

# A historical outline of the Armenian people

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## The origins

The appearance of the Armenians in history, as an *ethnos* that has achieved its long process of formation, is linked with the last great wave of Indo-European peoples that flooded the table lands of Eastern Anatolia in about the seventh century before Christ. There were many migrations in the area during this period. Each in turn, the Cimmerians, the Scythians and the Medes brought down the kingdoms of the Phrygians (676-675) and the empire of the Assyrians (612) and finally gave the coup de grâce to the kingdom of Urartu.

It is not improbable that the advance of the *armenioi* towards the east was a consequence of the collapse of the Phrygian kingdom. Herodotus (vii, 73) and Eudoxus (quoted by Stephen of Byzantium) connect the Armenians with the Phrygians. But the question of the origins of the Armenian people is far more complicated than this.

If the Armenian language is Indo-European - and indeed, it is an independent branch of this linguistic family - the somatic characteristics prevailing among the Armenians are local and once classified anthropologically as the "Armenoid" type: average to tall stature; strong bones; white skin; dark hair and eyes; abundant body hair; long head; short, high skull; long face; narrow, jutting nose, often aquiline; and relatively short legs. All of this would confirm the decisive role of autochthonous features in the ethnic configuration of the Armenian people, while the Indo-European origins of the migrants would be remotely echoed in traditional epics telling of the feats and deeds of a race of tall, blond heroes with blue eyes. This is, in fact, how one of the more popular gods, Vahagn, is depicted in the hymn of his birth. So we can safely say that the Armenians are another example of a fairly common phenomenon in history whereby the language of a conquering minority prevails, but without any effect whatsoever on the influence of climatic and environmental factors on the prevailing physiognomy.

The main autochthonous feature - the Urartian - underlying the ethnic composition of the Armenians can definitely be narrowed down to similar "Hurrian" population groups that can be seen as the earliest inhabitants, in the historical period, of the regions surrounding the lake of Van. All that can be said of this aboriginal or "Anatolian" population is that it was neither Indo-European nor Semitic, even though there had been infiltrations of Indo-European elements from the earliest days onwards, the first of these occurring at the beginning of the second millennium. The Hittite empire was founded and there were small kingdoms of unrelated peoples, such as the Hayasa and the Mitanni, on its eastern and southern borders. It seems that there had already been a symbiosis in these kingdoms between the invading Indo-European warriors and the indigenous tribes. Among these latter, above all, in certain central areas, close to the Hurrian stock, certain traces of language reveal the presence of "Caucasian", and rather "North-Caucasian" populations that might also have had some affinity with the Hurrians.

From this panorama, we can easily conclude that, as early as the second millennium, the regions east of the Euphrates, between the Pontian promontories and Northern Mesopotamia, were a point of encounter for Anatolian, Caucasian and Indo-European tribes.

Nevertheless, certain recent studies bring quite new perspectives to this view, according to which the land of historical Armenia was the cradle of the great family of Indo-European peoples and the starting point of their first mass migrations. If this theory, put forward by Ivanov and Gamkrelidze, were accepted — and this would completely upset early Indo-European history and geography — we would have to conclude also that the Indo-European dimension of the Armenian language has its most ancient roots in loco, even though it was later subjected to the stratification effects of waves of migration from the west and/or from the north east. This theory may perhaps explain why comparative linguists consider Armenian as the language that bears the greatest quantity of most archaic Indo-European traits.

The kingdom of Urartu collapsed towards the end of the seventh or beginning of the sixth century b.c. The Greeks called the new ethnopolitical entity that succeeded the Urartians the *armenioi*.

It is first mentioned in the Old Persian form *arminiya* in the cuneiform three-language Behistun inscription by Darius I (c. 520) as one of the peoples subjugated to his rule. The new ethnopolitical situation remained substantially unaltered until the extinction of the Armenian kingdom of the Bagratids (Bagratuni) in 1045 a. d., when the Turkish tribes made their arrival on the political scene in Anatolia. But even after these changes in the late Middle Ages, the Armenian people were to go on living in the same regions for another 900 years, until the tragic depopulation of most of those parts during the First World War.

## *The Orontid (Ervanduni) dynasty, the periods of Achaemenian and Macedonian dominion*

The first Armenian dynasty was that of the Ervanduni, from the name Ervand (Eruand), known in Greek historiography in the form Orontes or Aroandes. But it was a short-lived sovereignty, for the Ervanduni were soon subjugated to the rule of Darius I, who shared out their territory between the two satrapies, the *xiii* and the *xviii*, of his administrative system. Thus, among the twenty-three populations dominated by Darius were the Armenians, alongside the Medes and the Susians, in Adapadana of Persepolis.

Then began a long period of Achaemenian supremacy for Armenia, which still took place within the framework of a certain internal administrative autonomy. It was led by its own dynasty, the Orontids who, being related to the Persian court, acted as satraps, or provincial governors. The political supremacy of the Achaemenians was accompanied by a strong influence, particularly in the use of the Persian language, which is revealed by the large number of words, often fairly common ones, borrowed from Persian.

Only Macedonian expansion put an end to the Achaemenian domination, after the victory of Arbela in 331. A general tendency towards autonomy ensued, above all in the central-eastern regions, which were to be called Greater Armenia (Armenia Major).

Xenophon had already spoken of "Western Armenia" as a distinct administrative entity, but subordinated to "Armenia" (*Anabasis* ra, 5,17), which was led not by a satrap, but by a *hyparchos*, that is, a lieutenant. Further developments, the consequences of various political and cultural factors, were to result in the formation of two distinct territorial entities known respectively, around the middle of the fourth century, as Greater Armenia and Armenia Minor. The former was to include the eastern regions of the Euphrates, while the latter extended roughly over the territory delineated by the present-day cities of Sivas, Erzincan and Malatya, west and north of the upper elbow of the Euphrates.

Although it often possessed its own rulers, this area was to be deeply affected by the political and cultural influence of the Hellenistic world, finding itself in direct contact with the heavily Hellenized regions of the Pontus and Cappadocia. Greater Armenia, on the other hand, which was more protected from this point of view, was to have a more harmonious development, with greater emphasis on Armenian identity.

## The Artaxiads (Artashesiank') and the empire of Tigran

The first two decades of the second century b.c. were a particularly important turning point for ancient Armenia. During this period, its political and cultural unification and consolidation took place. Also during this time, Armenia started to advance toward a political power never again to be equalled in that country, not even during the more fortunate economic and cultural periods that followed.

At the roots of this evolution was the foundation, around 190 b.c., of the Artaxiad dynasty by Artaxias (Artashes) I (c. 190-159) with the proclamation of independence from the Seleucids, who had constituted the ascendent power in Armenia immediately after the collapse of Alexander's empire. Artashes had the approval and acknowledgement of the Romans for, having defeated Antiochus at Magnesia in 190, they were interested in having the Armenian sovereign as an ally.

