and Christopher Sheklian, work in the fields of literature and anthropology respectively. To further explore the new directions these two brimming young scholars are undertaking, they are co-organizing two workshops: Maral Aktokmakyán together with Michael Pifer, Department of Near Eastern Studies, on Armenian Literature and Liminality; Christopher Sheklian together with Hakem Al-Rustom, Department of History, on Armenian Music. We welcome Maral and Christopher to our ASP community!

I hope you will join us in the series of lectures and workshops that will showcase our Manoogian Fellows around this year's theme of *Liminality and Memorial Practices*.

**ASP Faculty**

**Hakem Al-Rustom**  
Alex Manoogian  
Professor of Modern  
Armenian History

**Kathryn Babayan**  
Director, Armenian  
Studies Program;  
Associate Professor of  
Iranian History  
and Culture

**Kevoork Bardakjian**  
Marie Manoogian  
Professor of  
Armenian Language  
and Literature

**Ronald G. Suny**  
William H. Sewell, Jr.  
Distinguished Uni-  
versity Professor of  
History

**Melanie Tanielian**  
Assistant Professor  
of History

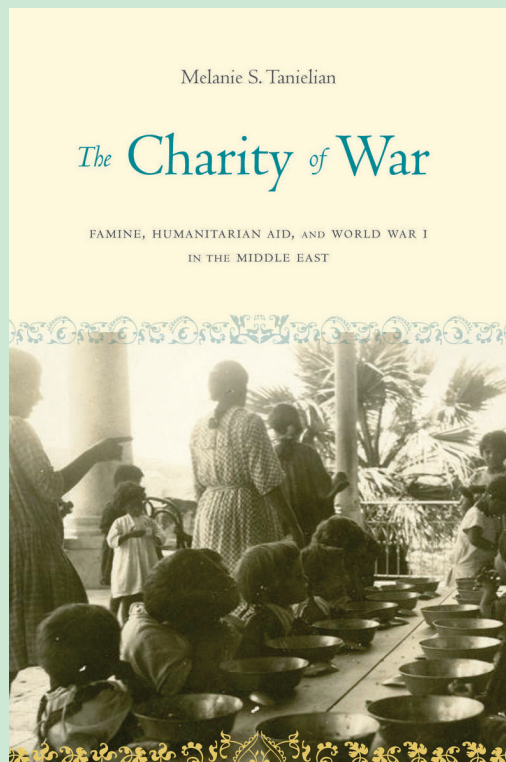




## FACULTY NEWS & UPDATES

**Kathryn Babayan**, Director of the Armenian Studies Program & **Michael Pifer**, Lecturer in Armenian Literature at the Department of Near Eastern Studies will publish their co-edited volume *An Armenian Mediterranean: Words and Worlds in Motion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Mediterranean Perspectives, 2018).

*An Armenian Mediterranean* offers a blueprint for an omnivorously comparative, deeply interconnected vision of Armenian Studies: one that might serve as a model for other area studies scholars, who must necessarily address these broader questions of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ within different comparative frameworks. In order to raise critical questions from different disciplinary perspectives and historical periods the volume is organized around five themes: rethinking boundaries, connecting histories, breaking national and imperial paradigms, texturizing diaspora, and placing statehood. These themes orient the reader broadly within the current state of Armenian Studies, but also provide a panoramic, yet highly selective glimpse of the Mediterranean through Armenian eyes. The movement of Armenians and Armenian Studies across disciplinary, cultural, and geographic boundaries suggests fresh ways of charting the frontiers beyond them.



**Melanie Tanielian**, Assistant Professor of History, has recently published her book, *The Charity of War: Famine, Humanitarian Aid, and World War I in the Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017).

*The Charity of War* tells how the Ottoman home front grappled with total war and how it sought to mitigate starvation and sickness through relief activities. It examines the wartime famine’s reverberations throughout the community: in Beirut’s municipal institutions, in its philanthropic and religious organizations, in international agencies, and in the homes of the city’s residents. This local history reveals a dynamic politics of provisioning that was central to civilian experiences in the war, as well as to the Middle Eastern political landscape that emerged post-war.

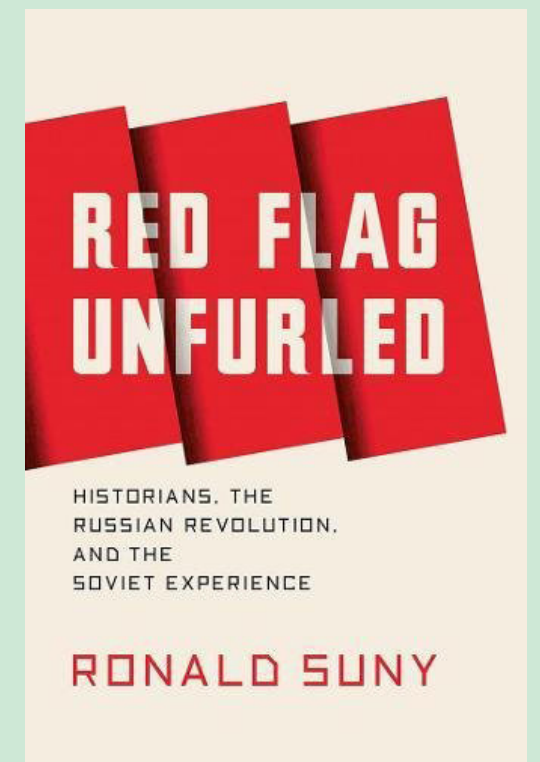
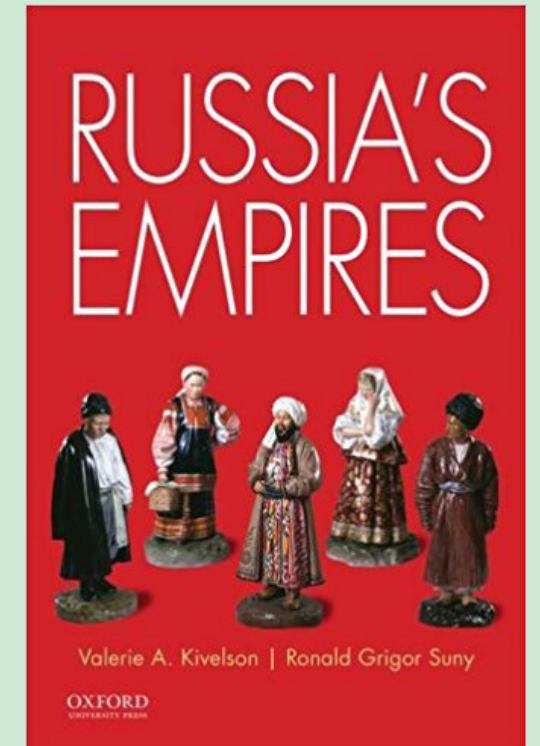
**Ronal Grigor Suny**, William H. Sewell, Jr. Distinguished University Professor of History and Professor of Political Science, recently co-authored a book entitled *Russia’s Empires* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Professor Suny has been busy traveling, giving interviews and delivering lectures on Armenians in the Russian/Ottoman empires, USSR, Diaspora, Russian empire, revolutions and politics. His new book entitled *Red Flag Unfurled: Historians, the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Experience* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2017) was released this November.

