

The “Loyal Nation” and Its Deputies. The Armenians in the First Ottoman Parliament

Elke Hartmann

In its title this article starts with what seems to be a contradiction. The title refers to the Armenian deputies of the first Ottoman parliament as representatives of their community, referred to as the “loyal nation” (*millet-i sadıka*) by the Ottoman-Turkish ruling elite. But the principle motivating the composition of the parliament was not to provide proportional representation for each community of the empire – religious, ethnic, linguistic and the like – but rather to send representatives of whatever affiliation for a given number of male inhabitants of a province to the capital.¹ Furthermore, these deputies were not elected by only one – their own – confessional group. Instead, they had to obtain the votes of those entitled to vote in all religious groups, whether the (male) population in Istanbul, or electors in the provinces. Why then, should we look at the Armenian – or Greek or Arab or Bulgarian – deputies as distinct groups?

Apart from the merely technical, but very legitimate argument that one needs specific language skills to use sources written in the non-Turkish languages of the Ottoman Empire, there are also other reasons for this approach. For the contradiction lies in the structure of the Ottoman parliament itself. In principle, its members were supposed to be deputies of the Ottoman people without confessional distinction, eligible only on the grounds of their personal qualities. In fact their religious affiliation played a role in their nomination and election because quotas for Muslims and non-Muslims were established. Otherwise, as Devereux argues, the non-Muslims would have sent hardly anybody to the Istanbul parliament because deputies were elected by members of the provincial administrative council, where, by definition, Muslims were always in the majority.² It should be noted that Devereux takes it for granted that members of these councils would have acted not as Ottomans but as Muslim Ottomans, and would never have considered electing a non-Muslim deputy, whatever his qualifications. The same lack of faith in the *de facto* spread of the idea of Ottomanism even among the members of the elite was obviously shared by the Ottoman government itself, which guaranteed the participation of an appropriate number of non-Muslims by establishing quotas.³

¹ Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period. A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore 1963), 124-125, 138-141.

² *Ibid.*, 124-125.

³ *Ibid.*

The number of deputies per province depended not on the local population, but on the importance of the province to the central government. Likewise, the ratio between Muslim and non-Muslim deputies differed from province to province.⁴ But the regulations distinguished only between Muslims and non-Muslims; they did not stipulate ethnic or linguistic criteria because these categories did not exist in the administrative system of the empire or in Ottoman political thinking (which does not mean that people were not aware of differences within the Muslim “*millet-i bakime*”). Newspaper articles, and in some cases also statistics, very clearly distinguish Turks and Arabs. On the other hand, all other Muslims, obviously even the non-Sunni Muslims, were lumped together under the general rubric of “Turk,”⁵ on the assumption that all Muslims shared the same interests, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background.

Similarly, the regulations did not make distinctions among the different non-Muslim *millets*, although this was indeed a category in Ottoman politics, and, paradoxically, one of growing importance in the Reform period. It was only then that the *millet*-system was fully developed. And it was in this period as well that the *millets* changed slowly from religious groups to communities with a growing national awareness. As result of this shift, the Greek Orthodox *millet* split along ethno-linguistic lines, whereas the Armenian *millet* split in consequence of missionary activities and inner-Armenian socio-political conflicts, as well as reform movements inside the Armenian Church. The official recognition of these new, distinct *millets* contributed to accelerating the nation-building processes as well as increasing competition among the different *millets*. The Ottoman government was at all times well aware of these differences and this competition and took them into consideration in its administrative order, making use of them – especially in the nineteenth century – playing one group off against the other in masterly fashion.⁶

Geopolitics and demography, history and tradition, as well as social and cultural factors provided very different and sometimes conflicting political options for the various non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire. Especially under the conditions of 19th-century Ottoman politics, every *millet*-community found its own way to place itself in the framework of Ottoman statehood, reform,

⁴ For details see *ibid.*, 138-141.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶ About the close connection between *millet*-system and nation-building in the Ottoman Empire see Kemal H. Karpat, “*Millets* and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era,” in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, 2 vols. (New York and London 1982), 1:141-169; for the emergence of the Catholic and Protestant *millets* see Hagop Barsoumian, “The Eastern Question and the Tanzimat Era,” in: *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2 vols., ed. Richard G. Hovannessian (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2:175-201 and Vartan Artinian, “The Formation of Catholic and Protestant *Millets* in the Ottoman Empire,” *The Armenian Review* 28 (1975), 3-15.

European influence and national aspirations. Given the complexity and diversity of Ottoman society, the entire non-Muslim population of a region hardly could have shared the same political agenda and interests.

The Armenian deputies to the Ottoman Parliament were, as we have seen, sent to Istanbul as Ottomans, as emissaries of a region, as Christians but not as Armenians. In the tangle of multiple and overlapping identities that every Ottoman subject lived with, how did the Armenian deputies conceive of themselves? On whose behalf did they act in parliament? Whom did they represent? And as whose representatives were they regarded? Did they speak in the name of the region they came from? Or did they refer to their religious community? And, if the latter, did they focus on being Christian or Armenian, perhaps even stressing the distinction between Apostolic and Catholic Armenians? Or did they try to go beyond the frame of reference of their own *millet* and think and act as Ottoman citizens?

We may say, at the outset, that only a few weeks after it was established, the work of the parliament was dominated and overshadowed by the war with Russia, a war declared on the pretext that Ottoman Christians needed protection against Muslim misrule, thus imposing the topic of religious affiliation on the deputies. In this situation, most Armenian deputies felt obliged to explain their attitude explicitly as Armenians. They did so more often and more obviously than any other confessional group.

* * *

Who then were these Armenian deputies, and where did they come from?

There is uncertainty even about such basics as names and numbers. According to the list of names provided in the published minutes of the parliament, there were 116 deputies at the first session (20.03.1877-28.06.1877), of whom eleven were Armenian, and at the second session 95 deputies, of whom eight were Armenian.⁷ However, this list is incomplete. Devereux has collated it with a variety of additional sources and added to it people who are not mentioned in the official list but can be traced in the minutes as taking part in the debates.⁸ According to this more complete list, out of 119 members of parliament at the first session, the following twelve Armenians were present: Krikor Bzdigoğlu Efendi (Adana), Manug Karadjian Efendi (Aleppo)⁹, Mikael (Mike) Altıntop Efendi (Ankara), Hagop Sbartialian Efendi (Izmir)¹⁰, Mardinli Hovsep (Osep) Kazazian Efendi (Diyarbakir), Rupen

⁷ Hakki Tank Us (ed.), *Meclis-i Mebusan 1293 Zabut Ceridesi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Vakit Matbaası, 1940-1954), 2:16-20.

⁸ Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, appendices B and C; 261-275.

⁹ In the minutes listed as Karaca Manok, in the Armenian press referred to as Manug Kharadjian, in the Armenian Church Register of Aleppo he is mentioned as Manug Karadjian.

¹⁰ Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan* and Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period* mention him as Ispartalioğlu Agop, Armenian literature always as Hagop Sbartialian

Yazıdjian Efendi (Edirne)¹¹, Hamzasb Ballarian Efendi (Erzurum)¹², Taniel Kharradjian Efendi (Erzurum)¹³, Sahag Yavrumian Efendi (Ishak Efendi) (Bursa), Sebuğ Maksudian Efendi (Istanbul), Hovhannes (Ohannes) Allahverdian Efendi (Istanbul)¹⁴ and Hagop Shahinian Efendi (Sivas). During its second session, the Ottoman parliament comprised 113 members. Of its Armenian deputies, Manug Karadjian (Aleppo), Hagop Sbartialian (Izmir), Hovsep Kazazian (Diyarbakır), Rupen Yazıdjian (Edirne), Sahag Yavrumian (Bursa) and Ohannes Hüdaverdian (Allahverdian) (Istanbul) were re-elected. Melkon Donelian Efendi (Ankara)¹⁵, Hagop (Agop) Efendi (Kayseri, *vilayet* Ankara), Murad Bey (Varna, *vilayet* Tuna), Hagop (Agop) Kazandjian (Ruşçuk, *vilayet* Tuna), Giragos (Kiragoz) Kazandjian Efendi (Erzurum)¹⁶, Khatchadur Der-Nersesian (Erzurum)¹⁷, Hagop (Agop) Kazazian Efendi (Istanbul), Kevork Efendi (Sivas) and Hovhannes (Ohannes) Kürekian Efendi (Trabzon) were new-comers. Thus the number of Armenian deputies during the second session rose to fifteen.

There were also Armenians among the senators (*ayan*). Among the 27 senators appointed on March 17, 1877, Servitchen Efendi and Mihran Düz Bey were Armenian. Among those who joined the senate after the Constitution was suspended was yet another Armenian, Apraham Paşa Yeramian.¹⁸ Of the 28 members of the drafting commission for the Constitution, there were again, three Armenians: Krikor Odian Efendi, Vahan Bey and Tchamitch Ohannes Efendi.¹⁹

The members of the drafting commission as well as the *ayan* were among the best-known personalities of their time. They therefore found their way into Armenian historiography, so that their biographies can be easily reconstructed on the basis of countless letters, entries in yearbooks and calendars, obituaries and contemporary newspaper articles. Their works and personal papers are kept in archives, and, although scattered, some have even been published. Since they are still marginalized in European and Turkish research literature, their biographies are summarized below.

¹¹ In Devereux's study wrongly listed as Zasioğlu.

¹² In Armenian sources always named Ballarian, whereas the Turkish texts identify him as Hallacian or Kallacyan.

¹³ In the minutes named Danyel Karacyan.

¹⁴ Other variants of his name read Hüdaverdizade, Allahverdi or Hüdaverdian.

¹⁵ In the minutes the versions Daniloğlu and Doniloğlu can be found; the correct form is most probably the latter, in its Armenian form Donelian. Cf. *Türk Parlamento Taribi*, vol. 2 (Ankara: TBBM Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), 15 gives his name as Doniloğlu.

¹⁶ Sometimes also mentioned as Khazandjian.

¹⁷ In the minutes: Hacaduryan Efendi.

¹⁸ Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 276-282.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, appendix A, 259.

*The Ayan (Members of the Senate)**Servitchen Efendi*

Servitchen was born as Serovpe Vitchenian in 1815 and died in 1897. He was one of the most famous Ottoman physicians of his generation.²⁰ His father, Sarrafoğlu Bey Vitchen (or Khazez Sarrafoğlu Ağa Vitchen), a banker who had worked for the famous Kazaz (Khazez) Artin (Bezdjian) and accordingly acquired a certain wealth, made special efforts to ensure a good education for his children. At a young age, Servitchen learned French, Italian and Greek from private teachers. In 1834 he was, together with Kasbar Sinabian, who became a very famous physician as well, the first Armenian student to go to Paris to study medicine. There he met not only the Ottoman ambassador of the day, Reşid Paşa, but also Fuad and Âli Paşas, who supported his studies.²¹ In 1839, he continued his education at the medical faculty of Pisa, from which he graduated in 1840 after defending his doctoral thesis. In 1842, we find him back in Istanbul, where he quickly gained a good reputation in his profession. Soon after, he was appointed head doctor of the Seraskeriate. Servitchen also served in high positions as a teacher of medicine and medical law. In 1846, he started giving classes on medical subjects at *Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultani*. For four decades, he was director of the military medical faculty at Pangalti. Finally, he was elected to leading functions in several medical associations and organisations. In 1856, he helped found the Ottoman Medical Association, later serving two terms as its president; at the same time, he presided over the High Medical Commission of Istanbul. In 1876/77, he served as a consultant of the Red Cross in the Ottoman capital. In obedience to an order from the Sultan, he founded the first Ottoman medical journal in 1849.

Beyond the field of medicine he was active in politics as well. In 1858 he was appointed to the Ottoman Educational Council (*maarif meclisi*). In 1877, when he already had many honours to his name, he was first elected one of the Istanbul deputies to the Ottoman parliament and then exchanged this mandate for a seat in the senate. His place in the chamber of deputies could then be given to a Greek notable, after the Greek newspapers of the capital had raised their voice in protest against what they considered as unjust distribution of seats among the Armenian and Greek *millet*s. Within the Armenian *millet* Servitchen served in many functions. He used his influence to advance the cause of the Armenian National [i.e. *millet*] Constitution. Later, he served as a deputy in the Armenian *mil-*

²⁰ For the following short biography see in particular: Vahan Kevork Zartarian, *Hishadagaran (1512-1933)* (Cairo 1933-1939), 394-396; Vahram H. Torkomian, *Pjishg Dokt. Servitchen Efendi* (Vienna 1893); Minas Tcheraz, *Gensakragan misionner* (Paris 1929), 39-48; Y. G. Çark, *Türk Devleti Hizmetinde Ermeniler 1453-1953* (Istanbul 1953), 91-93, *Türk Parlamento Tarihi*, 2:95.