According to Strabo (xi, xiv, 15), it was during the reign of Artashes that Armenian became the common language throughout the country. This must be taken as the expression of a widespread ethnic harmony that had already existed in those regions for a long time.

Otherwise, it would be difficult to conceive how the Armenian language could have become so important in only a few decades; an achievement that had not been accomplished over far longer periods of domination by the Persians and Greeks.

One of Artashes' most important accomplishments was the construction of the new capital, Artashat (Artaxata), not very far from the present capital of Armenia, Yerevan, which is to the south, at the entrance to the plainlands of the River Araxes, at a point where the watercourse forms a near peninsula. Hannibal, who had taken refuge in Armenia after escaping from the Romans, had pointed out to Artashes the strategic and military importance of the place.

The most outstanding representative of the Artaxiad dynasty was Tigran (Tigranes) II, called the Great. During the forty years of his reign (95-55 b.c), he extended the boundaries of Armenia to their fullest, making an ally of rival Rome. In addition to Sophene, he annexed Armenia Minor, sharing the territory with his father-in-law, Mithridates Eupator, the famous king of Pontus. He later incorporated Atropatene Media (the western

regions of Persia) into his kingdom, and then all of Mesopotamia, as far as Ctesiphon and Seleucia, and the western coasts of Syria as far as Phoenicia, part of Cappadocia and Cilicia. Tigran was now at the height of his power, the “king of kings,” as was stated on the coins he had minted. The position of Artaxata now seemed somewhat marginal in the rest of the vast territory, so Tigran set about constructing a new capital in a more central position further south, near present-day Diyarbakir in Turkey. He called it Tigranakert (Tigran's construction).

It was inevitable that this imperial expansion should culminate in a head-on collision with Rome. Mithridates, already in open conflict with the Romans, provided the stimulus. He had taken refuge with his son-in-law, who had skillfully remained on the sidelines of the dangerous game his father-in-law was playing with Rome. Now, against his will, Tigran suddenly found himself personally involved. Tigran's first rival was Lucullus. Having won an initial battle in 69, Lucullus came off badly in the second campaign, being drawn into a trap Tigran had set for him inside the Armenian plateau. So in spring of 67, the Armenian counter-offensive managed to regain the positions they had lost, and Lucullus was called back to Rome (taking the cherry and the apricot — *prunus armeniaca* — with him). His place was taken by Pompeo, who inflicted a harsh if partial defeat upon Tigran. Tigran had somewhat haughtily underestimated the military power of the Romans; his exclamation when he saw the Roman legions has gone down in history: “If they have come as ambassadors, they are too many; if they have come to fight, they are too few.”

Pompeo nevertheless turned out to be chivalrous towards the bitter old sovereign. He spared him the humiliation of having to lay down his crown at the victor's feet and made a stout ally of him.

The long affair ended with the peace treaty of Artaxata in 66 b.c.

## The dynasty of the Arsacids (Arshakuni)

In the decades that followed, Armenia became one of the cherished targets of the hegemony of Romans and Parthians alike, who found support from the pro-Romans and pro-Parthians within the local political setup. A new political situation came about with the campaign of Corbulo, which ended with the treaty of Rhandaia in 63 b.c. In future, Armenia was to have its own king who would be appointed by the Parthians and at the same time be a protege and ally of the Romans. Thus began the dynasty of the Arsacids in Armenia. They were the cadet branch of the dynasty ruling over Persia. As a token of the alliance, the first representative of the Arsacids in Armenia, Tiridates (Trdat) I, accepted to be crowned by Nero in Rome in 66. This was probably the occasion that was celebrated by the statue of Tiridates that can be seen in the Louvre in Paris. A gold coin bearing the head of Nero has recently been found in Soviet Armenia. Another statue, related to Trdat's crowning in Rome and called *submitio Tiridatis* (Trdat's submission) has also been recently discovered at Oderzo (Opitergium in Latin), a small town in north-eastern Italy going back to the Roman and pre-Roman eras. It is kept at the Archaeological Museum of Venice.

For a period of only two years, Armenia became an effective Roman province, after Trajan annexed it in 114. But his death and the revolt of the Jews in 117 rendered the plan to dominate the Parthian kingdom ineffective, and Trajan's successor, Hadrian, preferred to observe the treaty of Rhandaia.

In 224, the international political scene changed sharply, with the advent of the Sassanids in Persia. Although the Armenian Arsacids had been able to escape the extermination inflicted on their Parthian relatives, they nevertheless found an inflexible adversary in the new ascendant power. The Sassanids' plans for Armenia - political dominion and cultural-religious assimilation - were only partly fulfilled, on the political side, with the extinction of the Arsacid dynasty in 428. Tension ran particularly high on account of Armenia's having been converted to Christianity during the reign of Trdat I (287-330) by St. Grigor Lusavoritch (the Illuminator). Military vicissitudes between the Roman Empire of the East and the Sassanids made it inevitable that Armenia should be divided into two, and this took place in 387, with a north-to-south demarcation line that passed through the city of Karin or Theodosiopolis, present-day Erzerum. Unfortunately, the part that remained to the west of the line, under Byzantine hegemony, was subjected to cultural-religious pressure no less forceful than that exerted by the Sassanids.

Indeed, given the religious community, a not insignificant part of the Armenian population in those regions was practically Hellenized. The eastern regions, on the other hand, having remained under Persian control, were able to keep their ethnic-cultural identity. Apart from the influence of religious and sociopolitical factors in making this possible, another crucial factor was the invention of the Armenian alphabet in 404/405 by *vardapet* Mesrop Mashtots, who was venerated like a saint by the Armenian church. The western regions, under the Byzantine administration, were also partly affected by this.

## The interregnum: 428-861

The joint action of religious and cultural factors in the preservation of the Armenian ethnos was to be confirmed, about halfway through the fifth century, by an event that was so important that it was to remain a turning point in the political and religious history of Armenia. It was the so-called war of the Vardanank', in which one sees crystallized in its heroes and renegades, both the epic virtues and the defects that in many ways characterized the national life of the Armenians. The war lasted for the whole latter half of the century. Indeed, although the main battle lasted no more than a day, the second of June, 451, it was followed by year after year of tenacious passive resistance and bitter guerrilla warfare, wisely championed, moreover, by the wives of the princes that had died on the battlefield or had been exiled. Then at last, in 485, the King of Persia, Valash, reluctantly had to grant the Armenians freedom of worship, conscience, and culture.

The peace conditions proposed by the Armenians at the end of this victorious guerrilla warfare constitute a lesson in civilization that goes well beyond the concept and practices prevailing in those times as regards human rights. This had very much to do with the condition of a people that simply could not aim at the domination of others but merely desired to live undisturbed with due respect granted to their faith and identity. Peace was therefore concluded on the basis of three principles that the Armenians proclaimed they would not renounce, even at the risk of annihilation: *a)* no one was to be forced to change religion; *b)* people were not to be judged on the basis of their social condition, but rather according to their actions; *c)* no action based merely on hearsay was to be taken by the authorities against anyone; rather, they could act only with full knowledge of the case in point. These same objectives could well be pursued today in many places and circumstances.

