



UNIVERSITÀ
CA' FOSCARI
VENEZIA

DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI EURASIATICI



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ASSOCIAZIONE CULTURALE PADUS-ARAXES

PRESS RELEASE

CELEBRATIONS FOR THE 20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SUMMER INTENSIVE COURSE OF ARMENIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE OF CA' FOSCARI UNIVERSITY OF VENICE

The 20th anniversary of the Summer Intensive Course of Armenian Language and Culture of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, organized in collaboration with the Cultural Association Padus-Araxes, was celebrated with solemnity on an international level August 5th through 6th. The following official guests arrived for this occasion in Venice: Prof. Vladimir Barkhudaryan, Vice-President and Academician Secretary of the Armenian National Academy of Sciences (ANAS), Ms. Anahit Sirunian, General Consul of the Republic of Armenia for Italy representing the Ambassador Mr. Ruben Shugaryan, and Prof. Marc NICHANIAN, Chair of Armenian Studies at Columbia University New York, who also was the keynote speaker at the academic celebration. Many other guests came also to Venice from Italy, France, England, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, among whom Prof. Valentina Calzolari, Chair of Armenian Studies at the University of Genève and General Secretary of the Association des Études Arméniennes (AIEA); Theo van Lint, Chair of Armenian Studies at Oxford and Treasurer of AIEA. Media were represented by Mr. Arthur Bakhtamyan of the National Television of Armenia, Mrs. Léontine Ozkirichian of *France-Arménie*, and Mr. Roger Kasparian of *Nouvelles d'Arménie Magazine*.

Congratulatory messages were sent on this happy occasion by the following religious and civil authorities: H.H. Garegin II Catholicos of All Armenians; H.H. Aram I Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia; H.B. Nerses Bedros XIX Catholicos Patriarch of the Catholic Armenians of Cilicia; Mr. Robert Kocharyan President of the RA; Mr. Arthur Baghdasaryan President of the National Assembly of RA; Mr. Gagik Harutunian President of the Constitutional Court of RA; Mr. Hovik Hoveyan Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs of RA; Prof. Fadey Sargsyan President of ANAS; Prof. Radick Martirosyan Rector of Yerevan State University and member of ANAS; Prof. Henrik Bakhchinyan Director of E. Charents Museum of Literature and Art; Prof. Jos Weitenberg, President of AIEA; Prof. Josef A. Kéchichian, President of the Society for Armenian Studies; Prof. Riccardo Zipoli, Director of the Department of Eurasian Studies of Ca' Foscari; Prof. Dario Calimani, Director of the Interfaculty Linguistic Center of Ca' Foscari.

The celebrations formally began on August 5, Friday afternoon, in the main Hall of the magnificent University building of the 17th century Venetian Palace, Ca' Dario, with a speech emphasizing the role and significance of the Armenian Intensive Summer Course within the frame of Ca' Foscari University's research and didactic activity, by the Rector Prof. Pier Luigi Ghetti. This was followed by the reading of the various congratulatory messages. The floor was then taken by Prof. Marc Nichanian, keynote speaker of the day, whose title was: "Culture in Exile or Culture of Exile?" Prof. Nichanian made a keen analysis, in English, of the meaning and of the function of this intensive course, as an institutional praxis and an institution itself, in Armenian life and culture. This first day celebration was concluded with the presentation of a documentary entitled "The Long Journey to the West of Ignored Armenian Treasures" by Gerald PAPASIAN, actor and stage-manager, who was the art director and scenario writer of the first audiovisual course on videotapes for Armenian, entitled "Hayeren Khosink" and produced in 1993 by the Padus-Araxes Association. A gala dinner, headed by a *tamada* according to tradition, closed the day.

The second day's celebrations were held on August 6, Saturday morning, in the main Hall, the splendid *Sala degli Specchi*, of the Moorat-Raphael College, Ca' Zenobio. They opened with a speech, in Armenian, of Prof. Vladimir Barkhudaryan who shed light on the meaning and the function of the Intensive Course in the framework of international armenology and of the relations between Armenian and the diaspora. Then Fr. Levon Zekiyan gave a brief, concise explanation of the basic philosophy and policy that have been guiding this Course during all these twenty years and outlined proposals for the near future. He particularly stressed the generous and highly professional contributions of the teaching staff, considering it as one of the main factors in the positive results reached in these years. He also affirmed his deep and unconditional admiration and veneration for Abbot Mkhitar, the main source of his inspiration, and certainly one of the greatest figures in Armenian history and culture. The achievements of this course, he said, which has had up to date 743 participants, marked by 976 presences, are achievements of the Mkhitarian ideal, a sign of its vitality today. The day's academic section was concluded with the presentation of a new book entitled "Hushamatian" (Memorial Book), edited by Ms. Salpy Kasbarian. The book was presented first as to its content by the editor herself, which was followed by Prof. Raffi Setian, of the Course's teaching staff, with comments of an analytical approach concerning the contents. The protagonists of the day's artistic section were the pianist ANI MARTIROSYAN, and the tenor Jean ANSERLIAN, both from Milan, who also dedicated their performance as a gift to the current celebration. They executed with high skill pieces by Komitas, Kanatchian, and a Neapolitan song.

The final act of the day was by the well-known actress Nora Armani who masterly performed the play "On the couch with Nora Armani" written by herself: a monologue touching topical questions regarding the destiny of a person in search of a home.

The 20th Summer Intensive Course of Armenian Language and Culture ended on August 19. Registration for the next course will open by mid-November 2005.