*Russia’s Empires* explores the long history of Russia, the Soviet Union, and the present Russian Federation through the lens of empire, analyzing how and why Russia expanded to become the largest country on the globe and how it repeatedly fell under the sway of strong, authoritarian leaders.

Reflecting on the fate of the Russian Revolution one hundred years after October, *Red Flag Unfurled: Historians, the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Experience* explores the historiographical controversies over 1917, Stalinism, and the end of “Communism,” and provides an assessment of the achievements, costs, losses and legacies of the choices made by Soviet leaders.

**Tamar Boyadjian**, Assistant Professor at Michigan State University and ASP Executive Committee member recently edited a special *Absinthe* issue, entitled *Unscripted: An Armenian Palimpsest*.

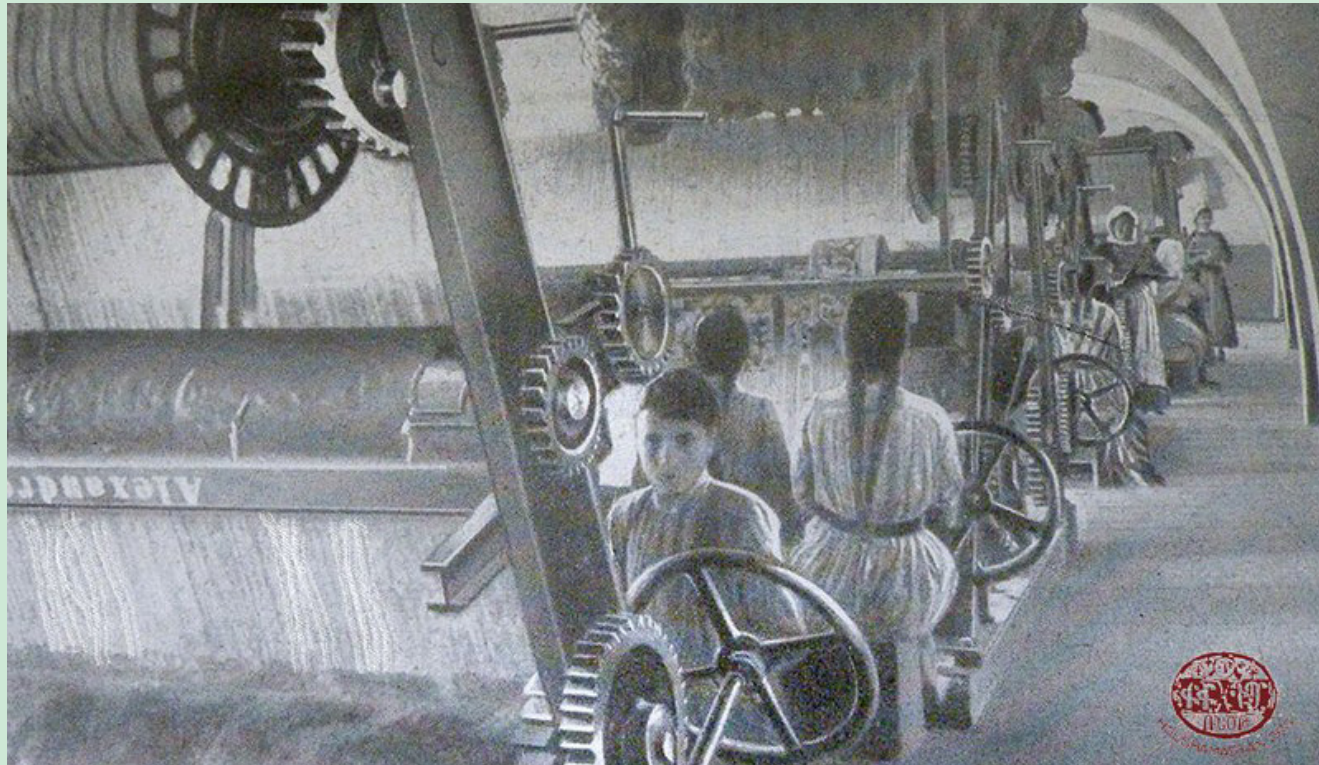
This volume is a collection of contemporary Armenian texts from living authors chosen as significant works which challenge, shape, and complicate conversations on transcultural analysis, and theories and practices related to translating. It is a survey of contemporary and active writers from around the world in Armenian today. This special *Absinthe* issue constitutes a collective corpus of writers mostly from the Armenian Diaspora–Lebanon, Syria, Iran, the United States, France, Sierra Leone—and some from the Republic of Armenia. Their translations grant access to an Armenian literary present and past, while at the same time allow others to enter this same world. This volume imagines texts and translations as being weighed against one another as balancing acts of statements and silences.





## YEAR IN REVIEW

### ORPHANED FIELDS: PICTURING ARMENIAN LANDSCAPES



Ourfa, Armenian women at work in the German carpet factory  
Source: Paul Rohrbach, *Armenien*, Stuttgart, 1919, [www.houshamadyan.org](http://www.houshamadyan.org)

### PHOTOGRAPHY & ARMENIAN STUDIES

February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Organizers: Kathryn Babayan, Director of the Armenian Studies Program, Yaşar Tolga Cora and David Low, 2016-17 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellows.

Bringing together participants from a number of different disciplines, this workshop set out to investigate how photography might contribute to and challenge multiple fields of study. It addressed photographs as objects with which to trace and engage with the Armenian past and present, prompting questions about how we might approach, probe and render legible these autonomous sources. It paid particular attention to photographs as both the products of and the means of exploring difficult and neglected historical epochs, considering how we might productively read their internal tensions in order to write about trauma and violence.

Addressing the production and reception of images in contexts characterized by unequal

power relations, Stephen Sheehi opened the workshop with an exploration of an organizing method for 'Decolonizing Photography.' With photography implicated in colonialism, as well as nationalism and class formation, it is necessary, Sheehi argued, for the reader of images to develop techniques of radical appropriation in order to 'emancipate' photographs and uncover their displaced histories. Seen thus, the photograph constitutes an open and fluid space that offers the viewer opportunities for reimagining and reinterpreting what is represented.