It would by no means be superfluous to draw special attention to one point, obvious though it may be: the war of the Vardanank' was not a religious war in the generally accepted sense of the term. On the part of the Armenians, it was fought with no intention whatever of imposing a belief, nor was it motivated by any desire to implement religious discrimination or intolerance: it was no more than a revolt against arrogance in defence of the religious freedom and identity of a people.

After the peace treaty drawn up at Nvarsak, Valash bestowed upon the commander-in-chief of the Armenian forces, Vahan Mamikonian, the title of marzpan, that is, plenipotentiary governor, and he effectively governed Armenia with full powers. This situation of relative tranquillity and prosperity lasted for forty years or so, after which Armenia became yet again the theatre of encounter between Byzantium and Persia and was to remain thus for nearly all the sixth century.

Halfway through the century, under the rule of Justinian, the Byzantine drive to Hellenize Armenia reached its peak. Justinian initiated a type of administration that was quite new for the territories under Byzantium, dividing them into four regions and entrusting their government to an imperial official, thus eliminating once and for all the power of the nakharar, who had until that time been the mainstay of the Armenian political system. The final anti-Chalcedon trends of the Church in Armenia ran parallel to these developments and certainly helped to trigger and organize ethnic defense mechanisms against the policy of assimilation the Empire surreptitiously pursued by religious means, among others.

The effects of the victory of Heraclius over the Persians in 629 were rather deceptive (the event led to a momentary reconciliation with the Greek Church, incidentally) in that the first Arab invasion occurred in 642. From that moment on, for almost 200 years, there reigned on Armenian soil a continuous stream of wars and bloody rebellions in which the Byzantine armies too were often involved. One of the most outstanding political figures of the time was Teodoros Rshtuni, who managed to initiate a policy of compromise between the Arabs and the Byzantines.

The eighth century and the first half of the ninth marked a period of crisis and stasis for Armenian culture, since the Arab invasion and the subsequent events had cut short the marvellous artistic boom that had begun in an earlier period and had produced such masterpieces as the famous cathedral of Zvart'nots and the church of the Hripsimiank', (for Hripsime and her companions, martyrs in the early sixth century).

## The Armenia, of the Bagratids (Bagratuni) and Artzruni

Along with its break-up in the ninth century, the compact Arab empire also saw a weakening of its power in Armenia. Meanwhile, a very important change had taken place in the ranks of the Armenian aristocracy. The house of Mamikonian, which had played a leading role in the political life of Armenia, actually governing as sovereigns without titles during certain periods, disappeared from the scene towards the end of the eighth century. The Arabs used harsh reprisals to crush the insurrection led by Mamikonian in 774, and the whole family was wiped out.

Once the Mamikonians had disappeared from the scene, the Bagratids began their ascendancy. They had a more flexible approach to the Arabs. One of the oldest and most influential dynasties of Armenia, never yet exposed to the hazards of struggles for power, the Bagratids had, since the times of Artashes I, by tradition and by acquired right, held the title of *agatir*, that is, crowners (of the king) while the Mamikonians had held the title of *sparapet*, commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Unlike the feudal possessions of the Mamikonians,

which occupied a practically continuous strip starting from the regions of T'aron, west of the lake of Van, and ending in the area around Mount Ararat and Mount Aragatz to the north east, the fiefs of the Bagratids were spread a little everywhere 'throughout Armenia and were later to extend even further into the Iberian kingdom (present-day Georgia).

Another family of nakharar, one of the few that survived the repression, were the Artzruni, whose dominions lay to the east of the lake of Van. On account of their less drastic attitude towards the Arabs, both the Bagratids and the Artzruni were able to profit from the confiscation and dismemberment of the property of the Mamikonians and other dynasties allied to them and enlarge their own possessions. The Bagratids assumed the role of representatives and promoters of this new conscience.

At practically the same time, in 888, a Bagratid branch of the Tayk' (Tao) lineage, near the borders between Armenia and Georgia along the river Djorokh (Çoruh), created the Iberian kingdom of the Bagratids. This was to have an extremely long life, lasting more than 1,000 years, thanks to the geopolitical situation in Georgia, which was more favourable than Armenia's. The new kingdom unfortunately collapsed in 1045.

The foundation of the Bagratid kingdom in Armenia emerged from the revolt of Prince Smbat Bagratuni about halfway through the eighth century. Despite the partial failure of the insurrection, at the end of which Smbat was captured and sent off to Baghdad, the growth of Byzantine power under the young dynasty of the Macedonians (of Armenian origin) forced the Arabs to adopt a more moderate policy, ensuring a certain equilibrium in Armenia and, thus, greater guarantees of safety for Arab interests.

In 861, Ashot, son of Smbat, was recognized by the court at Baghdad as prince of princes, a measure that did not fail to provoke a violent reaction on the part of the semiautonomous Arab emirates that had been established in the very heart of Armenia. They attacked Ashot with an army of 80,000 men. Ashot's forces were only half those of the Arabs, but nevertheless defeated them soundly. Ashot's prestige was now at its peak. In 855, the caliph sent him the crown and recognized him as *shahanshah*, King of Kings of the Armenians. Basil I, emperor of Byzantians, made haste to do the same. This was perhaps one of the happiest periods in the tormented history of Armenia: two empires were vying with each other not to dominate Armenia with arms but to gain its sympathy and consolidate its independence.

This was a difficult objective, to say the least. Indeed, the kingdom of Ashot's son, Smbat I (892-914), was one continuous round of harsh struggles against the Arab emirates that surrounded the young kingdom. Only by paying this high price was the Armenia of the Bagratids able to reach the peaks of economic, social and cultural prosperity which, according to Muyltermans, constituted a period of incomparable splendour in Armenian history, from about 920 to 1020. The best evidence of this was the fabulous city of Ani, built by Ashot in (952-977), with its "thousand and one churches." Jacques de Morgan has this to say: "In Europe, we still have a large number of cities surrounded by their medieval fortified walls: Avignon, Aigues-Mortes, Carcassone, in the south of France alone. But none of these can be compared with Ani because of the deep impression that dead city still arouses in us today: lost in the middle of an immense solitude, still bearing the deep wounds it received during its agony. Ani under the Bagratids was a great, beautiful city, embellished with numerous churches, palaces, beautiful walls in many-colored stone." (*Histoire du peuple arménien*, p. 121).

When Ani fell into Byzantine hands in 1045, that was the end of the kingdom. Unfortunately, Byzantium's expansionist policy with regard to Armenia, developed above all under Basil II, was ultimately to the detriment of the empire itself, for it had done away with that buffer state that had for centuries served as a bulwark against forces from the East. In Grousset's view, 1045 marks the beginning of the collapse of Byzantium, in spite of its apparent prosperity. This was illusory, as soon became apparent with the terrible defeat of Romano Diogenes at Manzikert in 1071 by the Seljuks of Alp Arslan, which opened the gates of Anatolia fully and for good.