²¹ Çark, *Ermeniler*, 92.

let-parliament and as a member of its various committees, especially the political and educational ones. Servitchen was also known as a writer and journalist. Notwithstanding all these activities and offices, he never ceased to practise medicine, offering treatment free of charge for the poor and supporting the Armenian hospital by providing financial support and by teaching there. For this commitment as well, Servitchen enjoyed great respect and popularity among the Armenians.

Mihran Düz Bey

Mihran Düz Bey (1817-1891) belonged to the great Düzian family, Armenian Catholic *amiras* and Ottoman court jewellers who had been in charge of the Ottoman mint for generations. Mihran's father held the same position together with his brother, but they were both beheaded on Sept. 5, 1819, victims of a plot.²² About Mihran's childhood and early education little is known.²³ In 1847, he was appointed director of the mint, following his family's tradition. In 1855, he was awarded the title of *bey*; one year later he was elected to the Reform Council (*tan-zimat meclisi*), and, in May 1856, appointed to the newly established Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances²⁴; the year after that, he was promoted to the position of a Secretary of State (*müsteşar*) in the Educational Council (*meclis-i maarif*). On November 1, 1862, Sultan Abdülaziz made him chief financial administrator (*sarraf*) of the Sultan's mother. On January 18, 1864, Mihran Düz became the first non-Muslim to attain a position in the Ministry of Justice. In 1867, he accompanied Abdülaziz on his trip to Paris, where he took part in an international financial congress as delegate of the Ottoman government. In 1870, he was awarded the highest decoration of the Ottoman state, becoming a member of the Council of State at the same time. Finally, on 17 March 1877, he was also appointed to the newly created Senate. He continued to serve in these various functions until 1880, when he moved to the Ministry of Finance, giving up all other posts.

Apraham Paşa Yeramian

Apraham Paşa Yeramian (1833-1918)²⁵ most probably came to the Senate on January 20, 1880 to replace Mihran Düz, who had moved to the Ministry of Fi-

²² Çark, *Ermeniler*, 56-59, 66, 67 blames, among others, Kazaz Artin Bezdjian for initiating the plot, a view that is vehemently rejected by Maghakia Ormanian, *Azkabadum*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Dbaran Srpots Hagopiants, 1927), 2363; Pascal Carmont, *Les Amiras. Seigneurs de l'Arménie ottomane*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Éd. Salvator 1999), 139, 135-137 mentions the plot, but without referring to Kazaz Artin; Zartarian, *Hishadagaran*, 315-316 gives a detailed discussion.

²³ For the following biographical notes see Çark, *Ermeniler*, 62-63, 165.

²⁴ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876*, 2nd ed. (New York: Gordian, 1973), 93.

²⁵ *Türk Parlamento Tarihi*, 2:115; Çark, *Ermeniler*, 285 (photograph).

nance.²⁶ His father, Kevork Aramian, was a *sarraf* from Eğin. Apraham was born in Istanbul, where he attended an Armenian school before obtaining his higher education in Egypt. There, he first served in the palace as secretary for Mehmed Ali’s son Ibrahim Paşa. In his function as *sarraf* for the Khedive Ismail, Apraham returned to Istanbul, where he later entered the service of the Ottoman sultan as minister. His excellent personal relationship to Sultan Abdülaziz allowed him to acquire vast landed properties in Istanbul.²⁷ For a very short period, in April / May 1876, Apraham Paşa was made minister without portfolio.²⁸ After the death of Artin Paşa Dadian in 1901, Apraham Yeramian took Dadian’s seat in the Council of State.²⁹ Apraham Paşa was one of the three senators still alive when the Ottoman constitution and parliament were re-established in 1908. These three senators became members of the new senate. Alongside his political duties, Apraham Paşa conducted some studies in ethnography.³⁰ Like many notables in comparably high positions, Apraham Paşa dedicated a portion of his wealth to his community, financing the construction of churches and schools.³¹

The Members of the Drafting Commission

Krikor Odian

Krikor Odian (1834-1887), jurist, writer, and politician, was without doubt the best known of the commission’s Armenian members.³² The discrepancy between the tendency to overestimate on the one hand and marginalise on the other is in no other case greater than in Krikor Odian’s. Armenian memory perceives Odian not only as the father of the Armenian *millet*-constitution but also as the author of the Ottoman constitution, for which the Armenian constitution served as in-

²⁶ According to Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period* the exact date is January 20, 1880, according to *Türk Parlamento Tarihi* 2:115 it is January 21, 1880.

²⁷ Cf. Çark, *Ermeniler*, 166, who rumours that Apraham Yeramian used to play tric trac with the Sultan. Cf. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 317.

²⁸ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 316-317.

²⁹ Çark, *Ermeniler*, 166, 147.

³⁰ *Index Bio-Bibliographicus Notorum Hominum, Sectio armeniaca*, vol. 1-4, (Osnabrück: Dietrich 1982-1987) [henceforth IBNArm], vol. 2, art. “Eramean, Abraham.”

³¹ Mgrditch Bodurian, *Hay bavrakidag* (Bukarest 1938-1939), art. “Yeramian, Apraham Paşa.”

³² About him see among others: Minas Tcheraz, *Gensakragan miusionner* (Paris 1929), 17-26; Hrant (Giurdjian), “Krikor Odian,” in: *Krikor Odian, Sabmanatragan khosker u djarer, tampanaganner maberu artiv krvadzner*, ed. Mikayel Gazmararian (G.Bolis [Istanbul] 1910), 7-18; Hrant, “Krikor Odian – ir tere Azk. Sahmanatrutian metch,” in: *ibid.*, 23-32; H. Ghazarian, art. “Odian, Kirkor Boghosi”, in: *Hay sovedagan bavrakidaran* [Armenian Soviet Encyclopaedia], 12: 578; Arthur Beylérian, “Krikor Odian (1834-1887): Un haut fonctionnaire ottoman. Homme des missions secrètes,” *Revue du monde arménien moderne et contemporain* 1 (1994), 45-86.

spiration and example.³³ In contrast, Turkish, like European and American historiography mentions him with barely a few lines, recognizing his special relationship to Midhat Paşa but usually without stressing his possibly crucial role in elaborating Midhat's constitution.³⁴

Krikor Odian was born on December 9, 1834 in Üsküdar as Krikor Misag Odian. His father's family originally came from Palu, later migrating to Kayseri. Odian's father, Boghos Ağa, was a very well-educated man. By profession, he was the secretary of the palace architect Krikor Balian. At the same time, he worked as administrator (*mütevelli*) of a foundation for Armenian churches and schools he had himself founded.

Krikor got his early schooling from his father, but soon Boghos Ağa left his son's education to the brothers Kapriel and Khatchadur Bardizbanian. Later the young Odian attended the private school of the language reformer and future editor of the influential newspaper *Masis*, Garabed Ütüdjian, where he had the opportunity to perfect his knowledge of classical as well as modern written Armenian. At the same time, he consolidated his knowledge of Ottoman Turkish with Oksen Shahinian and learned French with Andon Perteve, later even taking lessons from a Frenchman named Gardet, who was also employed by Sultan Abdülmecid as his private teacher. All of Odian's teachers noted his extraordinary talent. In the 1850s, Odian moved in the circles of the most important Armenian reformist intellectuals and politicians like Bardizbanian, Nigoghos Balian, Nahabed Rusinian, Parunag Bey, Krikor Aghaton and Mgrditch Beshigtashlian. Through these contacts he soon developed his own ideas for reform, cultural as well as political. His first works were related to the reform of the Armenian language. At the age of 17 he composed his first book, titled *Aratchargutiun ashkharbapar lezvi vra* (Suggestion for the modern Armenian language) and, together with Nahabed Rusinian, the bold outline of a modern Armenian grammar (*Ughghakhosutium*). Intertwined with his interest for language reform were his ideas for reforms in the political sphere. Consequently, he took on different tasks and functions in the 1860s in the administration of the Armenian *millet*. But Krikor Odian's greatest significance lies in the outstanding role he played in the process leading to the promulgation of the Armenian National [i.e. *millet*] Constitution of 1860/63.

³³ See for example Tcheraz, *Gensakragan miusionner*, 22 et al.

³⁴ See for example Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), 174-175. In their remarks on the Ottoman constitution the authors don't mention Odian or the Armenian *millet* and its constitution at all; cf. François Georgeon, *Abdühamid II. Le sultan calife (1876-1909)* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 62; Davison, however, discusses the significance of the Armenian *millet* constitution and Odian's role for the Ottoman constitution; cf. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 115, 289-290, 369 and idem, "The Milletts as Agents of Change in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire," in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2:319-337; see esp. 2:330.

At the same time, Odian also worked on the Ottoman state level. At the age of 20, convinced that Armenia's future lay only within the Muslim Ottoman Empire³⁵, he entered Ottoman state service, quickly rising to the rank of *mütemayiz* (the civil equivalent of military colonel). He spent the years 1864-66 at the side of Midhat Paşa in Rusçuk, as his advisor. In his function as director of political affairs, he assumed in fact the duties of a "foreign minister" of the province.³⁶ When Midhat became grand vizier, Odian remained in his service as counsellor and introduced him in his home to the most important Armenian reformers of his time, such as Servitchen, Dr. Kiatibian, who was also a physician, and Kevork Samandjian. In 1876, Krikor Odian was appointed to the State Council, now already with the rank of *bala* [the highest Ottoman civil rank]. When in 1877 the war with Russia broke out, Ottoman Armenians found themselves in a very precarious situation. During those difficult days, Odian acted as advisor to the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, Nerses Varjabedian, while turning his house into a meeting place for the leading figures of Armenian politics, Servitchen, Kiatibian, Mgrditch Portukalian, Hovhannes Sakız and Kevork Samandjian among others. Odian is also the author of the memorandum the Armenian delegation presented at the Berlin Congress.

After the Ottoman Constitution was suspended and especially after Midhat Paşa, with whose name his own political career was so closely connected, was deposed and banned, Krikor Odian feared his own persecution as well. In 1880 he fled the Ottoman capital settling in Paris, where he lived until his death. In his French exile, all too far from Ottoman politics, there was nothing else for him to do than follow French parliamentary debates, something he did with great interest. He also turned again to literature and contributed to the press, writing under the *nom de plume* of "Vahram." Over the years, Sultan Abdülhamid II made several attempts through his ambassadors in Paris to induce Odian to return to the Ottoman Empire, but Odian himself could never overcome his suspicions of Abdülhamid's government and remained in exile. He nevertheless kept close contact with his friends in Istanbul, above all Krikor Aghaton. They not only provided him with news and newspapers from his lost home but also helped Odian, who had never married, financially. On the 6th of August 1887 Odian died in Paris and was buried in Père Lachaise cemetery.

³⁵ Tcheraz, *Gensakragan miusionner*, 21-22. His optimism regarding the fate of the Armenians under Ottoman rule changed radically after the great disappointment of 1878, when reforms were promised but never introduced by the Ottomans nor effectively guaranteed by the European powers; *ibid.*, 23.

³⁶ Davison, "The *Millets* as Agents of Change," 327.

Vahan Bey (Efendi)

Vahan Bey (Efendi), originally Hovhannes Vahanian (1832-1891)³⁷, lost his father at the early age of ten. His mother, Nazlı Vahan Arzumanian, was exceptionally well educated, compared to other women of her generation. Even more unusual for her time were her activities in the public sphere. She made every possible effort to guarantee her two children, Hovhannes and Srpuhi (the later novelist Srpuhi Düsap Paşa), a higher education. She sent Hovhannes to Paris in 1848, where he studied chemistry. After his return to Istanbul in 1853, he joined the Armenian Educational Council, which had been founded the same year. There he met most of the young men who later became the champions of Armenian language renewal as well as the main protagonists of the Armenian constitutional movement. In 1866, he became a member of the Mixed Administrative Council of the Armenian *millet* (called mixed council because it was composed of Armenian clerics and laymen). His posts within the Armenian community were soon followed by positions in the Ottoman administration. In 1860, he was appointed a member of the newly formed Commercial Court; four years later, he became the president of the Supreme Commercial Court. In 1868, he was appointed vice-minister of Commerce; in 1869-71, he was a member of the *Abkam-ı Adliye* (Council of Judicial Ordinances); from 1871 on, he was also an advisor in the Ministry of Education. In 1872, he was made director of the *Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultani*.³⁸ The same year he changed his task as an advisor in the Ministry of Education for a similar post in the Ministry of Public Works, and was the same time appointed to the Reform Commission. In 1873, he changed positions again, going once again to the Ministry of Justice. Two years later he became counsellor in the same Ministry, a position he held until the end of his life. In the same year, 1875, he was appointed to the Council of State. In 1876-77, he served as Minister of Justice. In his capacity as advisor to the president of the *Abkam-ı Adliye*, a post he also acquired in 1876, he was sent to Europe to study legal codes of procedure, which might possibly serve as models for Ottoman use.³⁹ Like Krikor Odian and Servitchen, Hovhannes Vahanian was one of those members of a new Armenian elite who rose to high positions thanks to education and who always kept close contacts with literary life, working as writers in their free time.