The paper paved the way for a workshop that tended to approach photographs not simply as images to be read but sites of negotiation and

intervention. Active spectatorship continued to be advocated in further papers that examined photographs relating to histories of Armenian labor, migration and exploration. The silences running through social history and the history of photography emerged as particular themes, with these issues being further fleshed out in a response from Maya Barzilai and concluding remarks presented by Marie-Aude Baronian.

Although persistently presented as possessing the power of revelation, the camera can equally be seen as an agent of occlusion. The processes of veiling and unveiling that are involved in photographic production and spectatorship were repeatedly returned to in a discussion

that often hinged on voids, lacunas, failures, and mistakes, and considered these as part of the ontological being of photography. Also discussed were the broader questions of what is meant by the oft-invoked figure of the Armenian photographer, and whether it is even possible to speak of an Armenian history or theory of the medium. Designed as the first in a series of discussions, the workshop amply demonstrated the capacity of photographs to enrich and interrogate our work. As the conversation continues, we recognize that while photographs offer great potential as objects of study, it is not only to their frozen forms but also to their fissures that we must look as we seek to create new scholarly opportunities.

### ORPHANS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Organizer: Melanie Tanielian, Assistant Professor of History

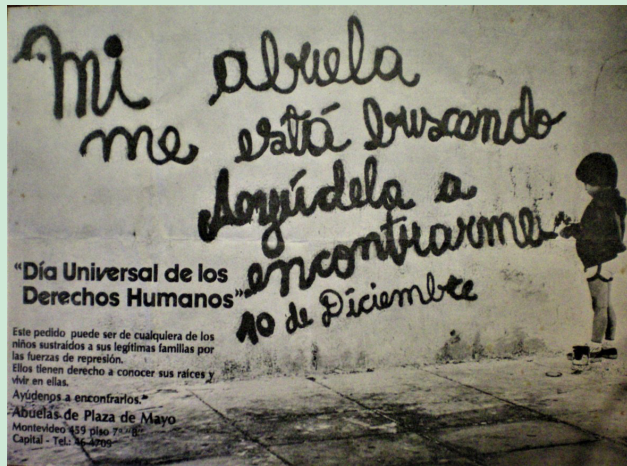
By the end of World War I, an estimated number of 150,000 children were orphaned as the direct result of the Armenian Genocide. From Egypt to Greece, Syria, Turkey, and into the Caucasus, the child survivors became the subject of local, national, and international 'rescue' missions. In recent years a number of publications, such as Keith Watenpaugh's *Bread From Stone: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism*, have drawn new attention to the aftermath of the genocide and its role in shaping international, secular, and professional humanitarian organizations. Whereas often the international relief effort has been located in the Eastern Mediterranean and with western European and American agencies and organizations, a small number of scholars have begun to draw our attention to the humanitarian ventures of the Soviet Union and its role in the international competition and cooperation in the care and education in particular of child survivors. We were fortunate to have retired Harvard Professor Nora Nercessian give the 2017 Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Annual Distinguished Lecture, based on her book, *The City of Orphans: Relief Workers, Commissars, and the 'Builders of the New Armenia' Alexandropol/Leninakan 1919-1931*. Nercessian diligently and meticulously researched the history of one of



2017 Berj H. Haidostian Annual Distinguished lecture by Nora Nercessian. March 16, 2017

the largest orphanages near Alexandropol (now Gyumri). Based on research in American and Armenian archives, Nercessian tells the story of this unique institution, which at one time housed more than 20,000 Western Armenian orphans in the early 1920s. It was one of the destinations for survivors of the genocide, who had crossed over into Soviet territories seeking a safe haven and taking shelter in barracks abandoned by the Russian military in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution in 1917. The Near East Relief (NER), an American humanitarian organization monitoring the flow of refugees, realized the potential of the former military properties and converted the





"My grandmother is looking for me, please help her find me. Universal Day for Human Rights." "This plea could be from any of the children taken from their legatine families by the forces of repression. They have the right to know their roots and live with them. Help us to find them." *Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* c. 1994.

*Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. "Mi abuela me está buscando." Flyer Distributed in the City of Buenos Aires* c. 1994. *CeDInCI Archive, Buenos Aires, Argentina.*

170 buildings into what would be dubbed the 'Orphan City.' Nercessian did not end there but in her lecture outlined the international cooperation and competition over the care of orphans once the Soviet Armenian Commissars entered the picture. The goal of both international relief workers and the local authorities was to transform the children into proper Armenian citizens. What that meant clearly was contested.

The workshop *Rescue or Internment? Orphans of the Armenian Genocide* followed the Haidostian lecture with the goal of opening a broader discussion addressing the utility of orphans and orphanages and by extension children as subjects of historical analysis. We worked comparatively as well as across temporalities and geographies, as papers addressed post-war reconstruction in Anatolia and Lebanon during the 1920s and 1930s as well as Argentina of the 1980s and 1990s. Guiding questions for workshop participants were among others: How is the category of orphan constructed, what purpose does it serve in these various spaces and temporalities? How do the categories of child and orphan speak to one another? Brittany Marguiri, a PhD candidate in the History and Women's Studies Program at the University of Michigan,

presented part of her dissertation research titled "*Children Lost and Children Present: Niños desaparecidos, Orphans, and the Figure of the Child in Post-Dictatorship Argentina.*" Therein Marguiri showed how in the Argentine context the absence of parents was deemed temporary, and the category of the orphan was hardly ever used. It was a suspended category, as its application would foreclose family reunifications. This stood in stark contrast to the Armenian case where even when one or both parents were still alive but were unable to support their offspring, a child could be considered an orphan, as here the category of orphan carried with it a possibility of survival. Moreover, Marguiri demonstrated how the "disappeared child" became a static category; the once disappeared child remained to be the child even when grown up. Marguiri argued "others grew up, but they remained children." A discussion ensued as to how the term "orphans" in the Armenian case might have a similar static characteristic. While an orphan by definition is a child who lost his/her parents, the Armenian orphan remains an orphan and by extension a child into adulthood.