The arts and culture in general flourished greatly in the reign of the Artzruni too (908-1021). The now well-known church of Aght'amar, the marvellous architecture of the school of Ani, and the mystical poetry of St. Grigor of Narek, with its passionate accents and flowing lyrics, embody the highest values of this artistic peak

## The principality and Kingdom of Cilicia. (1080-1375)

With the fall of the Bagratids and the occupation of historical Armenia, everything now seemed lost. But it was precisely at this moment of maximum dispersion that we see the re-emergence of a strength that led to the formation of a new Armenian state, through some miracle of the tenacious will to survive. The little kingdom took shape on a territory not far from historical Armenia, to the southwest, in Cilicia, which had housed Armenian colonies since the very early days. There were many of these colonies and they were consistent, a consequence of the mass migrations that took place after the kingdoms of the motherland had collapsed.

The founder of the new dynasty in Cilicia was a prince named Ruben, probably a relative of the last king of Ani, Gagik II. After a series of long, harsh battles, Ruben succeeded in establishing his authority in the

mountainous regions of Cilicia, founding a principality that bore his name: Rubinian. This is generally held to have occurred in 1080.

One most important point is exactly how this state was formed. Strictly speaking, it had nothing to do with the principle of free conquest that governed invasions. The Armenian princes and feudal families that had emigrated to Cilicia and the neighbouring regions had been driven there by the Byzantine government itself, which gave them land in exchange for the territories the empire had confiscated. The formation of an autonomous Armenian state in Cilicia was the outcome of the revolt against this vassalage, in an attempt to recover lost dignity.

The most critical period for the principality was from 1137 to 1145, when John n Comnenus invaded Cilicia and captured Prince Levon (Leo) I, taking him off to Constantinople in chains. It was then up to Toros II, son of Levon, to escape from prison and reorganize the Armenian state of Cilicia, at the harsh cost of terrible battles waged against far superior forces led by Emperor Manuel i Comnenus himself (1143-1180).

Now sure of its existence, the principality soared dizzily higher and at the close of the century officially declared itself a kingdom. In 1199, Prince Levon II, who came to the throne in 1187, managed to have himself recognized as king by the three great powers of the times, the Germanic empire, Byzantium and Saladin.

With Levon, dubbed the Magnificent and known as Levon I in the royal succession, Armenian Cilicia lived through its period of greatest splendour. Levon died in 1219, leaving his daughter Zabel, only nine years old, as his only successor. In 1226, Zabel married Prince Het'um, from the powerful Het'umian family of Lambron (Nemrun). These bitter rivals of the Rubinian dynasty now pacifically took over the throne. One of the most significant accomplishments of Het'um i in his very long reign (1226-1270) was his journey to distant Karakorum in Mongolia (from 1253 to 1256) in order to form an alliance with the Mongol sovereign Mangu Khan, grandson of Genghis. The main object of the alliance —which was drawn up before the conversion of the Mongols to Islam (1295) and is a mark of Hat'um's great political perspicacity and wisdom — was the defeat of Sultans of Aleppo and Egypt. The Mongolian khan promised Het'um he would restore Jerusalem to the Christians once he had occupied Syria and Palestine. The allied Armeno-Mongolian forces defeated the Sultan of Aleppo, advancing as far as Damascus and Jerusalem.

But the untimely death of Mangu (1259) obliged his brother Hulaghu, commander of the allied forces, to withdraw to the north to ensure his succession to the throne. The Armenians were now alone with their closest rivals. Another noteworthy event in Het'um's reign, important from a humanitarian-ethical viewpoint, was his refusal to deliver Gait-ed-Din, the Seljuk Sultan of Iconia (Konya), an old adversary who had taken refuge with him, to the Mongol invaders, even though the latter were his allies. Instead, he sent his own son Het'sun as hostage.

The last stage of the kingdom of Cilicia began in 1342 with the advent of a new dynasty, that of the Lusignan Princes of Cyprus, who were of French origin and came to the Armenian throne through matrimonial ties when the last of the Het'umians, Levon iv, died heirless. This was the most turbulent period for the kingdom. Internal discord among the princes, aggravated by religious dissent and the Latinizing attitudes of Western missionaries, of certain Armenian milieux, and of the Lusignans themselves, did no more than aggravate an already precarious situation, which ended sadly in 1375 with the surrender of the capital city, Sis, to the Mamelukes of Egypt.

With the end of the kingdom of Cilicia, the national political unity of the Armenian people began to break up, and foreign domination ensued. Only in 1918, more than 500 years later, was it possible once more to set up a new, independent Armenian state, in a tiny portion of historical Armenia.

The kingdom of Cilicia distinguished itself for the many new developments it brought in. They were mostly the outcome of the new geographical position and immediate contact with other ethnic groups, with the Western world above all. The consequences of this — economic, social, cultural, religious and political —were many and far-reaching. Of special importance was the reorganization of the Armenian feudal system along Western lines. While the old feudalism of Armenia had always been based on a subdivision of land, the system in Cilicia, especially with the reign of Levon i, was linked with the conception of donations made by princes, a far clearer affirmation of monarchical power than in the past.

The Cilician epoch was a period of great achievements in art, especially with the splendid miniature work of Toros Roslin and many other masters. Particularly worthy of mention are the many fortresses that were built, rebuilt or reshaped by the Armenians. In literature, we note a greater variety of themes and a broader awareness of the ordinary people, their language and their problems. Profane poetry, little of which had endured from earlier periods, became the interpreter of all these ferments, revealing a new spirit, a new vision of society and of the world. In classical literature, two giants dominate the scene: St. Nerses (1102-1173), called Shnorhali, a term that denotes mildness along with a wealth of natural and supernatural gifts; and St. Nerses Lambronatsi (1152-1199) (a relative of the latter). Their religious stature is so great that they emerge from the whole context of medieval Christianity as the *ante litteram* precursors of ecumenical spirit and principles.

## The political-cultural situation after the fall of the Kingdom of Cilicia

The period from the collapse of the kingdom of Cilicia to the end of the seventeenth century was, overall, a period of impoverishment and decadence in Armenian culture. For two whole centuries, both Greater Armenia and Cilicia (also called Little Armenia, so as to avoid confusion with Armenia Minor) were the theatre of invasions, wars, and harsh struggles for power. Around the end of the fourteenth century, Tamerlane imposed his might on eastern and central Anatolia and advanced as far as the surroundings of Ankara. Here, he soundly defeated the troops of Sultan Yildirim Beyazit in 1402, but his empire soon broke up nevertheless.

The second half of the century saw, on one hand, the ascendancy of Ottoman power in central and western Anatolia as well as in the Balkans and, on the other, the new dynasty of the Safavids making its mark in Iran. For more than 100 years, these empires fought for dominion over eastern Anatolia and the Caucasian regions. The struggle ended with the decisive victory of the Ottomans who, in 1585, succeeded in annexing the eastern parts of Armenia as far as the Caucasus.