³⁷ Teotig, *Amenun Daretsuytse*, vol. 21 (Paris, 1927), 566-568; cf. Art. Vahan êfênti in: IB-NÂrm., vol. 4.

³⁸ Cf. Adnan Şişman, art. "Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultani," in *Türkiye Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 13, (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1996), 323-326, here 325.

³⁹ Cf. also the report in *Masis*, February 17, 1877, 2 about his journey.

Tchamitch Ohannes Efendi

Tchamitch Ohannes Efendi, finally, was a member of the Council of State and above all a high official in the Ministry of Finance⁴⁰; later, he served also as Minister of Agriculture and Commerce⁴¹. He was apparently the initiator and one of the leading figures in founding the Ottoman Audit Office (*mubasebat dairesi*) in 1879. In 1881, he was appointed to the Advisory Committee for the Ottoman Public Debt Administration. An Armenian Catholic, he supported, like Mihran Düz, the anti-Hasun wing when it came to internal quarrels in the community over the question of Papal control.⁴² Appointed to the Drafting Commission for the Constitution in October 1876, he was a member of the commission's most important committee, the Editing or Drafting Committee.⁴³

The Mebusan (Members of Parliament)

Although some of the Armenian *mebusan* were without any doubt leading notables of their towns or regions, we know less about them. We are comparatively well informed about the two Istanbul *mebusan*, who belonged to the old Armenian ruling elite of *amiras*⁴⁴, who had established close relations with the sultans.

Hovhannes Allahverdian (1823-1915), in other versions of his name Allahverdi, Hüdaverdi, Khudaverdi, Hüdaverdian or Hüdaverdizade, belonged – like Mihran Düz – to one of the important Istanbul Armenian-Catholic *amira* families. His father, Apraham Asdvadzadurian⁴⁵ (in the Turkish translation of this name – Asdvadzadur means “the God-given” – he became “Allah verdi” or Allahverdian)⁴⁶ (1793-1861), born in Erzurum, apparently moved to Istanbul as a child and followed in his father's footsteps, becoming a banker. In this metier he rose to become one of the most successful and prominent financiers in Istanbul. In 1842, he helped found the Bank Society of Rumelia (one year later, a similar institution was created for Anatolia), which can be seen as the first sort of credit institute or bank proper. At the time, it combined credit allocation and tax-collection on behalf of the government. In 1853, together with Mihran Tchelebi Düz and other famous bankers, he founded the Ottoman Bank Society.⁴⁷ Again together

⁴⁰ Çark, *Ermeniler*, 207-208, 264.

⁴¹ Davison, *The Millets as Agents of Change*, 327.

⁴² Cf. Leon Arpee, *The Armenian Awakening. A History of the Armenian Church, 1820-1860* (Chicago and London 1909), 58; Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 119 n 17.

⁴³ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 370.

⁴⁴ For a general overview of the Armenian *amiras* see: Hagop Barsoumian, “The Dual Role of the Armenian *Amira* Class within the Ottoman Government and the Armenian *Millet* (1750-1850),” in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2:171-184.

⁴⁵ For his biography see Yeprem Boghosian, *Allahverdian kertasdane* (Vienna 1957), 63-72.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15, and 64-65.

⁴⁷ Cf. also Çark, *Ermeniler*, 242.

with Mihran Tchelebi Düz, Apraham Amira Allahverdi was appointed in 1857 to the Ottoman Commission for the Collection of Taxes in Arrears. In the Armenian community, Apraham Amira is remembered above all, as a patron and sponsor of Armenian cultural life.

His son, Hovhannes, was very thoroughly educated. He learned Turkish, Persian and French and, at an early age, was given the opportunity to expand his horizons in a long journey to Europe.⁴⁸ As for his profession, he followed his famous father and entered the world of finance and banking. At the same time, however, he also followed another family tradition, namely, the silk trade. A considerable part of the family's wealth had sprung from this business, based in Bilecik, as was the case with the Düzian family, part of whose business was taken over by the Allahverdians. Apart from these commercial activities Hovhannes Allahverdian entered Ottoman state service at an early age. In 1866, he rose to the rank of *mütemayiz*, a promotion orchestrated by the Armenian press of his time. In 1868, he was elected *kethüda* (headman or warden) of the Ottoman bankers. Later he was employed at the Audit Office and decorated with several medals. Obviously, he enjoyed special confidence at the Sultan's palace, since it was at the Sultan's instigation that Hovhannes Allahverdian was made vice-president of the new Ottoman parliament after having been elected as deputy in 1877.⁴⁹ Like his father before him, Hovhannes Allahverdian made a name for himself in his *millet*, assuming offices in the *millet* administration and making generous donations to the communities in Istanbul and various provinces. When the Armenian-Catholic *millet* was temporarily divided over the question of Bishop Hasun and the extent of Papal influence, Allahverdian lent his support to the "radical" (Hasunian) faction, in opposition to the Düzians and Hovhannes Tchamitch, who represented the anti-Hasunist group, considered as moderate or conservative.⁵⁰

Hagop Kazazian Efendi (Paşa) (1833-1891), who was elected to the second session of the parliament as deputy for Istanbul, also came from the circles of Armenian bankers in the capital. He was not, however, a member of one of the "noble," well-established *amira* families, but came from a modest background.⁵¹ Without the benefit of higher education, he worked his way up in banking. His first position was that of a tax collector for the Armenian Patriarchate. Later he worked for the municipality of Galata, before he entered the Ottoman Bank. There, he started working as a translator and rose to the office of chief translator of the Ottoman Bank. In this capacity, he made his first contacts with the Palace

⁴⁸ On Hovh. Allahverdian see Boghosian, *Allahverdian kertasdane*, 91-107; see also Çark, *Ermeniler*, 203, 113; a photograph is reproduced in Bodurian, *Hay hanrakidag*, 68.

⁴⁹ See also Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 162-163, esp. 163.

⁵⁰ Carmont, *Les amiras*, 141; Çark, *Ermeniler*, 264-265.

⁵¹ Çark, *Ermeniler*, 156-159 gives a biographical sketch (picture in *ibid.*, 157), cf. Bodurian, *Hay hanrakidag*, 427-428, *IBNArm*, vol. 2, art. "Gazazean, Yakob" and art. "K'azazean, Yakob;" Georgeon, *Abdülbamid*, 165-166.

and attracted the attention of Sultan Abdülhamid II, who employed him first – in January 1879 – as administrator of his private property, and five years later, transforming this post into a Ministry, as Minister of the Civil List with the rank and title of *paşa*. According to one source⁵², he was also a member of the Council of State. Like other Armenians who were high-ranking Ottoman officials, Hagop Paşa Kazazian, too, held different offices in the Armenian *millet* and was a member of the Armenian parliament.⁵³

About the third of the Istanbulot deputies, Sebuḥ Maksudian Efendi, we know little more than that he also seems to have been one of the leading notables of his city, and probably also came from a family of entrepreneurs or bankers⁵⁴; at any rate, he seems to have held one or another position within the Armenian *millet* administration. In June 1877 he is mentioned as deputy of Yeni Kapı (an Istanbul neighbourhood) for the Armenian *millet* parliament.⁵⁵ In general, little is known about the deputies who came from the provinces to the capital. About some of them, we learn that they were members of the administrative councils of their provinces, for example Manuḡ Karadjian (1837-1917)⁵⁶ from Aleppo, among his non-Armenian colleagues also known as Khatiba Shehir Kardja Zade Efendi, who served in the municipal council 1865-1870,⁵⁷ as well as Khatchadur Der-Nersesian from Erzurum, Hagop Sbartialian from Smyrna, Hagop Kazandjian from Rusçuk (*Tuna vilayeti*), Hovhannes Kürekian Efendi from Trabzon, Sahag (Ishak Efendi) Yavrumian from Bursa (Hüdavendigâr) and Mardinli Hovsep Kazazian Efendi

⁵² *IBNArm*, vol. 2, Art. K’azazean, Yakob. The same article gives his dates as 1831-ca. 1900, referring to Bodurian, p. 427-428, who, however, gives the dates 1831-1891. Cf. also the article “Gazazean, Yakob” in: *IBNArm*, vol. 2, which gives the dates 1833-1891, again referring to (among others) Bodurian, *Hay hanrakidag*. Bodurian has only the aforementioned single entry with the name Hagop Kazazian.

⁵³ Bodurian, *Hay hanrakidag*, 428.

⁵⁴ Çark, *Ermeniler*, 242 and 244 mentions him in the context of the foundation of the most important Ottoman credit institutes, in addition to Allahverdioglu Hoca Apraham, a certain Hoca Maksud Sarimian or Maksud Amira and – on *ibid*, 243 – a man named Maksudzade Sebuḥ Efendi as a leading member of the Ottoman naval company *Şirket-i Hayriye*. It is not clear whether this person is identical to the deputy Sebuḥ Maksudian or is related to him. Ter Minassian mentions a wealthy merchant family from Smyrna with the same name who later gained fame because of its spectacular bankruptcy (Anahide Ter Minassian, “Les Arméniens: Le dynamisme d’une petite communauté,” in *Smyrne, la ville oubliée? Mémoires d’un grand port ottoman. 1830-1930*, ed. Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis (Paris: Éd. Autrement, 2006), 79-91; the remark is *ibid*, 82). According to *Hayrenik* (Istanbul) of August 11, 1918, the wife of the Izmir deputy Sdepan Hagop Sbartialian was also a member of a Maksudian family, being the daughter of Maksud Simon Bey (maybe the same Simon Bey Maksudian mentioned in *Masis* of February 17, 1877 as an Armenian notable from Istanbul). In all cases it proved impossible to establish whether there was any relation to the Istanbul deputy Maksudian.

⁵⁵ *Masis*, June 2, 1877

⁵⁶ Dates according to the register of deaths of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Aleppo.

⁵⁷ Minas Nurikhan, *Jamanagagits Badmutiun, 19rt tar*, (Venedig 1909).

from the province of Diyarbekir⁵⁸. About others, we have the information that they were state officials in various functions. Murad Bey from Varna, who was sent as deputy for the Danube *vilayet* to the second session, was according to Devereux, a tax collector.⁵⁹ Others must have held high offices as well. Hagop Sbartialian Efendi from Izmir is mentioned as a “[long-time] member of the Grand Council [having] the rank of *bala*, or functionary of the first class.”⁶⁰ About Hovsep Kazazian from Mardin and Hagop Shahinian from Sivas, we lack any detailed information about their position so far; there exist, however, two photographs showing them dressed in Ottoman honorary uniforms with several decorations, so one can assume that they held high-ranking offices in their provinces as well.⁶¹ For others, again, we know that they had considerable wealth. The newspaper *Stamboul* reports about Hagop Sbartialian from Izmir on 26 February 1877: “Agop is rich, very rich, and has properties worth several millions.”⁶² The same report indicates another feature that was characteristic not only of Sbartialian: “He [Hagop] was a great friend of the late Hüseyin Avni Paşa, who enjoyed hospitality, while he was governor of Aydin, in Agop’s luxurious house.”⁶³ Similarly close relations to the Ottoman ruling elite as well as great wealth resulting from banking and international trade are mentioned in connection with the Erzurum deputy Hamazasb Bal-larian⁶⁴ and Krikor Bzdigian from Adana⁶⁵. Manug Karadjian from Aleppo is also known as a merchant with a high reputation among the local authorities.⁶⁶ About

⁵⁸ Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, appendices B and C.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, appendix C; *Türk Parlamento Tarihi*, 2:19 lists Murad Bey without additional information not as Armenian but as Muslim.