Participants were asked to contemplate the notion of children/orphans as spoils of war, and how the benefits of taking control of children's bodies and minds are framed by both agents of violence (the Argentine and Ottoman juntas) and agents of benevolence (missionaries and members of the survivor community). Where do their discourses merge? Where do they diverge? Furthermore, participants intended to trace when is the child innocent? When is it dangerous? For example, NER founding member James Barton noted that many children were simply roaming the streets, as a confused and indistinguishable mob "of wandering vagabonds and ragged waifs" that could "be a terrible curse on this land" if not taken care of "in a very large and efficient way." Nercessian highlighted the same attitude among NER officials on the ground who saw the trauma orphans had experienced as leaving the children with an unrestrained animal instinct. Consequently, orphans had to be remade based on the ideological preferences of the caretaker. Nercessian's narrative here refutes the common perception or description of orphans as "blank slates." Surviving children by no means were a tabula rasa but rather carried with them

significant baggage. We then had to ask what gave rise to the blank slate discourse. Was it the positioning of the orphan within a developmental stage marked by an imagined and real moldable mind and memory?

One of the questions that arose from Nercessian's lecture was the question regarding when do movements and humanitarian organizations become political? Or are they always political? What is interesting to note is the perception of humanitarian organizations and workers of themselves as apolitical. Marguiri emphasized the conscious attempt of Argentine groups that worked to recover children lost to the dictatorial regime, such as *Las Madres*, as presenting their organization as apolitical. She argues "their movement was built on the idea of political apolitics: that is, they claimed their actions, which were inherently political, were apolitical and simply a moral obligation based upon traditional national ideals." How does the political apolitics work in the context of international humanitarianism? It became clear that external and internal politics were central to the officially neutral NER. Francesca Piana, currently a postdoctoral fellow in women's and gender history in the History Department at Binghamton University, brought to the fore the continuous religious politics underlying relief and medical work of the men and women associated to the American Board of Commissioners to Foreign Missions (ABCFM) and the NER. These men and women, Piana writes, found "the Armenian genocide as an opportunity to strengthen the faith of those Armenians who had been converted from the Armenian Apostolic church to Protestantism. But even more importantly, American missionaries hoped that the rough times Turks were experiencing could make reality the long-dreamed of hope to convert them as well as the Kurds." And children here no doubt were the primary targets.

The story of childhood agency continues to be an important one; although most historians of childhood have come to let go of it as, of course, the voices of children are hardly traceable in history, Nercessian's lecture emphasized the influence of children in the orphanage in shaping the debate of education; from checking out library books to organizing secret Communists

clubs, the children's actions triggered responses from the adults. The existing literature has often insisted on the child as object or victim in particular when it comes to practices of identity erasures by Turkish officials and international relief workers during and after the war. Vahe Techjian, the chief editor of the Berlin-based Houshamdyan website, complicated the story by examining linguistic practices among survivors in Lebanon. As many survivors spoke Turkish in their daily lives, the assumption that all Armenian children spoke Armenian and the often-cited link between language and ethnic identity has to be reexamined. The same is true when it comes to American humanitarian workers, who were accused of identity erasure through the imposition of English and Arabic by the Armenian political and religious leadership. A close examination of practices in the American-run orphanages, however, shows a certain sensitivity of humanitarian organizations to strengthen an Armenian identity especially by teaching the Armenian language.

We ended our discussion with the viewing of the documentary "After This Day" written, directed and produced by Lebanese-Armenian filmmaker Nigol Bezjian. Bezjian's film tells the story of the orphanage of Antoura in Lebanon. Ottoman military commander Jamal Pasha established this institution to house both Armenian and Kurdish orphans with the goal of raising the children to become Turkish citizen. Jamal Pasha and his underlings forcibly converted the children, assigned them Turkish names, and forbade languages other than Turkish. The orphanage was poorly run and the stories of its inmates were stories of survival and death-defying courage, as children held on to their Armenian faith and language. The film is unique in that it brings together prominent Armenian and Turkish historians Vahé Tashjian and Dr. Selim Deringil to discuss and explore the history of Armenian orphans and orphanages that resulted from the Armenian Genocide.

<sup>1</sup>James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930): An Interpretation by James L. Barton (New York, 1930)*, 25.



## EIGHT ANNUAL GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOP



*8th Annual International Graduate Student Workshop Participants, April 2017.*

Our Eighth Annual International Graduate Student Workshop focused on the theme of Gender and Sexuality in Armenian Studies. Together with our graduate student, Jeremy Johnson (Antro-History Program) and Kathryn Babayan (Director of the Armenian Studies Program) we organized the first of such disciplinary workshops. There has been no concerted effort to analyze the ways in which the category of gender and sexuality can be a productive lens to study Armenian subjects. Much like our former interventions in the field, this workshop acted as a platform from which collaborations could emerge to nurture a new opening in the field of Armenian Studies.

The workshop convened a young cohort of twelve scholars from Armenia, France, the United Kingdom and the US who took the categories of gender and sexuality as critical frames of analysis for their studies on Armenian history, anthropology, ethno-musicology, art history, philology, educational studies and sociology. Drawing on the rich and diverse body of literature produced in the fields of gender and sexuality, we explored four thematic subjects: Sexuality and Gendered Subcultures, the History of Emotions, Performativity/Orality, and Soviet Moralities. Participants focused on a variety of modes of communicating and performing homosociality within the moral economies of

Yerevan, Istanbul and the Diaspora covering temporal periods of the early modern and the modern. Drawing on a wide-ranging archive of testimonies, newspapers, photographs, ethnographies, novels, music, and clothing the participants deployed the tools of gender and sexuality to explore authority and otherness in Armenian contexts. Whether through the production of female homosocial languages and the (in)visibility of queer behaviors, participants explored the ways in which a variety of Armenian identities were constituted to locate ideals of motherhood, kinship, queer domesticity, patriarchy, homosexuality and the gendered body.

Our discussions were enriched by the comments of our university faculty who specialize in gender and sexuality. As a collective the workshop opened up new ways of thinking about Armenian studies. We discussed methodologies and strategies that could be productively mobilized to give meaning to gendered Armenian landscapes. The workshop demonstrated the need for a more sustained engagement with gender and sexuality in the field of Armenian studies. This workshop was the beginning of an important conversation in a field which will flourish as these junior scholars develop their projects and publish their work.

## MEET THE MANOOGIAN FELLOWS

### MARAL AKTOKMAKYAN

2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow

*Tell us about your current project.*

Currently, I am working on two particular topics that expand on the subject of biopolitical modernity in modern Western Armenian literature. The first, which draws on a chapter of my dissertation, pays attention to the genre of rural literature and its secondary and reduced status within the Western Armenian literary canon. My aim is to reconsider spatial configurations (urban vs. rural spaces) and tensions that shape not only the canon but the formation of cultural and political reality. The second article is based on the ways in which the clergy is represented in Western Armenian literature with regards to sovereign structures. I focus primarily on two bodies of Armenian clergymen that act in the same manner - either as a victim or a sovereign figure.