In the first decades of the seventeenth century, Shah Abbas I, who had failed in his attempt to chase the Ottomans out of all Armenia (1602-1620), during his retreat, forced the Armenians living in the prosperous city of Julfa (Djughha) on the banks of the Araxes and in the vicinity to migrate and settle in Isfahan, in order to act as catalyzers on the great trade routes. The emigres founded the city of New Julfa (Nor Djughha) there. It was a bustling centre of trade, business and culture throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, and its economic activities extended from India to Italy and England.

The rivalry between Persians and Ottomans was finally settled with the wars of 1735-36, which saw the Persians conquer southern Transcaucasia, including eastern Armenia.

Obviously, the cultural situation in the motherland was extremely precarious under these circumstances. The great cultural nuclei of the past, such as the monastery complexes, experienced growing political and social dispersion, aggravated by never-ending large scale migrations. Apart from the Julfa migration, mass movements of Armenians, which had begun in previous centuries, continued towards the northern Caucasus, the northern coasts of the Black Sea, Poland, the Balkan countries, and western Anatolia. Above all Constantinople, the new Ottoman capital; it became a veritable pole of attraction, where one saw a new, booming Armenian prosperity, favored by the fair behavior of the sultans. But Constantinople did not begin to become a centre of cultural production until the eighteenth century, reaching its culmination only halfway through the following century.

In this period of dispersion and decadence - when new centres were being set up because of the diaspora - cultural ferment somehow continued, both in certain remote, marginal regions of the motherland that had remained untouched by the calamitous political events, at least for a certain period of time, and in certain dispersion areas. In Armenia, we may recall the famous monasteries of Gladzor and Tat'ev, both in the northern part of present-day Republic of Armenia: they were fully active still in the late fifteenth century.

A notable figure to emerge from these schools was Grigor Tat'evatsi (Grigor of Tat'ev), philosopher, theologian, master of sciences in the medieval sense of the term, and he was the most accomplished representative of Armenian scholasticism.

A development of no little cultural and religious importance, whose roots went back to the Cilician epoch and whose influence was to be felt beyond the eighteenth century, was the somewhat ill-guided activity of Latin missionaries. In their presumed attempt to bring about a union of the Armenian Church with the Church of Rome, they ended by creating deep cracks in the solidarity of the Armenian people, who had already been deprived of the greatest supporters of ethnic and national unity. The extremists among these missionaries and their Armenian disciples - often more fanatical than their masters in their drive to latinize the Armenian Church - not only went so far as to introduce "corrections" into Armenian liturgy and ecclesiastical discipline but actually began to model the Armenian language on Latin morphology and syntax. The movement reached its climax in the second half of the seventeenth century and was to die out at the end of the following century as a result of the ruthless fight put up by the Mekhitarist school. But while the latinization movement brought about a number of evil results, we should also recall that there was a certain positive outcome as well: more frequent, more assiduous contact with the Western world and its progress, and the introduction of printing shops and cultural methodologies so efficient that they were assimilated even by the most seasoned opponents of the movement.

Obviously, the principal and most important means of contact between the Armenian people and the western world were the colonies. And it should come as no surprise that the Armenians were the second ethnic group in the Middle East, after the Jews, to have their own printing shop, set up in Venice in 1509-1512. In one of the darkest periods of Armenian history, this event is truly symbolic of a burning desire for light, and it was a foretaste of the Renaissance that was to follow. Venice in the second half of the 1500s and above all in the seventeenth century, then Leghorn, Rome, Milan, Marseille, Amsterdam and other European cities, and New Julfa and Constantinople in the East, would become in turn famous centres of Armenian typographical art. The first edition of the Armenian edition of the Bible — called by La Croze the queen of translations—was published in Amsterdam in 1666 by *vardapet* Oskan Yerevantsi, sent on this special mission to the West by Catholicos Hakob Djughayetsi (1655-1680).

Another positive phenomenon in this otherwise desolate period was the flourishing of cultured, profane, and popular poetry in the language of the people, which had already begun in the Cilician epoch. But the vernacular could not yet be used as an instrument of scientific culture. One had to wait until the latter half of the nineteenth century for that.

## Isolated nuclei of independence and the beginnings of the liberation movement

The collapse of the kingdoms of Greater Armenia and Cilicia did not signify the absolute end of autonomy. Various princely houses, holding fast to their strongholds deep in valley or high on inaccessible mountains, managed to maintain their own independence, some for centuries. Among them were the princes of Siunik', a historical region in the south of present-day Republic of Armenia and Khatchen (corresponding nearly to today's region of Karabagh). They maintained their power virtually until Tamerlane's invasion. Later, their descendants partly took the same powers back from the Ottoman Turks of the Black Sheep (Kara-Koyunlu), who had seized eastern Anatolia during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, they were allowed to use the title of *melik'*, in the sense of autonomous prince, even though etymologically speaking the term means "king". With the passing of time, there were five "melikates" in this mountainous area, and in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, their descendants became the high aristocracy of eastern Armenia. Some have survived to this day: among others, we may recall the Hasan-Djalalian and Aghamalian families.

A small Armenian principality that remained autonomous to a certain degree was at Hamshen (Hemshin) on the coasts of the Black Sea, in Lazistan (formerly Pontus), surrounded by Moslem principalities. In the eighteenth century, the process of forced Islamization began, followed by a loss of independence that lasted until early in the nineteenth century. In certain villages in the area, people still speak the ancient Armenian dialect of Hamshen, as Dumézil noted during his study trip in Turkey in the sixties. (See *Revue des Etudes Armeniennes*, nouvelle série, IV, 1967).

Yet another semi-independent centre was at Sasun (now Sason) in the inaccessible mountains south of the plains of Mush (Mus) in the province of Taron. The Sasunians paid the local Kurdish bey an annual tribute in exchange for their internal autonomy. This situation lasted practically until the bloody repressions wrought by the Ottoman government in the last ten years of the nineteenth century.

In Cilicia, the people of Zeyt'un were the standard-bearers of Armenian semi-independence. In the heart of the Anti-Taurus range, Zeyt'un managed to maintain a form of internal self-government based on the figure of the *paron*, or *baron*, until 1862. The barons were the heads of the four leading families. The price paid to the sultan for this independence was 5,000 piastres a year.

Again in Cilicia, other principalities enjoying a certain independence were to be found at Hadjn and T'omarza. The latter was just outside the borders of Cilicia, in historical Armenia Minor, south east of Caesarea (Kayseri). The princes of Hadjn were able to keep their privileges until the second half of the eighteenth century, while the T'omarza prince maintained theirs, reduced as they were, until the Ottoman Constitution of 1908.

From this somewhat summary picture, it emerges that the thirst for independence had by no means ever fled the conscience of the Armenian people. And this explains the creation of the liberation movements that gave rise to the "Armenian question."