⁶⁰ *Stamboul*, February 26, 1877, quoted in Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 265.

⁶¹ See the photographs of Shahinian in Sarkis Boghosian, *Iconographie Arménienne*, vol. 2, (Paris 1998), 250-251. One of them shows the deputy in circa 1880 in Sivas. He is a man between 30 and 40 wearing the uniform of Ottoman officials of a certain rank with saber and *fez*, portrayed in an atelier with the typical background combining the symbols of tradition and modernity: the floor is covered with Oriental carpets, Shahinian sits on a European-style armchair, behind him stands a little table with a Turkish mocca set, beside him stands a clock, the object which, more than any other, symbolizes the new age in the Ottoman Empire. For the other photograph, taken in Sivas in 1898, the recently deceased patriarch of an extended family and important household was dressed for the last time in his honorary uniform and placed on a chair amidst his entire family and the personnel of his household. Yet another photograph of Shahinian, most probably taken in Istanbul during his tenure as deputy, is reproduced in Arsen Yarman, *Osmanlı Sağlık Hizmetlerinde Ermeniler ve Surp Pırgıç Ermeni Hastanesi Tarihi* (Istanbul: Surp Pırgıç Ermeni Hastanesi Vakfı, 2001), 63. On the same page there is also a portrait of the Diyarbekir deputy Hovsep Kazazian also dressed in an Ottoman honorary uniform with four medals on his chest.

⁶² Quoted from Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 265.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Ghazar-Tcharik, *Garinabadum. Hushamadian Partsr Hayki* (Beirut 1957), 394; cf. *ibid.* 402 and 395 (photograph), and Mesrob K. Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire 1860-1908* (London, etc.: Routledge & Kegan, 1977), 44.

⁶⁵ See his biography below.

⁶⁶ Armenian Church Register, Aleppo, entry about Manug Karadjian; Haig Barigian and Hovnan Varjabedian, *Badmutiun Surio Hay Dbaranmeru* (Aleppo 1973), 159.

Rupen Yazidjian, the deputy from Edirne, finally, the newspaper *Masis* informs its readers of the rumour that his wife is the sister of the Armenian patriarch.⁶⁷

For the time being, this is all the available information. Of a total of 21 Armenian deputies who were members of the Ottoman parliament throughout its existence, there still remain five about whom we know nothing beyond their names and confessions.⁶⁸ Furthermore, our information about some of the others is too scanty to allow any significant conclusion. Yet a certain profile of the Armenian deputies to the first Ottoman parliament becomes apparent from the information we have.

Some of them belonged to the well-established *amira* class, which emerged during the 18th century as the upper crust of Armenian society in the imperial capital. But the vast majority of the deputies came from circles which rose up as new elites as a result of the radical changes of the reform era. Most accumulated wealth through trade, especially long-distance and international trade, and banking, that is, through the very same professions that had made possible the rise of the *amiras* a century before. The high proportion of *sarrafs* and merchants among the Armenian deputies is striking. But, in addition, a new political career pattern based on thorough and modern education becomes visible (although this is much truer of the members of the drafting commission than of the *mebusan* or *ayan*).

The second characteristic of the Armenian deputies of the first Ottoman parliament is the high percentage of those who were members of administrative bodies in their provinces of origin or had served as state officials before being elected to parliament; this was also a new career pattern that produced new elites over time. One reason for their over-representation lies in the election procedure in the provinces. It was the members of these new administrative bodies, not the populace, who exercised the right to vote; candidates, moreover, had to be elected with votes from all confessions.⁶⁹ Bearing this background in mind, it seems all too natural that the attention of the electors was monopolized by those local notables who were visible not only to the people of their own *millet*, but in an *Ottoman* public sphere, first of all their own colleagues, members of the provincial administrative councils, Ottoman state officials, and finally those who stood out by virtue of their wealth.

⁶⁷ *Masis*, January 23, 1877.

⁶⁸ These were, from the deputies of the first session, Mikayel Altıntop from Ankara (Armenian-Apostolic), and from the deputies of the second session, Kevork Efendi from Sivas (Armenian Apostolic), Giragos Kazandjian Efendi from Erzurum (Armenian Apostolic), a certain Hagop Efendi from Kayseri (Armenian Apostolic) and Melkon Donelian (Doniloğlu) from Ankara (Armenian Apostolic). About Sebuhs Maksudian Efendi, one can at least assume from some scattered hints that he may have been one of the leading notables of his community, about Taniel Kharadjian Efendi from Erzurum, we know from some notices in the newspaper with certainty that he was one of the important Armenian notables in his town (cf. *Masis*, March, 20, 1877, *passim*)

⁶⁹ See above.

In many cases, one can assume that wealth, reputation and public office were mutually dependent. It seems that, more often than not, public offices and honorary posts – in the Armenian community or Ottoman bodies – were offered to persons not because of their special qualifications or experience, but because of their wealth, especially to those among the rich who were known as generous donors to charitable institutions.⁷⁰ It may well be that parliamentary seats were passed from one family member to another. At any rate, when the Ottoman parliament was re-opened in 1908, there was again a Melkon Donelian representing the Ankara province, as well as Sdepan Sbartalian (Istepan Spartalian), who was the son of 1877 deputy Hagop Sbartalian, representing the *vilayet* of Aydın.⁷¹ In Donelian's case, however, his relation to his namesake of the same place of origin from the day of the first *meşrutiyet* has yet to be examined.

Another important characteristic of the Armenian members of parliament was their good knowledge of Ottoman Turkish, a skill that also suggests a high degree of integration into Ottoman society at least of the Armenian elites, if not of the community as a whole. Their ability to master the official Ottoman language of state is often stressed in the description of the Armenian deputies.⁷² In many other cases, their language skills become obvious in their active contribution to parliamentary debates.⁷³ With regard to the interrelation of the degree of integration into the Ottoman state and society and the assumption of public functions, the overrepresentation of Catholic Armenians in the Ottoman parliament is another significant fact. Of 21 Armenian deputies, at least three, if not more, were Catholic; among the three *ayan*, there is, again, one Catholic; and of the three members of the Drafting Commission for the Constitution, one is also Catholic.⁷⁴ An ex-

⁷⁰ See, for example, the obituary of Sdepan Sbartalian in *Hayrenik* (Istanbul), August 11, 1918. Generally speaking, it is striking to what extent donations to charitable institutions are stressed in biographical sketches and obituaries of notables. The discussion in the media about whether or not Sbartalian was to be buried inside the compound of the Armenian Hospital in Istanbul shows how much this kind of large-scale generosity was expected and explicitly demanded in return for symbolic honours and reputation within the community (*Hayrenik*, August 15, 1918, August 18, 1918, August 19, 1918).

⁷¹ About the latter cf. the short entry in *Türk Parlamento Tarihi*, 2:259.

⁷² See, for instance, *Masis*, March 24, 1877. Generally it should be mentioned in this context that, in the non-Turkish population of the Ottoman Empire, linguistic assimilation was obviously most advanced among the Armenians and Jews. Cf. Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908* (Leiden, etc.: Brill, 2001), 129; Carter V. Findley, "The Acid Test of Ottomanism: The Acceptance of Non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Bureaucracy," in: *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2:339-368, here 350; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* (München: Beck, 2000), 107-108.

⁷³ Manug Karadjian, the Armenian deputy of Aleppo, provides a good example. Among the Armenians in parliament, he is one of the most active. Sebuğ Maksudian of Istanbul should also be mentioned in this respect.

⁷⁴ The Catholic *mebusan* were Hovsep Kazazian, Rupen Yazdjian and Hovhannes Allahverdian; the Catholic Armenian among the *ayan* was Mihran Düz while the Catholic member of the Drafting Commission was Hovhannes Tchamitch.

planation may be the general attitude of the Armenian Catholic community towards the Ottoman state. In the situation of conflict and competition with the Armenian Apostolic Church, they tended to draw closer to the Ottoman state, which presumably resulted in an even higher degree of integration and assimilation. It may well be that the Porte and the palace preferred the Catholics to the Apostolic Armenians, just as they may have favoured the Armenians in general over the Greeks.⁷⁵ But neither the Sultan nor the government were the ones to vote, and the voters in the capital as well as the electors in the provinces proved independent enough to vote for candidates critical of official politics, and even to re-elect them to the second session. Therefore, looking at the distribution of seats among the non-Muslim communities, apart from their degree of assimilation, the most decisive criterion was perhaps the extent to which a community was regarded as a political risk in a day of separatist nation-building processes. Moreover, the constant glance towards Europe that seems to have accompanied the whole process of drafting the constitution and parliamentary work may have been of some importance as well.⁷⁶ What is obvious for the appointments to the senate, namely the preference for high-ranking personalities who were well known to palace and government and enjoyed their confidence, is likely to have played a certain role in the election of the deputies as well, if only indirectly. The indication of close contacts of many of the deputies with the highest representatives of the Ottoman provincial governments suggests this.

The opening of the Ottoman state apparatus to non-Muslims was a new phenomenon in the period of the first *meşrutiyet*. Almost four decades after the beginning of the *tanzimat*-reforms, a growing number of non-Muslims, among them many Armenians, occupied administrative posts of lower rank. Non-Muslims also made their contribution to the newly created administrative councils in the towns and provinces. Yet only a very few non-Muslims had attained higher-ranking posts.⁷⁷ When one studies the Armenians among these few high-ranking non-Muslims, one encounters the same handful of names time and again, already familiar to the reader: Hagop Paşa Kazazian, Vahan Efendi, Odian Efendi, Artin Paşa Dadian, and Portakal Paşa. Sultan Abdülhamid II, trying to defend himself

⁷⁵ Cf. the heated debate in the newspapers about an alleged Turkish-Armenian plot against the Greeks during the poll for the Istanbul deputies which ultimately led to the appointment of the Armenian deputy Servitchen to the Senate and the election of another Greek deputy in his place. *Masis* devotes a whole series of long and often acerbic articles to this affair; cf. *Masis*, March 6, 1877, March 17, 1877, March 22, 1877, March 24, 1877, April 7, 1877, April 14, 1877, etc. On the question of the replacement of Greeks in Ottoman service by Armenians in the second half of the nineteenth century, cf. Shaw and Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, 200; Geogon, *Abdülhamid*, 323.

⁷⁶ For the latter point see Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 125, 141-143.

⁷⁷ Geogon, *Abdülhamid II*, 323; Findley, *The Acid Test of Ottomanism*; Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire*; about the administrative reforms in general cf. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*; Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980).

against allegations of his anti-Armenian prejudices, proudly mentioned these names in order to emphasize that there were also Armenians among his high-ranking officials.⁷⁸ The very same handful of names have been repeated over and over again since – whenever there is a need to demonstrate the participation of non-Muslims in Ottoman politics. But the constant repetition of the same few names only shows the extent to which they remained an exception. These few confidants then often assumed not only one, but several positions, and finally they were appointed to the senate as well.

Many of the Armenian deputies started their public service careers with posts in the Armenian *millet*-administration, moving up to Ottoman state service. Some of the Armenian deputies from the provinces were at the same time agents of the Istanbul Patriarchate. But they were not necessarily the leading figures of the Armenian community in their provinces as well. Many of those Armenian personalities who played a significant role for their *millet*, be it as important donors, founders of schools or charitable institutions such as orphanages, hospitals, etc., or be it as leading intellectuals, writers or teachers – in short, many of those who were later remembered as leaders of their community in whatever function – had nothing whatsoever to do with the Ottoman administration. The Armenian Ottoman deputies were, without doubt, among the wealthiest members of their community; most of them were engaged in businesses that required close ties to the Ottoman authorities. As such, they were part of the economic elite of their *millets*. But not all members of this economic elite dedicated their wealth – or at least a part of it – to the development of their community.

With the little we generally know about the lives of the Armenian deputies from the provinces – in one case, however, that of Khatchadur Der-Nersesian from Erzurum, coincidence gives us a more detailed biography.⁷⁹ Without any doubt, his multi-faceted career was exceptional in a way, yet many aspects of it seem paradigmatic for the career-pattern of the new elites which had come up with the modernizing reforms and now also formed a majority among the Armenian – and not only the Armenian – *mebusan*.