*What attracted you to apply for a Manoogian post-doctoral fellowship at U-M?*

The Manoogian post-doctoral fellowship is an exceptional opportunity to further scholarly research in Armenian literature, culture and history. Together with its rich library resources, openness to interdisciplinarity and academic dynamism, the program allows me to become part of and contribute to scholarship in Armenian language and literature. Hence, I look forward to participating in this academic environment, which I believe will help me push the boundaries of my research.

*What do you hope to accomplish while you are a post-doctoral fellow?*

I plan to revise my dissertation and publish a manuscript with a new chapter during my fellowship year. I would also like to publish a few articles that I am currently working on. Additionally, I plan to engage in academic life and participate in panels and conferences within the Armenian Studies Program both at the U-M and other universities.

*What course will you teach during your fellowship?*

I will be teaching a course on the question of travel and travel writing in the Department of



*Maral Aktokmakyan*



*Ottoman Armenians celebrate the restoration of the constitution in 1908, Merzifon- in Les Armeniens 1917-1939 La Quete d'un Refuge (The Armenians, 1917-1939 In Search of Refuge) / Credit:Michel Paboudjian*

Comparative Literature in Winter of 2018. The course will analyze the notion of travel, the question of borders, passage, and eventually the (im)possibility of traveling and writing the experiences. Alongside a series of classical texts in travel literature, the course will offer an alternative understanding of traveling or non-traveling through close readings of works by William Faulkner, William Saroyan, Zabel Yesayan and Joseph Conrad. The course will help students think about the politics and poetics of traveling/travel writing in tandem with an investigation of a number of key philosophical questions (e.g. What is a subject? What is an experience?).



## CHRISTOPHER SHEKLIAN

2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow

### **Tell us about your current project.**

My current ethnographic project, based on my dissertation entitled *Theology and the Community: The Armenian Minority, Tradition, and Secularism in Turkey*, explores the possibilities for collective minority existence in modern, secular states, and interrogates the limits to those possibilities imposed by secular law, legal heritages, and the concepts and practices internal to a minority tradition. Ultimately, I argue that in addition to forms of belonging associated with the modern state, such as citizenship dependent upon “modern secular representation,” the liturgical subject of the Armenian Apostolic Church also is bound to the city of Istanbul through a mode of embodied, affective, urban belonging. In unfolding the possibility for being attuned to the city through an immersion in the Armenian liturgy, I offer a broader meditation on how minorities may feel attached—if not necessarily to the state—to the urban settings that are an increasingly crucial site of minority life.

This project is based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork among Armenians in Turkey, mostly in Istanbul. My two primary sites of fieldwork were the Hrant Dink Foundation together with the associated newspaper *Agos* and several of the thirty-six Armenian Apostolic Churches in the city, anchored by the Armenian Patriarchate in the neighborhood of Kumkapı. Additionally, I attended meetings and discussions about the administration of the vakıfs, a form of charitable endowment and foundation; read and discussed the other Armenian-language daily newspapers – *Jamanak* and *Marmara*; served on the altar of several churches in my capacity as a deacon of the Armenian Apostolic Church; and moved between “Armenian” neighborhoods throughout the city.

In addition to developing the conceptual apparatus needed to transform the dissertation into a book – as well as two or three article-length publications – I am also working through Armenian theological and historical texts with an eye to concepts of authority, government,



Christopher Sheklian / Credit: Elizabeth Hewitt

and politics. I plan to articulate connections between Armenian Miaphysite Christology and the understanding of semiotics and hermeneutics in the Armenian textual tradition. Taken together, the overarching project I will be working on develops social-scientific concepts in conversation with Armenian theology and history.

### **What attracted you to apply for a Manoogian post-doctoral fellowship at U-M?**

The Manoogian post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan will provide the perfect opportunity to refine many of the concepts and genealogies deployed in my dissertation. Throughout my work, I rely heavily upon Armenian liturgical practices, hermeneutic techniques, and ideas about Jesus Christ as “the Word of God” within the Armenian Christian tradition. Ultimately, my goal is to develop some of these ideas and concepts into a “toolkit” for social-scientific inquiry. Before embarking on a second major ethnographic project, it is important to have some of this toolkit refined and expanded. The possibility of having the resources to explore this aspect of my broader anthropological project, along with colleagues in the Armenian Studies Program and the Department of Anthropology who can push me as I refine these ideas, was extremely enticing. There are very few places in the world where such a combination of materials, resources, and committed academic community exist to pursue this line of inquiry. It is with the excitement of

knowing that the University of Michigan and the time and resources provided by the Manoogian post-doctoral fellowship could offer such a chance and an academic environment that I applied to the fellowship!

### **What do you hope to accomplish while you are a post-doctoral fellow?**

During my time as a Manoogian post-doctoral fellow, I plan to pursue three major lines of work. First, I will continue working with the ethnographic material related to Armenians in Turkey that formed the basis for my dissertation. Much of the dissertation uses Armenian categories derived from Armenian theological and historical sources, and I plan to use fully the resources at the University of Michigan to refine my understanding of Armenian hermeneutics and Armenian historiography. Deploying these refined concepts, I will begin a project on turning my dissertation into a book and publishing two articles based on the ethnographic material.

Secondly, I will conduct exploratory ethnographic research for a second major project. The project explores the role of existing Diasporic connections and institutions in the lives of refugee populations. In addition to complicating the category of “Diaspora,” the project also has important policy implications for thinking about integration of migrant and refugee populations and the role of networks and non-governmental institutions in transnational movements.

Finally, I plan to continue developing a book-length project I started while a student at the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. Titled *Armenian Political Theology*, the project traces concepts of authority attributed to both God and states through Armenian sources. Through reading classical and medieval Armenian texts, the project develops a vocabulary of concepts such as *derutyun*, dominion, in order to articulate Armenian political categories and the way in which Armenians have thought about government, authority, and the role of the state and church throughout time.

### **What course will you teach during your fellowship?**

During my fellowship, I will teach a course entitled “Liturgy, Hymnography, Community.” This course uses three bodies of literature in the

social sciences to explore the role of Armenian Christianity in the lives of contemporary Armenians. The first concerns liturgy and ritual, the second body of literature explores sound and voice, and the third grapples with the idea of community. These theoretical texts will be paired with a selection of published works on Armenians and the Armenian Church today, as well as examples from my ethnographic work. Each section will also involve activities and embodied practices related to the set of texts.