In a recent article full of original material, Sisakian calls J. Laurent to mind and states quite rightly that the Armenian question began in the Middle Ages. And he goes on: "Wishing to seek a conventional date for the first official manifestation of Armenian aspirations for liberation, one could take the secret council that met at Etchmiadzin... under Hakob IV of Julfa in 1677" (A. Sisakian, "Questions armenes?", in *L'Oriente Moderno*, LXI, 1981, p. 21).

"Twelve *melik'* were members of the council... they discussed the possibilities of using the help of "Christian powers" to liberate the regions subjected to Persia and the Ottomans" (Sisakian, *ibid.*). And from then on, the same objective was pursued intermittently, both through diplomatic channels and through the use of force. The most notable diplomatic attempt made before the Congress of Berlin was without doubt the effort of Israyel Ori, son of one of the *melik'* who took part in the Etchmiadzin Council. In vain did he frequent all the leading courts of Europe which, in the end, directed him towards Russia. He soon realized that a *Realpolitik* for the liberation of Armenia could not do without an alliance with Russia, given the enormous distances and differing interests separating Armenia from the other "Christian powers." This latter concept shows how, like all the Christian peoples of the East, the Armenians remained estranged from post-Renaissance developments in the West, and how ingenuous they were in their hopes for a Christian alliance. Ori died in 1711 without having achieved any tangible results except, perhaps, that of getting Peter the Great interested in the Armenian question and arousing far greater ethnic awareness and cohesion among the Armenian magnates.

In actual fact, years later, in 1722, Peter the Great was to undertake a Caucasian campaign, but once he reached Derbend and Baku - a political and military success he could be satisfied with for the moment - he did

not wish to compromise further the strategic equilibrium with the Ottomans. So he stopped his march of triumph, greatly disappointing the expectations of the Armenian *melik'* and leaving them alone to face the powerful imperial army.

For eight years, from 1722 to 1730, under the strong, wise leadership of Davit' Bek, the Armenians carried on the unequal fight until the Ottomans bested them following the defection of certain Armenian generals and princes after the death of Davit'. The actions of these men arose out of silly squabbling for power. Nevertheless, these battles are some of the most glorious pages of recent Armenian history, and Davit' is one of the Armenian people's most popular heroes. His name is linked in the popular imagination with the legendary figure of the same name, Sasuntsi Davit' (Davit' of Sasun), hero of the national epos.

The latter half of the eighteenth century saw various attempts at diplomatic persuasion in the wake of Ori. The most noteworthy were the efforts made by General Hovsep' (Joseph) Emin, a man from India who enrolled in the English army, and by Archbishop Hovsep' Arghut'ian. Attempts at the courts of Heraclius II (1762-1796), King of Georgia, and of Catherine II, to urge an anti-Islamic coalition were to no avail, because the intentions of Russia, as they revealed later, were not to make Georgia and Armenia autonomous allies but rather simply to annex them to its own empire without further ado. Sure enough, in 1827, the son of Heraclius, Giorgi ceded his kingdom to Czar Paul I; at the same time Eastern Armenia, snatched from Persian dominion, was annexed. The 1828 treaty of Türkmənçay confirmed this new state of affairs.

## The Renaissance

The Seventeenth century — and above all from 1630 onwards, when a period of relative peace and quiet was beginning in Armenia after the campaign of Shah Abbas — offers a broad panorama of ongoing, consistent efforts to accomplish a cultural and religious revival made principally by the enlightened churchmen who succeeded one other on the throne of the catholicos in Etchmiadzin and by certain *vardapet*. Thanks to these efforts, high-level schools were established at New Julfa — we have already discussed its cultural vitality — at Etchmiadzin and at Baghesh (present-day Bitlis). At the same time as this ferment in the literary and scientific fields was underway, the arts, architecture and the miniature in particular, were also permeated by a vigorous revivalist inspiration. Unfortunately, if the revival of the plastic arts met with greater success and diffusion, efforts for a literary-scientific revival did not yet penetrate too deeply into the vast, lethargic structures of the cultural milieu. But there were more or less isolated achievements, and they did help to prepare the way for the accomplishments of the following century, above all the work of Mekhitar (Mkhit'ar), which provided the decisive boost.

Mekhitar's work differs from former works in its organic unity and organization, based on the double criterion of efficiency and endurance. It is also different in that through his I mediation Armenian culture came for the first time into very close contact with the various expressions of western tradition, both ancient and modern. It is different in its ideological If content, both on the strictly religious level and on more general cultural levels.

The religious content of Mekhitar's work was ecumenical, expressed with an intuition at least two-and-a-half centuries ahead of its time, which was naturally understood neither during his times nor afterwards. The cultural content of his work may be defined as humanism with a Christian inspiration. It views man in his totality, so the range of topics covered is vast: from history and linguistics to beekeeping, chicken farming, and the production of silk. The reason that lay behind this was the condition of the Armenian people, who desired no more than the possibility to live a full human life. Publishing (and later the periodical press), the system of itinerant preachers, and the vast network of schools were the fulcrum of the Mekhitarist apostolate. The impact of Mekhitar's work on Armenian culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and later was such that one of the greatest modern Armenian historians, Leo, states confidently in his monumental *History of the Armenians*, in its pages dedicated to Mekhitar, that he “marks the beginning of a totally new era in the history of our spiritual progress”, (*op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 979, in Armenian). Leo does not hesitate to qualify the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the “Mekhitarist century”.

## The Reawakening (c. 1840-1880)

While the Renaissance, *veratznund*, fitted into the traditional structures of cultural production and propagated through them, the term Reawakening, *zart'onk'*, a common word in Armenian historiography, denotes the period during which new structures, new means of propagation, and also new partners in cultural production were created. In other words, this was the period when the victories of the Renaissance left their elitist environments wherein the learned culture of the past had always been guarded, and became the common property of the whole people, in both the productive and the receptive sense.

The Reawakening true and proper was preceded by a period of transition, the first decades of the nineteenth century. The main thing one notices during this time is the first great expansion of schools and the first attempts to set up the periodical press. This was also the period when modern Armenian began to appear forcefully in cultured literature, becoming the object of learned discussions and elaborate study. About halfway through the century, modern Armenian was already well established, even though there was still some hesitation over accepting it in the more traditional circles, that were closely attached to classical Armenian. Language, then, was one of the most evident manifestations of the Reawakening.

Another fundamental development of these times was the abolition of the clerical monopoly over culture, which was carried out without a hitch because it was brought about by the clerics themselves, in their schools. This obviously meant that cultural content too became secularized. From now on, Armenian culture was to keep pace with the great movements of the West; indeed, it often brought the West to the Middle East. The Reawakening was, in fact, greatly influenced by Romanticism and an urgent neo-Classicism.