Khatchadur Der-Nersesian Khan-Efendi was born in Bitlis in 1810. There is no indication about his family belonging to the local elite. In any case he owed his education not to the means of his family but to the patronage of the high-ranking cleric (and later patriarch) Hovhannes Movsesian, who supported him when he came to Istanbul together with his father at the age of 16. But instead of becoming a priest, Khatchadur Der-Nersesian devoted himself to trade, first moving to

⁷⁸ Georgeon, *Abdülbamid*, 282-283.

⁷⁹ Teotig, *Amenun Daretsuytse* vol. 6 (Istanbul, 1912), 404-405 (with photograph). It should be mentioned that Çark, *Ermeniler*, 174, takes Der-Nersesian's biography and photograph from Teotig, but wrongly attributes the photograph to a military doctor of the same name (*ibid.*, 228). Also Krikorian, *Armenians in the Service of the Ottoman Empire*, 44, obviously takes his summarized information on Der-Nersesian from Teotig.

Alexandropol (today's Giumri in the Republic of Armenia, called Leninagan during Soviet times), where he married the daughter of a local merchant. He then went to Erzurum, where he started cooperating with two merchant companies, expanding his trade to Persia. During a stay in Tavriz (Tabriz in northwestern Iran), he apparently offered his services to the Persian government, eventually being awarded the title of *khan*. After he returned to Erzurum (Garin) successfully, he sought to move closer to the Ottoman authorities while pursuing his commercial activities, and soon entered Ottoman state service. He assumed the position of head of the customs office, first in Erzurum, and later in Van. For many years he was also a member of the administrative council of his province. He was one of the first non-Muslims to receive an Ottoman state award. But Der-Nersesian offered his services not only to the Persian and then the Ottoman government; ultimately, he also started working for the Russian Empire, acting as translator for the Russian consulate in Erzurum. Within the Armenian *millet*, too, he held various offices. He started as a member of the Church Council; after the inauguration of the Armenian constitution, he became a member of the Armenian Provincial Council and the Political Committee, acting also as chairman of the latter for some time. The Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople sent him to Aghtamar as its inspector. His election to the Ottoman parliament brought him back to Istanbul. After the Chamber of Deputies was closed, Der-Nersesian remained in the capital, where he again assumed office in the Political Committee of the central administration of the Armenian *millet* during the 1880s. After a long life, he died in Constantinople on March 15, 1895.

Similarly, one can see the careers of the Izmir *mebus*, Hagop Sbartialian, and the deputy from Adana, Krikor Bzdigian, as exemplary for the type of Armenian deputy who gained wealth through trade – often international, large-scale trade – or banking, appeared in his own community as a generous donor and patron, and, as a result, was first invited to join the public service in his community, and, later, to assume functions also in Ottoman state service.

Hagop Sbartialian came from a family of textile merchants from Izmir. The Sbartialians, or Spartali, were among the few wholesale merchants who were able to expand their business despite growing competition, and import their goods directly from Manchester, where a branch of the Spartali Company was opened in 1857.⁸⁰ In his hometown Izmir, he and his brother Hovhannes were the principal donors for the Armenian schools and the Armenian hospital. Their statues stood in front of the hospital building.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ter Minassian, *Les Arméniens: Le dynamisme d'une petite communauté*, 82; George, *Merchants in Exile*, 23; cf. also Yarman, *Osmanlı Sağlık Hizmetlerinde Ermeniler*, 391.

⁸¹ Yarman, *Osmanlı Sağlık Hizmetlerinde Ermeniler*, 394 provides a photograph of the statues of the Sbartiali brothers taken in 1866.

Krikor Bzdigian was a member of one of the most influential Armenian families of Adana.⁸² The history of the Bzdigian family can be traced back to the beginning of the 17th century, when, after the Persian invasion of the Eastern Armenian lands, the five sons of the priest Bzdigents Der Harutiun Kahana resisted Shah Abbas' famous deportation of the Nakhitchevan Armenians to Isfahan and were spread throughout the Ottoman lands. One of them, Arakel Bzdigian, came to Adana, where he was ordained as a priest like his father. He soon developed a close relationship with the local governor and thus gained a governmental position and wealth. His grandson, Avedik (or Avedis) Ağa Bzdigian (1751-1862), was the chief treasurer of Adana province. During the Egyptian occupation of Cilicia he gained the confidence of Ibrahim Paşa. Through his political influence his three brothers were appointed to various commercially important posts and consequently not only became very rich and accumulated vast land possessions but also lay the foundation for a very successful long distance trade with agricultural products, mainly tobacco.

The only son of Avedik Ağa was Krikor Bzdigian, the Ottoman *mebus*. Krikor Bzdigian seems to have been one of those few who were critical of the Ottoman war against Russia in 1877/78 and advocated a peaceful solution instead. Puzant Yeghiayan, drawing mainly on the orally transmitted and written memoirs of a number of Armenians from Adana, reports that Krikor Bzdigian, initially having provoked the Sultan's suspicion with his proposals, after the fall of Plevna was given an award and an honorary sabre for what was then considered political realism. Yeghiayan also informs us about Krikor Bzdigian's especially close relationship to the Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim Paşa. According to Yeghiayan, Mahmud Nedim Paşa received Bzdigian as his guest during the latter's time in Istanbul and later visited Bzdigian at his private estate at Bahçeli-Dam, around three hours away from the city of Adana, during his term as governor of Adana province. Bzdigian's pro-Russian political orientation may be seen in this context.

Like many other Armenian deputies, Krikor Bzdigian was also known as "a pious Armenian loving his Church and his people,"⁸³ a formulation that indicates his activity as donor for Armenian community institutions. About his private life we know that he was married to a certain Markrid, who was a member of a notable and very wealthy Greek family by the name of Nikoloğlu. After her marriage with Bzdigian, the whole family converted from the Greek Orthodox faith to the Armenian Apostolic Church, changing their name to Nigolian. Bzdigian had three sons, Bedros, Mgrditch and Mikayel, among whom especially Bedros seems to have played an important role in the Armenian community of Adana.

⁸² The following biographical sketch is based on the information given in Puzant Yeghiayan [Püzant Yeghiaian], *Adanayi Hayots badmutiun* (Antelias 1970), 923-924.

⁸³ Yeghiayan, *Adanayi Hayots badmutiun*, 924.

A similar case is the biography of the Erzincan deputy, Giragos Kazandjian. A merchant, he expanded his business in the 1870s and 1880s to all over Cilicia and Western Armenia. The fact that he participated in and even presided over several meetings of the Provincial Council in Aleppo during his stay there in 1879-1880 indicates Kazandjian's activity in the political field. But unlike the other merchant-politicians whose biographical sketches are given above, Kazandjian was also known as a journalist. From the various places he travelled, he regularly contributed to the Armenian press of Istanbul and Izmir. Later, he collected his articles and published them in a separate volume.⁸⁴

* * *

Further research will hopefully reveal more information about the Armenian deputies of the first constitutional period. Perhaps an obituary will be found in the Armenian newspapers of the day; some lines may have been written on the occasion of an award accorded to one of the deputies or an important donation he made. But the fact remains that there is – contrary to the biographies of the deputies of the second *meşrutiyet*, which we know, by and large – a striking gap both in historiography as well as in the sources.

Turkish – and, generally, Ottomanist – historiography has only recently begun (for many reasons which cannot be discussed here in detail) to give more attention to the non-Turkish and non-Muslim groups of the Ottoman Empire. Within these communities, again, the Armenians are among those, which are particularly neglected. Present Turkish and Ottomanist research does not even know the complete names and dates of birth and death of the deputies discussed here.⁸⁵ Even the Ottoman sources of the time (at least those accessible to date) know little about them. So far, no new information about the Armenian deputies of the first *meşrutiyet* has emerged from the Ottoman state archive. In future, this may change, since more and more documents are being made accessible, most notably the *sicill-i abval* registers, which are already catalogued but have not been used in studies of the 1877 parliament yet⁸⁶. Similarly, the Turkish (i.e. Turkish-language) newspapers of the period have not been studied systematically with respect to prosopographic data about the late-19th century Ottoman elites. Moreover, the Ottoman biographical encyclopaedias include entries on hardly any non-Muslims, whatever important positions in state or society they may have held.

⁸⁴ Ghazandjian, Giragos S, *Kharn namagner ughevortian* (Istanbul: M. G. Sarnian, 1886)

⁸⁵ Cf. the data given in *Türk Parlamento Taribi*, 2:4-5. The list printed there gives incomplete names and no dates of birth and death at all. The prosopographical part has entries on Servitchen and Apraham, but not on Mihran Düz. None of the Armenian *mebusan* are to be found there.

⁸⁶ Looking through the *sicill-i abval* catalogues available to date, I could not trace entries about any of the Armenian deputies so far.

For instance, in the *sicill-i osmani*⁸⁷ one searches in vain for anything about Krikor Odian, Hagop Paşa Kazazian, Mihran Düz (or any of his family or other *amiras*), Ohannes Tchamitch or Vahan Bey. That Turkish historiography, but above all contemporary Ottoman sources, pay so little attention to these men tells us more about the overall relationship between the majority or Turkish-Muslim ruling elite and the (not necessarily numerical, but sociological) minority of Armenians or non-Muslims in general than it tells us about the activities or significance of the non-Muslim notables. But since we have barely any account of many of the Muslim and even some of the Turkish deputies, this attitude cannot be the sole, and is perhaps not even the primary reason for our ignorance. Perhaps the short episode of the first Ottoman parliament was not regarded as having the same importance that we attribute to it now in the retrospective view.

As for the available Armenian sources, one has to look first to the contemporary press. In the provinces there was no Armenian press in the period of the first constitution; not even the short-lived periodicals that had appeared before were still in existence.⁸⁸ The only and, as such, all the more remarkable exception was Smyrna (Izmir), which in the period had one daily newspaper, the *Arsbaluys Araradian*, and a weekly magazine with the title *Arevelian mamul*.⁸⁹ The Armenian press in the capital, however, was plentiful. Since the 1830s, roughly one hundred Armenian newspapers and journals had been founded, not all of them of course continuing down to 1877. Around 1877 several daily newspapers and weekly political magazines were still being published, among them the weekly journals *Puntch* and *Hayrenik* as well as the daily papers *Manzume-i efkar* (published in Turkish written in the Armenian alphabet), *Nor tar* (published half in Armenian and half in Turkish in Armenian script), *Lrakir*, and finally, *Masis*, were the most important.⁹⁰ Of these papers, *Masis* has been chosen for the purposes of the present study, since it was probably the single most representative and important newspaper of its time, because, to begin with, of the number of readers it had in the capital and many provinces. Almost no other paper was published without interruption under the conditions of a continuously stricter Ottoman censorship although this was the case with *Masis*; hardly any other paper contributed as much to the development of the modern (West-) Armenian literary language as did *Masis*; few journalists of the day enjoyed such a good reputation across the bounda-

⁸⁷ Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani yahud tezkere-i meşahir-i osmaniye*, 4 vols. (Istanbul: Matbaa-i amire, 1308-1311), and the Turkish translation by Nuri Akbayar (ed. and transl.), *Sicill-i Osmani yahud tezkere-i meşahir-i osmaniye*, 6 vols. (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı, 1996).

⁸⁸ See A. Giragosian, *Hay barperagan mamuli madenakrutium (1794-1967)* (Yerevan 1970), 552-554.

⁸⁹ Giragosian, *Hay barperagan mamuli madenakrutium*, 58, 218 and 546; cf. also Vahé Oshagan, "Modern Armenian Literature and Intellectual History from 1700 to 1915," in: *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2:139-174, here 2:160.

⁹⁰ Giragosian, *Hay barperagan mamuli madenakrutium*, 546-547, cf. also 92, 121, 132, 144 and 182.

ries of the various (Armenian) confessional groups as did its editor and chief contributor Garabed Ütüdjian as a balanced, though critical observer. At the same time, *Masis* functioned as the official gazette of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople and the organ of the Armenian *millet*-administration, for it was founded in 1852 as a successor to the official organ of the Patriarchate *Hayasdan*, which nevertheless had complete financial and journalistic independence from the Patriarchate and the National (*millet*) Assembly. Garabed Ütüdjian was considered to be a "progressive and liberal, but at the same time cautious and modest," "semi-conservative," someone who, "within the framework and limits of the law, defended the rights and well-being of the [Armenian] nation enthusiastically and advocated courageous ideas, yet with such adroitness," that he was able to spare *Masis* over decades the fate of being repressed and closed.⁹¹

Masis carefully followed everything involving the new parliament. It covered the elections of the electors, and later, of the deputies in Istanbul. Again it commented on the appointment of the senators, and, finally, provided information about the election of the provincial deputies.⁹² When the chamber of deputies began its work, *Masis* reported regularly and extensively on the debates in parliament, paying especially close attention to the contributions of the Armenian members.⁹³ Their participation in the debates was regarded as an honour for the whole Armenian people.⁹⁴ "With satisfaction and, above all, pride, we see that, of the non-Muslim members of the Chamber, the Armenian deputies contribute

⁹¹ Zartarian, *Hishadagaran*, 85-89 (art. "Garabed Ütüdjian (1823-1904);" citation *ibid.*, 86). Cf. Teotig, *Amenun Daretsuytse* (1921), 315; Oshagan, "Modern Armenian Literature," 158, who characterizes *Masis* as "most influential daily of the [Armenian] community." Cf. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 121.