The first section on religion and ritual pairs anthropological texts on religion such as Talal Asad’s *Genealogies of Religion* with the writings of Father Daniel Findikyan on the Armenian Apostolic Liturgy and selections from Malachia Ormanian’s *The Church of Armenia*. The second body of literature is on sound and voice, and features Alain Corbin’s *Village Bells*, Nicholas Harkness’ *Songs of Seoul*, and Charles Hirschkind’s *The Ethical Soundscape*. Finally, in the last third of the course, we will explore the idea of community, reading Benedict Anderson’s seminal *Imagined Communities* as well as read selections from the volume *Armenian Christianity Today*, excerpts from Zabel Yessayan’s *The Gardens of Silihdar*, and William Saroyan’s play *The Armenians*. The course will include trips and guest lectures related to liturgy and liturgical music. The goal of using these three bodies of literature, as well as fiction and directed exercises is to explore various ways Armenian Christianity and the Armenian Church does and does not play into the formation of a sense of Armenian community.



Ruins of Sis. / Credit: Christopher Sheklian



## LIMINALITY & MEMORIAL PRACTICES

### LITERATURE & LIMINALITY: EXPLORING THE ARMENIAN IN-BETWEEN

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Organizers: Maral Aktokmakyan, 2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow, and Michael Pifer, Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies.

It is a common trope to refer to Armenia as historically divided between other lands, empires, and peoples. But what does it mean to be in-between? This workshop will examine the liminality—both as a theme and as a quality—in and of Armenian literature.

Rather than locating Armenia as a distinct interstice between otherwise ontologically stable powers, places, and ways of being, this workshop seeks to grapple with how liminality in Armenian literature might unsettle binary divisions of many kinds—between self and other, center and periphery, urban and rural, modern and premodern, native and foreign, and even Armenian and “Odar.” How has liminality—geographic, literary, linguistic, temporal—shaped Armenian cultural production? How might we read it? And how might it shape the ways in which we approach Armenian literature as our object of study?



Caption: Church of the Holy Redeemer- Ani/Kars  
Credit: Gokhan Toka, Nov. 2011

### ARMENIAN MUSIC, MEMORIAL PRACTICES AND THE GLOBAL IN THE 21ST CENTURY

March 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Organizers: Hakem Al-Rustom, Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History, and Christopher Sheklian, 2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow.

From lullabies transmitting genocide memories and post genocide experience in Turkey (Bilal 2013; 2006) to anamnesis, a form of liturgical remembrance of God’s role in human life (Findikyan 2008), and an act of survival in exile (Kerovpyan, 2015), music is constitutive to the Armenian experience worldwide. Both the shared affective participation in the resonance of melodies and rhythms and the tales and stories conveyed in sung musical texts help to create a bond of common experience and sense of belonging within and across Armenian populations spread throughout the globe.

This workshop situates various genres of Armenian music—liturgical, lullaby, folk, pop, and contemporary—as a site from which to explore central questions for the Armenian experiences in the 21st Century. What ties together diverse Diaspora populations, Anatolia, and the Republic of Armenia? How is a shared Armenian experience conveyed and transmitted? Which institutions and practices sustain the Armenian community? How does music resonate with individuals while simultaneously creating both communal bonds, tensions, and distinctions? In what ways does music tie the past to the present

and even help imagine a future? How do we contextualize the ‘traditional’ and the ‘experimental’ in contemporary Armenian music production?

We believe that these questions, central to Armenian Studies, can be effectively and productively approached through the melodies and rhythms of Armenian music, and hope that this workshop develops music as an analytic site within Armenian Studies.

Paper · 416 ff. · 13.1 x 10 cm · Awendants, Khizan in the Province Van · 1647. / Credit: Utopia, armarium codicum bibliophilorum, Cod. 4: Armenian Hymnarium (Sharaknots) (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/utp/0004>).



### INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE FOR ATROCITY CRIMES – WORTH THE COST?

2018 Dr. Berj H. Haidostian Annual Distinguished Lecture by Nicholas Koumjian, International Co-Prosecutor

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

Since the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1993, several efforts have been made around the globe to bring to justice political and military leaders responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Several different models of international tribunals were established for Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cambodia and Lebanon. In 2002, the International Criminal Court began operations. Critics have labelled these efforts as too slow, too expensive and a hindrance to peace efforts. Have these international courts had any effect on the commission of atrocities in times of conflict? Do they serve the interests of victims or contribute in any way to post-conflict transitions? What are the future prospects for international criminal law? Will there ever be a justice mechanism for atrocity crimes ongoing today in places like Syria, Yemen and Myanmar?

Nicholas Koumjian has worked at various international criminal tribunals for the past 17 years, including the International Criminal Court,

International Court for the Former Yugoslavia, Special Panels for Serious Crimes in East Timor, State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Special Court for Sierra Leone. From 2007-2012, Mr. Koumjian was Senior Trial Attorney for the prosecution of Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia for crimes in Sierra Leone. Following his appointment by the United Nations Secretary General, he has served in Cambodia as the International Co-Prosecutor at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. In June 2017, he completed final arguments in the trial of Nuon Chea, “Brother Number 2” in the Khmer Rouge regime and Khieu Samphan, the former Head of State on charges for crimes committed by that regime between 1975-1979. It is estimated that almost 2 million people lost their lives during that regime and the charges include genocide, enslavement, forced marriage and rape.



## ARMENIAN CHILDHOOD(S): HISTORIES AND THEORIES OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IN ARMENIAN STUDIES

Ninth Annual International Graduate Student Workshop

April 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018

Organizers: Melanie S. Tanielian, Assistant Professor, Department of History, and Tuğçe Kayaal, PhD candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies.

In recent years, the study of childhood and youth has gained increasing attention that has resulted in innovative interdisciplinary scholarship. The field of Childhood Studies of the last decade has concentrated on modern childhood(s) and youth, and has questioned the meanings that adults and governmental bodies attribute to children. For example, universal characteristics, such as “innocence,” “incompetence,” and “vulnerability,” defining children and youth have been examined and challenged by scholars from a variety of fields, who insist that “childhood”, like ethnicity, gender, and class, is a constructed social category. Pushing methodological boundaries to explore political, historical, cultural, economic, and social formations, structures and contexts across time and place, scholars have begun to consider children and youth as agents in their political and social environment rather than passive members of society.

This workshop will initiate an inter-disciplinary conversation about Armenian childhood, children, and youth. The goal is to consider new perspectives, methodologies, and cross-disciplinary frameworks that will put Armenian Studies in conversation with Childhood Studies. We aim to bring together theoretical and methodological approaches along with empirical studies across disciplines that use childhood as a category of analysis and/or concentrate on children’s agencies and experiences in Armenian history, politics, society, economy, and culture. We see both childhood and youth as fluid categories and concepts that are subject to flexible interpretations and definitions.