In the Reawakening, attention was also paid to socio-pedagogical problems (the emancipation of women, a reassessment of the theatre as entertainment, of the actor's profession, certain changes in lifestyle, and so on). The Reawakening profoundly changed Armenian society both in the Ottoman capital and, later, in the internal provinces. For the eastern Armenians, Tiflis, that nineteenth-century cosmopolitan city, acted as a go-between for Russian-German and Armenian culture.

Religious questions and struggles also left their mark on the period. The long, patient efforts of the Mekhitarists to overcome differences of religious opinion between Armenians who did or did not sympathize with the Church of Rome were permanently hampered by vehement clashes between the pro-Latin and nationalist wings. A reasonable compromise was proposed in 1820, subscribed by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Poghos, the Mekhitarists, and the notables of Ottoman capital (the name of the city was officially changed to Istanbul only with the advent of the Turkish Republic in 1923).

Extremist fanaticism on both sides, Catholic or not, prevented the initiative from enjoying any success. Later (1850-1860), mainly under the leadership of the poet and playwright Mkrtych' Beshikt'ashlian, student of the Moorat Mekhitarist College of Padua in Italy, more balanced minds strove to stress the need to overcome religious discord and rediscover a sense of national unity. In pursuit of these ideals the "Hamazgiats" (connationals) association was founded. All Armenians could belong to it regardless of their religious beliefs. But ostracism and religious fanaticism once again threatened its success in carrying out its objectives, which were to unite the efforts of all for the improvement of the peasants' condition by introducing modern farming methods; to elevate cultural levels through a network of schools to be founded in the interior; and other such initiatives. Although officially the movement was a failure, the mentality it created left its mark on various strata of the Armenian people; but its fruits became tangible only long after, first with regard religious beliefs and then regarding political tendencies.

This was also a time of rapid social change. While the old aristocracy, the *amira* class (Armenian nobles in the Ottoman empire) that had come to maturation in the previous century, approached the peak of prosperity in the mid-nineteenth century and then began to decline, new merchant classes emerged along with professional people, artisans (goldsmiths, for instance) and above all a new class of intellectuals, mostly educated in Western universities, in London, Paris, Dorpat (present-day Tatu), and St. Petersburg. The interests and ideologies of the new classes often conflicted with those of the *amira* and their circle.

Finally, we should recall the historical context created by the Tanzimat movement (1839) (for relations with the Armenians, see the art. cit. by Sisakian, and J. Etmekjian, *The Tanzimat Reforms*), promoted by Sultan Mahmud II as a stimulus and programme for an approach by the Ottoman Empire to Western culture. Although the imperial edict did not have a very deep impact or produce radical change, this political-cultural context did favour the free development of the Armenian culture of the Reawakening and in turn drew from it inspiration and criteria for orientation.

## The Armenian Question and the Catastrophe of Genocide

The Reawakening was also the period during which, after a certain stasis early in the century, the Armenian question re-emerged and suddenly became more bitter, under the impulse of many different factors. Among these were for example, the precarious and sometimes desperate situation of the masses, the peasant classes above all, in the internal eastern provinces; the new national conscience of the young intelligentsia that formed after the examples set by the Italian Risorgimento and the insurrectionary movements in the Hapsburg and Russian Empires; the gaining of freedom by the Balkan peoples, formerly subjects of the Ottoman Empire; and the competition between the great powers, which was accompanied by empty and sometimes deceitful promises, to exploit the situation of the Armenians for their own end.

The need for reform was ever more pressing, and was spurred also by a certain local autonomy that was later to burst out into a demand for independence. The Congress of Berlin (1878) marked the official ingress of

the Armenian question into modern international diplomacy. This formed the first bitter disappointment for the Armenians. The comment made about that occasion by Grigor Otian, one of the more illuminated spirits of the time and counsellor to Mithad Pasha when the first Ottoman constitution was drawn up, has remained famous: “We have worked hard to obtain this article (article 61, which speaks of the Armenians) and we must now work just as hard and even harder to forget it.” Article 61 was of little use to the Armenians, being no more than a pretext for suspicion and the sultan's exertions against them.

In the short period between 1885 and 1890, the three main Armenian political parties of the times were founded: Armenakan (1885, armenophile); Hnchakian (1887, socialist); and Dashnaksakan (1890, confederated). The latter was the revolutionary confederation that initially promoted the idea of establishing a confederation consisting of the already existing parties and the various revolutionary movements. The project did not work, and the dashnaksakan party became another party alongside the others. All three parties were active within the framework of the great socialist ferment of the end of the century. But they also had a clearly nationalistic inspiration, in that the common objective of all three was the autonomy or independence of Armenia. Then, in 1908, the Ramkavar (popular/democratic) party was founded: it was tendentially liberal-democratic and shared the national objective with the other three. Obviously, the methods and strategies employed by each of these parties distinguished them from one another. Finally, Lenin's ideals of socialist revolution made great strides in those years, especially among the young intellectuals of the Caucasus, and the Armenian Communist party was eventually founded.

These movements, carried out in general by young intellectuals lacking political experience, met the decided opposition of the ruling party in the Ottoman empire, called of “Union and Progress”, known also as the party of the “Young Turks”, which was inspired by a panturanic ideology, and aimed at keeping not only the integrity of the existing empire but also at enlarging it in order to include the various Turkic populations of Central Asia. The result was the immense Catastrophe that led to the total uprooting of the Armenian people from their native Anatolian land where, for nearly 3,000 years, they had lived, worked and built. In recent history, it is perhaps a unique case, certainly singular, of a land that has been completely emptied of its most ancient and culturally advanced ethnic group. It is the first great genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which unfortunately has been up to day the object of a strong negationist campaign. It is generally estimated that nearly one million and a half of people died in the massacres and some eight hundred thousand survived in the hell of exile. Some of the survivors were to form one of the more consistent nuclei of the new Armenian Republic, while the rest were scattered over the world in the more recent Armenian diaspora.

## The Armenian Republic

Five and a half centuries after the fall of the Kingdom of Cilicia and the depopulation of eight tenths of the historical territory of Armenia, the Republic of Armenia was proclaimed, on 28 May 1918. It had a surface area of about 4,000 square miles around the capital Yerevan and a population of little less than a million people. But the new-born Republic, which had enlarged its boundaries by reconquering part of the ancient Armenian territory, was not able to withstand the confrontation with the far superior forces of Turkey, and capitulated on 18 November 1920. On the 30th of the same month, the Sovietization of Armenia was proclaimed, and then finalized with the surrender of the last pocket of resistance on 13 July 1921.