⁹² *Masis* January 20, 1877 (preparation for the parliamentary elections); January 23, 1877 (elections in Edirne); January 30, 1877 (about the elections in Istanbul with an urgent appeal to take part in the elections and some strategic considerations concerning them); February 17, 1877 (elections in Yanya, *vilayet* Tuna, Selanik, Bosnia, Edirne, Scutari, Sivas and Erzurum); February 22, 1877 (elections in Istanbul and Aleppo); February 27, 1877 (elections in Istanbul and Izmir); March 1, 1877 (elections in Istanbul); March 3, 1877 (meeting of the electors in Istanbul and election of the deputies); March 6, 1877 (resignation of some); March 8, 1877 (again meeting of the Istanbul electors); March 13, 1877 (postponement of the opening of the parliament); March 20, 1877 (opening of the parliament, its work schedule, appointment of the senators, outcome of the elections in Diyarbekir and Erzurum); March 22, 1877 (meeting of the Istanbul electors); March 24, 1877 (on the deputies of Erzurum); March 29, 1877 (arrival of the deputies Kharadjian from Erzurum and Shahinian from Sivas in Istanbul); April 3, 1877 (appointment of Hovhannes Allahverdi as vice-president of the parliament, appointment of Kastro to the Senate and irritations about the Greek deputy Zoghrafou Efendi); April 7, 1877 (alleged resignation of Zoghrafos and arrival of Ballarian in Istanbul); April 12, 1877 (swearing in of the newly arrived deputies); April 17, 1877 (departure of Zoghrafos and election of his successor), etc.

⁹³ *Masis*, March 22, 1877 and March 24, 1877 (the Sultan's speech at the opening of the parliament, first sessions of chamber of deputies and senate); and the issues of March 27, March 29, March 31, April 3, April 7, April 12 of the same year, etc. (reports on the sessions of the Ottoman parliament).

⁹⁴ Cf. for example the report on the Istanbul deputies in *Masis*, March 3, 1877.

most to the discussions presenting ingeniously inspired ideas and useful suggestions,” Ütüdjian commented on their work.⁹⁵ In his remark one can also see his delight over the fact that the Armenians were more progressive than any other Ottoman people in terms of political participation. In this sense, the editor of *Masis* had appealed previously to the Armenians, “the first constitutional people of Turkey,” to act accordingly and participate in Ottoman elections, procedures and institutions.⁹⁶ Likewise, *Masis* reported with satisfaction and a touch of Ottoman national pride on the success of the Ottoman parliament and the positive impression it left on European observers, writing: “In Europe, the Ottoman parliamentary debates have made a profound impression [...], [because] people there believed that everything is passed without objection or opposition. Then they saw that this is not the case. In the Ottoman parliament real debates are taking place. The European newspapers approve the Muslim deputies above all.”⁹⁷

The appeal to the Armenian voters to take the elections seriously as well as the appeal to the deputies to assume their duties even if that involved personal sacrifice also expresses the deep belief in the significance and utility of parliamentary work. Ütüdjian as well as a large segment of the Armenian elite optimistically hoped for Ottoman commitment and ability to reform. And they were convinced that, in this context, both the contribution of the Armenian deputies would be of some use for the Ottoman fatherland, and, their work in parliament would provide an important chance to improve the situation of the Armenians of the Empire and promote the cause of the Armenian nation. Therefore, the argument ran, the best and most qualified members of the community should be elected.⁹⁸ A very telling example of this conviction is offered by the almost suppliant request to Servitchen not to resign from office because “his talent and education could be of great weight and he could consequently be of much use to the Ottoman [father]land and Armenian people.”⁹⁹ The same attitude – optimism and enthusiasm for an indigenous Ottoman modernisation in which the creation of parliament and high esteem for its work played an important part – was also expressed in the strict rejection of any foreign intervention designed to further reform, for it was all too obvious that intervening in the name of much-needed reforms served more as a pretext for imperial ambitions than helping the Ottoman Christians.¹⁰⁰ Beyond this basic consent, the Armenian deputies did not always share the same opinions, as, for example, the debate of March 26 shows, when it came to a dispute between Ohannes Allahverdi and other Armenian members of parlia-

⁹⁵ *Masis*, March 29, 1877.

⁹⁶ *Masis*, January 30, 1877.

⁹⁷ *Masis*, April, 14, 1877.

⁹⁸ Cf. for example *Masis*, March 6, 1877, March 8, 1877, etc.

⁹⁹ *Masis*, March 6, 1877; previously rumours had come up about Servitchen’s possible resignation.

¹⁰⁰ See below.

ment.¹⁰¹ Often the Armenians in parliament also tried to mediate between the Muslim deputies and other Christians.¹⁰²

None of these reports, however, provides much biographical information. The senators and Istanbul deputies were probably so well known to the readers of *Masis* as leading notables of the community that the paper did not deem it necessary to introduce them to its readership. About the provincial deputies, on the other hand, the paper itself did not know much at all. This ignorance shows through in vague remarks or in a footnote attributed to an uncertain source. Thus *Masis* reports on 23 January 1877: "The deputies for the province of Adrianople have already been chosen: four Turks, two Greeks one Armenian and one Bulgarian. The Armenian deputy is Rupen Efendi," and adds, diffidently, in a footnote: "He is the Patriarch's sister's husband, people say."¹⁰³ After the results of the Diyarbekir poll became known, the newspaper could only reproduce the names without comment or contextualisation. "One Muslim with the name of Hadji Mesud Efendi" was elected as was "Hovsep Efendi Kazazian, of Armenian stock."¹⁰⁴ More indicative, however, is the information the paper gives about those deputies it knows well. "The two last-named Armenians are in every sense worthy persons, with their high education, enlightened views, and patriotism," *Masis* tells its readers, for example, about the newly elected representatives of Erzurum Taniel Kharadjian and Hamazasb Efendi Ballarian on 20 March 1877, confirming this assessment four days later by means of a letter from Erzurum which states: "For the parliament that will be convened next March in Constantinople, Kharadjian Medz[abadi]v Taniel Efendi and Ballarian Hamazasb Efendi were elected as members by the Christians of this province. Both have profound knowledge of the Turkish language and, with their firm familiarity with the laws will undoubtedly be able to master the office bestowed on them."¹⁰⁵ A biographical summary, the profession, personal and social background, and even confession of the deputies appear irrelevant to the correspondent. However, it seems important to him to report on their educational level, Turkish language skills, knowledge of the Ottoman body politic and its laws, and, finally, integrity and reputation. Ütüdjian thus assures his readers even in the case of the sufficiently well-known Istanbul

¹⁰¹ *Masis*, March 29, 1877; cf. Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 16-39. There is a certain incongruence between the coverage of *Masis* and the proceedings concerning date and content of the parliamentary debates. According to the proceedings, the date of the debate mentioned here was March 26; *Masis* summarizes not only the lengthy speech of Sebuğ Maksudian, but also reports long contributions of Manuğ Karadjian and Rupen that the official proceedings as given by Us do not mention.

¹⁰² For instance, regarding the language dispute during the session of 28 March, but 31 March according to *Masis*, (Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 52-53; cf. also the report in *Masis*, April 3, 1877) or in the debate on the *vilayet* law of 1 April, where Manuğ Karadjian and Sebuğ Maksudian offered compromise proposals (Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 66-70; *Masis*, April 7, 1877).

¹⁰³ *Masis*, January 23, 1877.

¹⁰⁴ *Masis*, March 20, 1877.

¹⁰⁵ *Masis*, March 24, 1877.

deputies: “We are glad that the Constantinople deputies are in every sense extraordinary and independent personalities who defend the true interests of the country and the just rights of the people with dignity, and, with their genius and free spirit bring honour to the Armenian nation.”¹⁰⁶ However, foreign observers report on the Ottoman deputies in much the same vein. A British consular report from Trabzon, for instance, says nothing about the biography and background of the deputy Hovhannes Kürekian Efendi, mentioning only that he is “a man of sound judgement, who, with the knowledge of the wants of the populations in this province, might make suggestions of a very acceptable character.”¹⁰⁷

Before examining contemporary newspapers and archives, one would of course be inclined to assume that research of this sort perhaps has been done by Armenian historians. Armenian historiography, however, mentions only the names of the Armenian deputies, if it mentions them at all.¹⁰⁸ Some explanation for this is to be found in the specific conditions of Armenian historiography after World War I. Many Armenian reference works were not written by professional historians. Under the conditions of genocide – which had affected the intellectual elite above all – and dispersion, and without a state which could provide the necessary structure for professional research, the Armenians could hardly produce a well-developed historiography. Many history books were written by learned priests, physicians, or engineers and journalists. Most remarkable are the numerous memorial volumes about the lost land. These are often thick books written by survivors of the catastrophe out of a deep consciousness of irretrievable loss, filled with all the memories, stories and histories their authors were able to collect from various sources, beginning with their own memories, oral legends and testimony from their scattered surviving compatriots, and research in all sorts of contemporary written sources. They are compilations of local history, traditions, customs and dishes, songs, dialects, geographical, climatic and agricultural conditions, anecdotes, and biographies of notable or famous compatriots. They are elaborate and learned in some cases,¹⁰⁹ simpler in many others. These books are in many ways real treasure-troves, yet they have never been systematically studied until now. Nevertheless, on the Armenian deputies to the first Ottoman parliament they hardly contain a line.¹¹⁰ The possibilities of Soviet Armenian historiography were

¹⁰⁶ *Masis*, March 3, 1877.

¹⁰⁷ Bilotti (Trabzon) to Derby, November 29, 1877, cited in Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 275.

¹⁰⁸ For example H. Dj. Siruni, *Bolis yev ir tere*, vol. 3, (Antelias 1987), 492, and vol. 4, (Antelias 1988), 293.

¹⁰⁹ Noteworthy above all are the works of Arshag Alboyadjian, who may be counted, indeed, as a professional historian. Among others, he published two volumes about Gesaria (Caesarea / Kayseri) and another about Yevtogia (Tokat). Cf. Arshag Alboyadjian, *Badmutiun Hay Gesario*, 2 vols. (Cairo 1937); idem, *Badmutiun Yevtogio Hayots* (Cairo 1952).

¹¹⁰ Cf. Hagop Aghasian, *Adrianubolso Hay kaghute* (Plovdiv 1935); Hagop Kosian, *Smürnio Hayere*, 2 vols. (Vienna 1899); Artavazd Sürmeyan, *Badmutiun Halebi Hayots*, 3 vols.

likewise very limited. In addition to the restrictions historians had to cope with in other socialist states as well, Armenian historians were for decades cut off from many of the non-Armenian sources relevant to the history of Western Armenia or Ottoman Armenians.

Even more forbidding than the aforementioned obstacles may be the historical experience that induces a community to take an interest in certain periods of its past, to approach them critically or glorify them, and repress, forget, or even distort others. The historical experience of the Ottoman Armenians during the last years and the collapse of the empire could hardly be more drastic or profoundly unsettling. The genocide during the First World War meant the complete destruction of the Armenian *millet*. It meant, as well, the final shattering of any hope of a future within the Ottoman-Turkish state, which had been the hope of Armenians in Erzurum and Van, Muş and Bitlis, Izmir and Istanbul for generations. In the face of total extermination, that pious wish appeared as a deadly error. Many also saw it as treason. The continuing denial of the very fact or significance of the genocide, which in the final analysis implies nothing less than the continuation of the genocidal process itself – its last act, one might say – had an important share in cementing this reduced interpretation and holding the already sparse Armenian historiography hostage in the endless circle of an alleged need to prove the genocide.