For more information about the Annual Graduate Student Workshops visit: [ii.umich.edu/asp/news-events/all-events/workshops.html](http://ii.umich.edu/asp/news-events/all-events/workshops.html).



Miss Harnack with a group of (Armenian) orphans  
Credit: *Der Christliche Orient* (Vol. 15, 1914)

### From the MULTIDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP FOR ARMENIAN STUDIES Organizers

“We are excited to begin the fifth year of the Multidisciplinary Workshop of Armenian Studies (MWAS). We are looking forward to having monthly workshops for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who will share their work with the Armenian Studies community on campus. MWAS has come to be a vibrant and productive medium of intellectual conversations for those on campus interested in scholarly approaches to the study of Armenians. We also plan to bring an invited guest for a lecture and workshop in the second semester of 2017-2018.”

Dzovinar Derderian and Tuğçe Kayaal, both PhD candidates in the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

## PROFILES & REFLECTIONS

### ASP FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENTS

Recipients of Haiganoosh Mengushian/Ajemian Memorial Student Travel Grant

#### JEREMY JOHNSON

PhD candidate, Interdepartmental Program in Anthropology and History

#### Conference Participation

From March 31 to April 2, with the generous support of the Armenian Studies Program, I participated in the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES) conference held at Fitzwilliam College at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. BASEES is Europe’s largest conference for scholars studying East Europe and Eurasia. There were over 500 participants and 130 panels. I was presenting a paper entitled “Registers of Red: Sovietizing Language in the South Caucasus” which explored the impact of Soviet policies on the speech of everyday citizens during the 1920s and 1930s in Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan. The panel included the editor of *Caucasus Survey*, Laurence Broers, and Historian and former ASP post-doctoral fellow, Jo Laycock. Additionally, I presented a second paper as part of a roundtable discussion on revolutions, restorations, conflicts, and connections in the Modern South Caucasus, entitled “The South Caucasus: A Useful Region for Historical Analysis?” It examined the social construction of region, the power dynamics and cultural aspects of regional designations from different perspectives. I also served as the chair-discussant for two panels: “Church Slavonic, and Language and the Russian Intelligentsia” and “Place and Space in Russian History.”

As part of the administrative portion of the conference, I participated in the founding of the Caucasus Study Group, a scholarly group within BASEES designed to increase support for scholarship about the Caucasus. The study group, led by a faculty in the UK with the help of scholars from around the world, will meet annually and plan international conferences and workshops. Additionally, the study group will seek to provide support for scholars in and from the region.

BASEES was an excellent opportunity for me to share my work with European colleagues working on similar topics and receive valuable feedback. This workshop also provided an important networking opportunity with young scholars who will finish their dissertations soon, as well as with established academics, as I face the job market in the coming year. I was especially excited to be part of the founding of the study group, and will continue to be involved for years to come.

#### Summer Research

This summer I also traveled to Georgia and Armenia for follow-up dissertation research. Over the process of writing my dissertation, several new questions have arisen. With the generous support of the Armenian Studies Program, I was able to return to significant archives to follow up on these questions. My dissertation focuses on the campaigns to eradicate illiteracy among adults in the early Soviet South Caucasus. The Soviet Union attempted to provide literacy



An illustration from the Soviet Armenian children’s magazine *Hoktemberik*,  
Credit: *Hoktemberik*, No 9-10, 1929. pg 11.



classes for every national and language group in the region. Given the high level of diversity in the region, this meant that the republics of the Caucasus were tasked with providing literacy instruction in over 75 languages, many of which had no existing writing systems. Unlike many other republics which used the Latin script, Georgia and Armenia used their own scripts for the development of some national minority groups. Utilizing the resources in the national archives and libraries of Georgia and Armenia, I was able to explore some of the responses to localization efforts and better understand the processes involved in spreading literacy among smaller national minority populations. Using this new-found material, I will be able to complete my final chapter of the dissertation and have a better understanding of the important social, cultural and linguistic processes at play during the period.

This trip also served as preliminary data gathering trip for my second project, which focuses on borderland spaces and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the South Caucasus during the 1980s and 1990s. I was able to use my time in the Caucasus to network and visit preliminary field sites. I also acquired important geo-spatial data that will help me design a digital humanities component to this project. Developing a clear second project is important as I face graduation

## AROOSHE GIROTI

*BA student, Political Science, Philosophy & Economics*

I am incredibly grateful to the Armenian Studies Program for providing me with the resources to travel, work, and live in Yerevan, Armenia with the Armenia Volunteer Corps. I learned about the Armenian Genocide, and by working with local non-governmental organizations I could contribute to Armenian society. During the day, I worked with the *French Armenian Development Foundation* where I was working on a program proposal which would help refugee-Armenians integrate into Armenia and avoid persecution in their home country. I researched different immigration policies from countries in the European Union to compare and contrast the policies crafted by different voluntary return

and the academic job market.

Additionally, I presented my work-in-progress to local scholars both in Yerevan and Tbilisi, gathering important on-the-ground historical perspectives and sharing ideas about future collaborations in the region.



*Alphabet Monument in Armenia  
Credit: Jeremy Johnson*

programs in order to help with a draft of the program proposal. I was able to practice my French in a professional setting, and I connected with high ranking French lawyers whose careers I admire. Additionally, I worked with the *Aleppo Organization* where I attempted to document the journeys of Syrian refugees to Armenia to create an oral archive of this history. I utilized my videography skills to help film them, record audio, scribe, and edit their interviews into short, and long clips. Along the way, I met some of the strongest and most inspiring people I have ever encountered, and hearing their stories was an absolute honor.

However, the ultimate reason I went to Armenia was because I am interested in studying war and genocide. I firmly believe that genocide and war cannot be just studied in the classrooms – you need to travel to the places in which it was orchestrated or interview the survivors and their decedents. After living in Bosnia last year, I learned how a tragedy like the genocide effectively marks a country for generations to come, and plagues it with political instability and economic hardships. I believe that it is necessary to learn about genocides in order to equip people with the knowledge to efficiently solve collective actions problems with an understanding of how psychology, economics, and geo ethnic politics go hand-in-hand. My trip to Armenia was incredibly fulfilling, and it showed me a beautiful part of the world I would have never had the opportunity to visit were it not for this travel grant. I will continue to pursue my interest in genocide while keeping Armenia close to my heart.