This dilemma becomes even clearer if we essay certain comparisons. Beginning in Bulgaria and Greece, but also in other countries in the Balkans, a critical re-assessment of the local Ottoman past and, consequently, new research that also takes Ottoman documents and perspective into consideration has only recently begun.¹¹¹ The same can be said about the Arab countries, which had long been under Ottoman rule.¹¹² For obvious reasons, sketched above, Armenian society and historiography are even further from such a new approach to their own past. Against this background, it is also not surprising that very few of the Armenian chroniclers or professionally trained historians of our day choose Ottoman-Armenian history – more precisely, the Ottoman context of Western Armenian history – as their subject. Especially poorly studied are the Armenian members of the Ottoman elite, whose careers were more closely bound up with the Ottoman state than they were with the Armenian community – those who believed in an

(Aleppo 1940-1950); Püzant Yeghiaian, *Adanyi Hayots Badmutium* (Antelias 1970); Hagop Kosian, *Partsr Hayk*, 2 vols. (Vienna 1925), etc.

¹¹¹ Cf. the overview articles of Maria Todorova, "Die Osmanenzeit in der bulgarischen Geschichtsschreibung seit der Unabhängigkeit," in: *Die Staaten Südosteuropas und die Osmanen*, ed. Hans Georg Majer (Munich: Südosteuropa-Ges., 1989), 127-161 and Maria Todorova, "Bulgarian Historical Writings on the Ottoman Empire," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 12 (Spring 1995).

¹¹² Seminal works in this respect are among others the studies of Rifaat Abu El Haj, Abd ar-Rahman Abu Hussayn, Adnan Bakhit, Beshara Doumani and Ussama Makdisi, who make extensive use of Ottoman archival material in addition to local and European sources.

Armenian future inside the Ottoman Empire and therefore hoped (and pushed) for reform, and modernisation in order to strengthen that fatherland, Ottoman patriots who were at pains to contribute to these modernizing efforts. It was, in the first place, the choice of means rather than the goal itself that distinguished them from the Armenian social revolutionaries of the 1890s who considered themselves later as the real attorneys for the Armenian nation. The Armenian revolutionaries, who were organized in political parties very much inspired by Russian models and under the leadership of predominantly Caucasian Armenians from the late 1880s onwards, hated the *amiras* as “conservatives” or even as henchmen of the “despotic Hamidian regime.” They considered the representatives of the new elites, reformers such as Krikor Odian, to be predecessors of the Armenian national movement, but at the same time condemned them for their strict opposition to anything resembling revolution and rebellion.¹¹³ In fact, this opposition to all forms of rebellion against the Ottoman authorities can be seen as the minimal common sense shared by all currents of Armenian political thought and all elite groups in the period of the first constitution, whether they were Turkophile (in the sense that they worked for Ottoman reform and could imagine an Armenian future only under Ottoman rule), Russophile (in the sense that they may have preferred Russian rule to Ottoman, or, at least, opted for Ottoman cooperation with the Russian empire without ever being disloyal to the state they lived in), Anglophile (in the sense that they hoped for British insistence on Ottoman reform), or, finally, Francophile or Italophile (as many Armenian Catholics were hoping for French or Italian pressure for reform).¹¹⁴

In evaluating the development of Armenian historiography and the place of high-ranking Armenian-Ottoman officials and representatives in it, one also has to take into consideration that this history was later essentially written by East Armenian intellectuals who were close to the revolutionary parties, most importantly Leo (Arakel Babakhanian)¹¹⁵ and Mikayel Varantian. In addition, a number of factors influenced contemporary discussions as well as later historiographical analysis. Schematically, they can be summarized as, first, a generational conflict

¹¹³ Paradigmatic for this view: Mikayel Varantian, *Haygagan sharjman nakhabadmutiun*, vol. 1 (Geneva 1912), 234, 246, 286, 290-91 and passim. Already telling is the fact that this book, whose title reads in translation “Introductory History of the Armenian Movement” (or “History of the Period Preceding the Armenian Movement”) and that covers the 1870s extensively, does not so much as mention the Ottoman Armenian deputies. On the revolutionary parties see Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement. The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1963). Varantian can be considered representative of the historiography of the revolutionary parties because of his outstanding position as a historian and an intellectual of the Tashnagsutiun. His work is extensively used and quoted by most of the authors close to the political parties, although few of them mention their source.

¹¹⁴ Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 27.

¹¹⁵ Leo’s multi-volume work is generally regarded as one of the most important reference works on Armenian history; Leo, *Yergeri joghovadzu. Dase badaorov*, 10 vols. (Yerevan, 1966-).

between the *amiras* and the first representatives of the new elites (stemming primarily from the *esnaf* social stratum) as well as another generational conflict that followed the first, involving, this time the now well-established officials of the new type and the young revolutionaries; second, as a class struggle¹¹⁶; and, third, as a dichotomy or even conflict between the Armenians of the Ottoman West and those of the Russian East, with their different models, experiences and political ideas and options.

Against this complex and multi-faceted background, the main political discussion of the day was conducted around the question as to which ways and means were the right ones to improve the situation of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Eastern provinces, which was steadily deteriorating as the crisis of the Empire came to a head. The Armenian members of the Ottoman parliament represented those Armenians who tried to bring about reforms within the limits of the present regime and its institutions and opposed any armed measures or revolt. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Hay behgapokhagan tashmagtsutiun*, HHT), which was by virtue of its influence and numbers the most important of the revolutionary parties, went down much the same path. They, too, chose the Ottoman state and its institutions as the framework for their action. But, in their case, the element of revolutionary means was added.

A generation after the "Young Ottoman" constitutionalists of the first *meşrutiyet*, an Ottoman revolutionary movement had emerged. It is usually summarized under the rubric of the "Young Turks." The Young Turks' aim was to pursue the reform programme of the *Tanzimat* politicians, but they were convinced that, after decades of Hamidian autocracy, political reform was only possible after the reinforcement of the constitution, to be achieved through a revolutionary act and the deposition of the Sultan.¹¹⁷ The Armenian revolutionaries joined this movement, working closely with the Young Turk leaders and, like them, opting for a putsch. Through the constitution, they hoped to achieve political reform and, consequently, greater equality for all Ottoman subjects and better protection for the Armenians in the provinces. However, it must be clearly stressed that this political programme was directed against the present regime and its functionaries, but not against the Ottoman State. Revolutionary conspiracy and violence were directed

¹¹⁶ This struggle is generally described as a struggle between *amiras* and *esnafs*, but one also has to take into consideration that the revolutionary parties appealed more to the young, modern educated intellectual elite on the one hand, and, on the other, to the lower strata of society, who cannot be subsumed under the *esnafs*. Another important feature is that the revolutionaries apparently recruited their followers among the rural population, whereas both *amiras* and *esnafs* are urban groups. A systematic examination of the social composition of the political parties, their leadership as well as their followers, would be of great interest in this context.

¹¹⁷ On the emergence and further development of the Young Turk opposition cf. the very detailed studies of Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York, etc.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995) and his *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford, etc.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001).

against Sultan Abdülhamid II and the hatred of the Turkish and Armenian revolutionaries was focused on his spies. But the conviction that the Ottoman State was the framework for thought and action, the only one in which action made sense, was never questioned – neither by the Armenian revolutionaries nor by their Turkish comrades.¹¹⁸ The principal West-Armenian leaders of the Tashnagsutiun, such as Vartkes Serengülian, or politicians close to that party, such as Krikor Zohrab (both deputies in the Second Ottoman Parliament), were Ottoman patriots who believed in the Ottoman State and its reformist rulers to the very end – even during the first phase of the First World War and the beginning of the mass deportations of Armenians, to which they ultimately fell victim themselves.

Only post-genocide historiography, in one-sided, simplifying interpretation, has made the Tashnagsutiun only the fighter for an independent Armenian nation-state of the kind that existed in 1918-20 under its rule, denying the role of the Tashnagsutiun as an *Ottoman* political party. Meanwhile, the Armenian-Ottoman politicians of the previous generation, among them, prominently, the deputies of the first *meşrutiyet*, were simply blotted out of historical memory and, therefore historiography, that is, out of Western Armenian history. Those about whose life we know a little something have left traces on other fields, as doctors, writers, journalists, etc., and are paid tribute for that. For their work and achievements as Ottoman-Armenian politicians, they are neither appreciated nor even remembered. As politicians of that kind, they are not the heroes of a historiography whose ideal is the nation-state. It remains for a post-national, critical historiography to re-introduce such personalities into history, be it Armenian or Ottoman. Through the prism of their biographies, the Ottoman Empire appears as a state that many different nations considered theirs and, therefore, continued to stick to even when it was already falling apart.

Whom, then, did these Armenian-Ottoman deputies blotted from the history books represent, and what did they stand for? What did they consider themselves to be? About their attitude to the Empire, their speeches in the parliament are telling. Especially the debate of April 25, 1877 over the Russian declaration of war offers insight into their convictions as well as the state of Ottoman domestic political affairs.¹¹⁹ First of all it is striking how many Armenian deputies contributed to this debate. Of 24 men who addressed the chamber during the debate, seven

¹¹⁸ This statement remains valid despite a certain amount of rhetoric about “throwing off the Turkish yoke.” Simplistic rhetoric and utopia are one thing, realistic political goals and programmes another. Yet it is a remarkable fact that, among the Young Turk revolutionaries, the Armenians were especially daring and ready for action. It is no coincidence that the attempt on Abdülhamid’s life in 1905 was conducted by Armenian revolutionaries. On the Tashnagsutiun see Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement*, 151-178; Hratch Dasnabedian, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun 1890/1924* (Milan: OEMME Ed., 1989).

¹¹⁹ Published in Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 170-180.

were Armenian. The debate began with the reading of the Russian declaration of war and the Ottoman reply. First Hasan Fehmi Efendi, a Muslim deputy from Istanbul, commented on the declaration of war and, in this context, also addressed the topic of Russian claims to protecting Christian minorities, now no longer limited to the Balkan Slavs, but embracing all Ottoman Christian subjects. His words reflect the perceptions of the Muslim elites, and most probably of major portions of the Muslim population of the Empire as well: He portrays Russia as the eternal enemy of the Ottoman State and the whole civilized world, affirming that it had so far exerted influence only on the Slav segment of the Ottoman population, but was now trying to goad all Christians into staging uprisings.¹²⁰ It is precisely this language which continuously runs through the administrative records of the Hamidian era, moving every Christian villager's complaint about abuse, corruption or violence in the direction of rebellion, which foreign agents had probably even incited.¹²¹

The nationalist atmosphere dominating the debate was not produced by Hasan Fehmi's speech, but had already emerged in the session of the previous day. During that session, there was a discussion about whether Christian religious leaders should be *ex officio* members of the Provincial Administrative Councils like the Muslim *mufitis*. With this subject, the session provided one of the generally rather rare occasions on which the battle lines in parliament were drawn according to religious affiliation. At the end of the session, the news was announced that Russia had declared war on the Ottomans. Reacting to this breaking news, two Muslim deputies delivered spontaneous speeches. One was Nafi Efendi from Aleppo; the other was Hoca Mustafa Efendi from Kozan in the *vilayet* of Adana, who had already stirred up the discussion in the debate about the Montenegro Question more than any other member of parliament.¹²² They spoke about the unity of the people, the expected success of Ottoman arms "and inflamed all deputies with fiery patriotic zeal," as the newspaper *Masis* put it, immediately adding: "The Christian members of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies also univocally protested against the Russian action, declaring that the Christians of Turkey do not need Russian protection at all and that they [therefore] repudiate all claims of that sort."¹²³

One has to analyse the debate of 25 April 1877 against this background. The deputies already knew what the subject of the session was to be, and they also already knew that the atmosphere would be heated and nationalistic from the very

¹²⁰ Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 170-171.

¹²¹ This general impression and stereotype had become so common place that it even left its mark on children's games; Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education*, 251-252.

¹²² Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 53-60, in particular p. 57-58; cf. the critical analysis of this debate in Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 188-191.