*Arooshe Giroti*

## ÖZGE KORKMAZ

*PhD student, Department of Anthropology*

With the support of the Armenian Studies Program and International Institute, I have started my dissertation fieldwork in the summer of 2017, travelling extensively in the Kurdish region of Turkey. My research examines the relationship between the production of public, ethical values and historical consciousness in rural Kurdistan, an area that has long been saturated by large scale transformations. I investigate the ways in which historical changes seen across various sectors of everyday life, including economic life, demographics, language and kinship, are transformed into matters of public concern through the deployment of ethical arguments. My research starts with the premise that ethics, in other words, the belief in the necessity and possibility of living a proper life that is guided by moral values, centrally plays on the formation of publics. Following from this, I ask about



how the changing political, economic and social landscape of the rural Kurdistan articulates with such ethical considerations over what constitutes a proper life.

My preliminary research in the area has shown that, although it is currently populated mostly by Turkish Kurds, it remains a “historical home” to many other communities such as Armenians and Assyrians whose ghostly presence continues to frame the ethical visions of the current residents. For many, for instance, what happened to the Armenian population during the final years of the Ottoman Empire is a matter of public concern which has ethical implications at multiple levels. People deliberate over what to do with the material remains of the Armenians who were systematically killed during the Armenian Genocide. They seek to restore old



Armenian names, and if they choose not to, they find themselves having to conjure an ethically acceptable excuse as to why. Thanks to the fellowship I have received from the Armenian Studies Program for the past two summers, I have had the chance to conduct research in two provinces, Diyarbakır and Van, most affected by the Genocide. Especially this past summer, I have made a significant move from Diyarbakır, where I had spent substantial time as a researcher and as a traveler since 2009, to Van, the only province that officially had an Armenian majority prior to 1915 due to the current political conflict and security reasons. I could do so thanks to the support provided to me by the Armenian Studies Program as it allowed me to start my research at a much earlier date. I now feel confident and ready to start the main and the longest path of my dissertation research which will last over a year.



*Y aylakonak Village in Bahcesaray District of Van, an Armenian village named Taramag prior to 1915 Armenian Genocide. In records from 1928, the village is called Teramağ, which is an appropriation from the old Armenian name continued to be used by the Kurds, its new residents. In 1949, it was renamed to Y aylakonak, a Turkish word, by the government. In the photo, villagers are seen waiting outside a house to give condolences to the family of a recently deceased old village man.*

*Credit: Özge Korkmaz*

## 2017-2018 ASP GRADUATE STUDENTS

### Ali Bolcakan

PhD candidate, Department of Comparative Literature  
Area of concentration: Armenian, Greek, and Turkish language debates and literatures in the late Ottoman Empire and early Republican Turkey

### Dzovinar Derderian

PhD candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies  
Area of concentration: 19th-century Ottoman social and cultural history

### Jeremy Johnson

PhD candidate, Interdepartmental Program in Anthropology and History  
Area of concentration: Soviet history, languages of the Caucasus, gender

### Tuğçe Kayaal

PhD candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies  
Area of concentration: Childhood history and the history of Armenian orphans during the late 19th and early 20th century

## OUR DONORS

We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals for their generous contributions in 2016-17 (donations as of September 1, 2016). A special thanks to donors of books to the ASP library. Lastly, we extend a very warm thank you to the Manoogian Simone Foundation and Alex and Marie Manoogian Foundation.

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# 2017-2018 EVENT CALENDAR

**Wednesday, Sept 20, 4-5:30 PM**

*Lecture*

**Armenian Riddles: Learning How to Read with Medieval Poetry**, Michael Pifer, Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies.  
Room 110, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Wednesday, Oct 4, 7-8:30 PM**

*Film Screening*

**3 Weeks in Yerevan** (Directed by Vahe Berberian and Vahik Pirhamzei; 2016).

Room 555, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Wednesday, Oct 11, 4-5:30 PM**

*Roundtable Discussion*

**Scholars Under Fire: The Turkish State, Nationalists, and the Repression Against Study of the Armenian Genocide.... 102 Years After the Events.**

Room 110, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Friday, Nov 3, 5-7 PM**

*Film Screening*

**Coming Full Circle** (Directed by Ara Shirinyan; 2017).

Space 2435, North Quad, 105 S State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Wednesday, Nov 15, 4-5:30 PM**

*Lecture*

**Biopolitics and Life-Writing among Ottoman Armenians: The Sacred Life of Zabel Yesayan**, Maral Aktokmakyan, 2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow.

Room 110, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Friday, Dec 8, 10 AM-1 PM**

*Workshop*

**Literature and Liminality: Exploring the Armenian in-Between.**  
Organizers: Maral Aktokmakyan, 2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow, and Michael Pifer, Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Room 455, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Wednesday, Jan 17, 4-5:30 PM**

*Lecture*

**Christology and Culture: Armenian Theological and Historical Sources as Social Theory**, Christopher Sheklian, 2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow.

Room 555, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Wednesday, Feb 14, 4-5:30 PM**

*Lecture*

**Modern Armenian Historiography: Suggestions for Periodization**, Ara Sanjian, Associate Professor of History, Director of Armenian Research Center.

Room 555, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Wednesday, Feb 21, 7-8:30 PM**

*Film Screening*

**The Last Inhabitant** (Directed by Jivan Avetisyan; 2016)

Room 555, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Friday, Mar 16, 10 AM-5 PM**

*Workshop*

**Armenian Music, Memorial Practices and the Global in the 21st Century.**

Organizers: Hakem Al-Rustom, Alex Manoogian Professor of Modern Armenian History, and Christopher Sheklian, 2017-18 Manoogian Post-doctoral Fellow.

West Conference Room, Rackham Graduate School, 915 E Washington Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Friday, Mar 16, 6:30-8:30 PM**

*Film Screening*

**Singing in Exile** (Directed by Turi Finocchiaro and Nathalie Rossetti; 2015)

Space 2435, North Quad, 105 S State Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Saturday, Mar 17, 4 PM**

*Evening Service and Musical Concert*

St. John Armenian Church, 22001 Northwestern Hwy # 1, Southfield, MI 48075.

**Thursday, Mar 22, 7-9 PM**

*Dr. Berj H Haidostian Annual Distinguished Lecture*

**International Justice for Atrocity Crimes - Worth the Cost?** Nicholas Koumjian, International Co-Prosecutor.

Room 1010 Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

**Friday-Saturday, Apr 20-21, 10 AM**

*Ninth Annual International Graduate Student Workshop*

**Armenian Childhood(s): Histories and Theories of Childhood and Youth in Armenian Studies.**

Organizers: Melanie S. Tanielian, Assistant Professor, Department of History, and Tugce Kayaal, PhD candidate, Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Room 455, Weiser Hall, 500 Church Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

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- Preparing the next generation of scholars in the field of Armenian studies
- Offering a comprehensive university-level education in Armenian studies, including undergraduate majors, MA and PhD degrees, and post-doctoral studies
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