¹²³ *Masis*, April 26, 1877, 2. Strangely enough this last part of the debate was not included in the minutes. Information about what happened can only be gleaned from the newspapers of the day.

outset, with the deputies striving to outstrip each other in patriotic statements. The Christians among them also knew that they would be summoned, not only as Ottomans, but, first and foremost, as Christians and potential traitors, to reject Russian protection and confirm their loyalty to and unity with the State and Ottoman nation. The need for such a statement was the more deeply felt the more a deputy or community had previously complained about excesses and violations and had pressed for reform and more effective protection of the Christian subjects. With this background in mind, the course of the debate of April 25 is not surprising. The observer is not surprised to see – after some introductory remarks by Hasan Fehmi – one Christian after the other standing up hastily rejecting Russian ambitions, and expressing his own loyalty and his community's willingness to make sacrifices for the Ottoman State and its dynasty. It is also not surprising to see that the deputies from Bulgaria and the other predominantly Christian Balkan provinces in particular came well prepared and handed in written statements of their loyalty.¹²⁴ Yet historians of the first *meşrutiyet* are right to state that it was not only subservience which motivated the Christians' speeches in this debate.¹²⁵ Despite the fear visible between the lines of the speeches, their comments also reflect an apparently honest and deeply felt Ottomanism and attachment to the Ottoman State that should not be neglected in historical analysis out of hand. Their attitude is, rather, the expression of their political realism, stemming from the conditions and political possibilities of their respective communities.

Most of the Christian deputies who came to the fore in the April 25 debate belonged to communities for whom an independent state, that is to say, secession from the Ottoman Empire after the Greek or Bulgarian example, possibly with Russian or European help, was simply not a realistic perspective. Their communities, be they Christian Arabs or Armenians, were too scattered and not sufficiently homogenous in their home regions even to think seriously about delimiting a territorial unit as their nation state. This situation forced them to concentrate their hopes still more on the reforms in the Ottoman Empire, which would offer their communities safety, equality and the opportunity to participate in politics. This was all the more the case in that the Armenians, as residents of the ever troubled Eastern borderlands, fully contributed to the Ottoman reform process wherever they saw an opportunity to do so and appealed to the state to resume its functions in guaranteeing public order and security of all its subjects seriously and effectively. In their allegiance to the Ottoman State, however, there was also an

¹²⁴ Two such declarations were submitted, the first one is signed by Karamihaloğlu Yorgi from Edirne, Misho Todori and Samakovlu [sic!] Zahari from Sofia, I Stefanaki and Dimitraki from Tuna and Dimitri from Selanik. The second one is described as declaration of the Serbian deputies, but bears the signatures of one Greek from Trabzon, one Armenian from Sivas (Hagop Shahinian) and one Christian Syrian (Nawfal); Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 1:172-173.

¹²⁵ Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 217; Enver Ziya Karal, "Non-Muslim Representatives in the First Constitutional Assembly," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 387-400, see esp. *ibid.*, 397.

element of doubt about, or even rejection of, Russian rule. Armenians in the Ottoman Empire took careful note of the manifold oppressions to which non-Orthodox Christians were exposed in Russia; and the Russian state itself was plainly the author of the measures in question.¹²⁶ On the other hand, the distress and violence which the Armenians on the Ottoman side of the border increasingly suffered could not be directly attributed to the state in the same way. It seemed, rather, that the deplorable situation of the Armenians was a consequence of the weakness of the state organs, so that strengthening the power of the central government would soon improve their condition. As long as the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire did not hold the Ottoman state responsible for their bitter lot, but rather "Kurds and Circassians," without ever blaming the Central government for deliberately inciting the latter against the Armenian villages on purpose, and as long as the Ottoman Armenians put the misbehaviour of many officials mainly down to their corruption, not to orders or at least encouragement and toleration from the Istanbul government, they placed their hopes in the renewal of the Empire more than anything else.¹²⁷

That Russian rule might prove more oppressive for them as non-Orthodox Christians than Ottoman-Islamic rule in its heyday was the theme of many speakers. Nawfal from Syria deduced Muslim tolerance for Christians from the Qur'an, and Nakkash, likewise from Syria, called on the Russians to show respect for the non-Orthodox Christians in their own country before rushing to offer protection to the subjects of other countries.¹²⁸ The Armenian deputy from Erzurum, Hamazasb Ballarian, invoked his own family's story to prove his anti-Russian outlook. His family, he said, had been among the approximately 100,000 Armenians who, in 1829, had believed Russian promises and emigrated to Russia.¹²⁹ They were, however, soon disappointed and returned to their country; for this reason they now were among the most loyal and trustworthy Ottoman subjects, and could even better appreciate the security and order that the Armenian nation had enjoyed for more than 500 years of Ottoman rule; consequently, they rejected any Russian protection whatsoever.¹³⁰ Accordingly, Armenian deputies were active in the parliamentary commission charged with collecting aid for the Muslim refugees and also donated considerable amounts.¹³¹ One can only speculate about their reasons for this specific commitment. It may be interpreted as a symbolic gesture meant to stress the strong bond with the Ottoman state. An-

¹²⁶ Hrant Pastermadjian, *Histoire de l'Arménie depuis les origines jusqu'au traité de Lausanne*, 4th ed. (Paris: Samuelian, 1986), 313-315.

¹²⁷ This view is reflected in the aims and language of countless Armenian petitions and finally also entered into the wording of the treaties of San Stefano and Berlin.

¹²⁸ Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 173-174. On anti-Russian feelings among Armenians as well as Greeks, especially among their elites, cf. Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 218.

¹²⁹ On this episode see Pastermadjian, *Histoire*, 310.

¹³⁰ Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 174-175; cf. also the report in *Masis*, April 28, 1877.

¹³¹ See for example Us, *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 323, passim.

other possible interpretation is that they hoped that, when the *muhacirs'* needs were more fully met, the situation of the Armenian peasants, who were often victims of plundering landless immigrants, would also improve.

Among the Christian speakers of the April 25 debate, it was most particularly the Armenians who went beyond mere pledges of loyalty and offers of financial support. They demanded the right to participate in the armed forces as well. The Istanbul deputy Maksudian appealed for immediate consideration of a law introducing military service for non-Muslims.¹³² The Erzurum deputies Ballarian and Kharadjian announced that in their home province, the Armenians had already taken up arms and organized in "National Units" together with the Muslims of the border region.¹³³ It has been repeatedly stated that the Christian elites never again raised this question of integrating the non-Muslims into the armed forces and had not been seriously interested in recruitment among their communities.¹³⁴ This argument neglects the fact that probably no community ever would press for recruitment in the middle of an ongoing war, especially in view of the prevailing deplorable conditions. This question would have to be negotiated and resolved in times of peace. At least there are many indications that one should not dismiss the demand of incorporation in the army, unambiguously put forward by the Armenian deputies, as mere rhetoric, but take it seriously in light of the particular situation of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The commitment of the Armenian deputies of the second constitutional period – above all Krikor Zohrab – to a new law on recruitment which would include non-Muslims in the armed forces, is an important argument in favour of reconsidering this point. Facing the continuously insufficient protection against violent incursions, the wish to finally gain the right to carry arms, like the Muslims, constitutes another strong argument here.¹³⁵ It has to be stressed as well, that there was dissent among the Armenian elite over this question already in 1877. In a long article, Ütüdjian advocated inclusion of the Armenians in the army, arguing that this was the best way to claim equal rights.¹³⁶ The Armenian *millet* parliament voted likewise for Armenian military service in its session of December 7, 1877; then it was only the Grand Council of the Patriarchate who opposed this decision.¹³⁷

¹³² Ibid., 173-174.

¹³³ Ibid., 178.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 221-225; Davison, "The *Millet*s as Agents of Change," 329, 332; Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice," in: *Arming the State. Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia*, ed. idem, (London and New York: Tauris 1999), 79-94, here 88-89.

¹³⁵ See, for example, the diaries of the Armenian prelate of Adana Bishop Mushegh Seropian, who explicitly elaborates this idea. Mushegh Srpazan Seropian, *Inknagensakrutium*, vol. 4, January 1916 – May 1917, 947 (entry of March 25, 1917, quoting his diary of 1909), Archives of the Bibliothèque Nubar, Paris.

¹³⁶ *Masis*, May 19, 1877.

¹³⁷ Devereux, *The First Constitutional Period*, 224 n94.

It is not surprising to see that the exceptional atmosphere of the war debate and the question of Russian protection for the Christians of the Ottoman Empire forced the Christian deputies of the chamber to make statements *as Christians*, not as representatives of the region that had elected them. Only peacetime debates or debates on subjects not related to the war or explicitly religious concerns will shed light on the deputies' perception of whom they represented. But, here again, in many debates, in the speeches and the wishes and arguments they reflected, as well as in the votes, it can be seen that the deputies of the Ottoman parliament, although elected as representatives of a region, were acting primarily as deputies of their religious community. Or, as Davison puts it: "[...] as deputies, the non-Muslim could not totally shed their sectarian identity, however much they might feel and act as Osmanlis. They had, in effect, a dual character, and in a sense they still represented their *millets*."¹³⁸

Thus we come back to our starting point. The Armenians in the first Ottoman parliament were certainly elected as deputies from a certain region, but they acted often, and perhaps primarily, as representatives of their community, although they did not forget the concerns of their region as a whole. Interestingly enough, however, the consciousness of ethno-lingual, secular "national" belonging overweighed the confessional *millet* identity. At any rate the press, here again exemplified by the Istanbul daily *Masis*, made no distinction between Catholics and Apostolic Armenians. Representatives of both groups were presented to the reader as "members of the Armenian nation" (*hayazki*), and the confessional affiliations of the Armenian deputies were not even mentioned in the paper.¹³⁹

* * *

The appearance and perception of the Armenian deputies in parliament as representatives of the Armenians does not necessarily mean that their views were representative of those of a majority of Ottoman Armenians of the time. If we put aside the fundamental question of how representative of a people elites can be, we have to confine ourselves to stating that in the period of the first Ottoman Constitution, there was no other organized current of Armenian politics. There then existed, besides the Armenian members of the Ottoman parliament and the Armenian members of the various Ottoman administrative bodies on different levels, only two, closely interconnected arenas of Armenian political representation. One was the Church as official representative of the Armenian *millet* (or Armenian Catholic or Armenian Protestant *millet*). The other was the National Assembly with its various committees, which had been established during the reform of the *millets* beginning in the mid-nineteenth century (especially with the Armenian constitution of 1860/63) to assist the patriarch in administering the

¹³⁸ Davison, "The *Millets* as Agents of Change," 329.

¹³⁹ Cf. *Masis*, March 3, 1877; March 20, 1877, etc.

community. Despite their internal conflicts over a number of other questions, both followed the same political strategy concerning the Ottoman state and the place and role of Armenians within it: advocating improvement of the living conditions of the Armenians, especially those living in the Eastern provinces, not outside the Ottoman State and its institutions, but in the framework of, and in constant reference to the Ottoman state. The sole means to be used were countless petitions and requests, which appealed to the duties and self-conception of the Ottoman State. The Armenian-Ottoman deputies, like the Armenian members of administrative councils or Armenian state officials, pursued the same goal, choosing as their means the active contribution to those Ottoman administrative or representative organs to which the Patriarchate appealed.

On an informal level, some intellectuals aired other views, which found expression in the journals. They drafted utopian dreams of an “independent Armenia,” while, remarkably, never concretely defining the borders of this land and, even more remarkably, writing off its multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition.¹⁴⁰ They inspired the Armenian revolutionary movement, which emerged later in the century. At the time of the first Ottoman parliament, no political parties yet existed. They all were founded later: in 1885, the *Armenagan* Party in Van; in 1887, the *Hntchagian* Party in Geneva (Switzerland), and in 1890, the *Hay Heghapatagan Tashmagtsutiun* (Armenian Revolutionary Federation) in Tiflis (Caucasus). Their history will one day have to be re-examined with regard to the real political goals they pursued concretely on the ground, beyond revolutionary rhetoric and utopia. It will be equally important to examine the differences between the projections of the predominantly Caucasian-Armenian leadership of the two revolutionary parties (*Hntchag* and *Tashmagtsutiun*) and the expectations of their Ottoman-Armenian members. In this context it will be also imperative to estimate, at least roughly, the size of the revolutionary movement, so as to gain some notion of the percentage of the Ottoman Armenian population that it represented.

¹⁴⁰ See for example “Vartan’s dream” in Raffi’s best-selling novel “*Khente*” [The Fool]. In this utopian Armenia set 200 years in the future, the Kurds have simply disappeared, having been assimilated into the Armenian population. Raffi, *The Fool. Events From the Last Russo-Turkish War (1877-78)*, transl. Donald Abcarian (Princeton: Gomidas Inst. 2000), 206-217, esp. 210-211. Raffi (Hagop Melik-Hagopian, 1835-1888) was probably the most influential Armenian novelist of his generation. Although he worked and published in the Russian part of Armenia, his novels were also widely spread among Ottoman Armenians.