The Soviet Republic of Armenia included an area of about 11,500 square miles and had a population of over 3,500,000 at the moment of its collapse. There were more than 300,000 Armenian casualties in the Second World War. Although it was the smallest of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union, both in terms of population density and of surface area, Armenia was of great importance in industrial production and, above all, in certain branches of the sciences. The astrophysics school of the Biurakan observatory, run by one of the greatest astronomers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Victor Ambartzumian (Hambartzumian), is still very well known. Among the outstanding historical leaders of the Revolution were several Armenians, including Shahumian, Makintsian, Miasnikian and, last but not least, Anastas Mikoyan, who was also the longest living political survivor of those times. His brother, Artem Mikoyan, created the famous MIG jet fighters. In chess, the national sport in all the area covered by the former Russian and Soviet empires, Tigran Petrossian and Gary Kasparov (part Armenian) are listed among the best minds ever in the history of this sophisticated intellectual “game.” In other fields of sport too, Armenia boasts of remarkable records in relation to its small population. In the arts, we may recall the musician Aram Khatchaturian, a personality of the same stature in the Soviet Union as Prokofiev and Shostakovich; the painter Martiros Sarian, whom Aragon considered one of the masters of the first half of the last century; and the poetic genius of Yeghishe Tcharents indeed, he was rightly considered to be the greatest poet of the Revolution, along with Mayakovsky, though he was less well known, for obvious linguistic reasons.

Finally, we may note that Armenia was the most ethnically homogeneous of all the Soviet republics: more than 90% of the population was Armenian. This proportion is even higher today, although the overall population of Armenia has been drastically reduced in the last ten years, due to massive migration movements.

## Diaspora

While the process that led to the formation of the Armenian Republic was in progress, the present great diaspora was already underway.

Few peoples have experienced as many migrations in the course of their history as the Armenians have; nor have most peoples merged for so long or adapted so well to the social, economic, cultural, and even political fabric of their countries of adoption, while still maintaining the distinctive traits of their original identity. Indeed, since the very beginnings of history, the Armenians have always somehow expanded into regions beyond their own frontiers. We should at this point attempt to clear up certain misconceptions about the Armenian diaspora. In our view, we cannot talk of the Armenians' dispersal as a diaspora in the strict sense of the word, that is, as a state of "dispersion"; it did not become so until immediately after the 1915 massacre when, as we have already mentioned, most of the historical territory of Armenia was depopulated and the survivors spread to every corner of the world. This same process is still underway, in a certain sense, with the mass migrations from the Middle East that are due to the unstable political situation that now pervades practically the whole area. Before 1915, it would be more appropriate to speak of "colonies," although the collapse of Greater Armenia and Cilicia and the consequent political situation had already laid the grounds for a diaspora type of migration. The fact remains, however, that most of the Armenian people continued to live in their own land.

Then, the Armenian colonies are to be distinguished from those of the Ancient Greeks and from the English and French colonies of more recent times, in that both the former and the latter powers ended up by "colonizing," that is, importing their own language and culture, to the lands they occupied, more often than not by military and political conquest. This did not happen with the Armenians, whose colonies had no dominating function, except perhaps economically. Indeed, even when the Armenians rose to great heights in the societies they had entered, as in the Byzantine empire, for example, their position did not fundamentally change the political, linguistic, or cultural setup of those societies.

To get an idea of the situation that existed, let us quote the opinion of an eminent Byzantine scholar on the Byzantium colony, which is doubtless one of the most eloquent cases in the history of Armenian colonies. Peter Charanis has this to say: "For almost five hundred years, the Armenians played an important rôle in the political, military and administrative life of the Byzantine empire... During the early part of this period, in the 7th and 8th centuries, when the empire was struggling for its very existence, they helped a good deal in fighting its enemies. But their role was even more important in the 9th and 10th centuries when, as soldiers, administrators and emperors, they dominated the social, military and political life of the empire, whose greatness is largely due to them. Indeed, their role was so important in this period that these two centuries of the Byzantine empire might well be called Greco-Armenian: "Greco" because, as always, their civilization was Greek, "Armenian" because most of the people who directed the empire's destiny and provided most of the forces to defend it were either Armenians or men of Armenian origin" (*The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire*, p. 57). We feel that no further comment is needed.

To a lesser extent, the Armenians were extremely active and influential also in the Persian empire (above all in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), in the Russian empire and, more than anywhere else in the Ottoman Empire of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Other colonies flourished in Poland and Transylvania (from the 14<sup>th</sup> through the 18th centuries), in various Italian cities (in the 13<sup>th</sup> through the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), France (from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onward), Holland (in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18th centuries), India (in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries), Crimea (from the 14<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) and Tiflis (in the 18<sup>th</sup> and, above all, 19<sup>th</sup> centuries). In Italy, from the Late Middle Ages onwards, Armenians had settled in more than forty places, with their own monasteries, churches, hospices, social and commercial structures and, later, printing houses. We may recall that the first book in Armenian was printed in Venice and, with the Mekhitar Foundation, Venice became the most important centre of the Armenian Renaissance in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. As for the Armenian's economic activities, we need only refer to Braudel, who considers Armenia to have been the "maximum inter-agent" of world trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> and part of the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a function equal to that later assumed by the Jews. Among the most famous Armenian names in Italy in past centuries were Giorgio Baglivi, whom the Treccani Encyclopedia holds to be "one of the most eminent men in the history of medicine" (Baglivi was the name of a doctor of Lecce who adopted him as an orphan of a Julfa family of foreign descent); the Venetian engineer Anton Sourian; the Venetian abbot and author Zaccaria Seriman; the poetess Vittoria Aganoor; and the chemist Giacomo Ciamician.

After the 1915 Catastrophe, the greatest foci of the new diaspora were the United States of America and France, which welcomed the Armenians that had survived from the Syrian desert and from Constantinople and, in smaller numbers, from the Caucasus, above all after the October Revolution. Between the wars, Greece had a very large colony of refugees, who came straight from Western Anatolia. This community decreased greatly in the Second World War and is about 12,000 strong today. In the East, Syria and Lebanon were the backbone not only of the Middle-Eastern community but of the whole diaspora on account of the very favourable conditions

they offered for the preservation of both the culture and the language of the Armenians. In Lebanon at the present time, in spite of the recent migrations, there are still nearly 150,000 Armenians, while the community in Syria is estimated at 70,000. In the pre-Nasser period, Egypt, where tens of thousands of Armenians still live today, was a very flourishing colony, with socio-cultural traditions dating back to an enlightened bourgeoisie of the last century. Iran, where Armenians from the penultimate generation were settled as from the times of Shah Abbas, saw its Armenian community grow with influxes from the neighbouring regions of Van, Kars, and Erzerum, partly as a result of the Ottoman persecutions and the Soviet Revolution. It is estimated that something like 120,000 Armenians now live in Iran, after the great migrations of recent years. In Turkey, where the Armenians of Constantinople were exempt from deportation, there are now some 70,000 Armenians in Istanbul and perhaps 10,000 or more in the interior. All these numbers reflect the situation prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. A strong migratory movement has been developing since then from Armenia. Likely one million of people left the country.

Other poles of attraction for the Armenians were Argentina (80,000 settled there) from the twenties to the fifties, and Canada and Australia (about 45,000 Armenians in all) in the last three decades. Nearly one million Armenians live in the United States, 400,000 in France. There are Armenians just about everywhere. Their numbers in the countries outside of the former Soviet Union must be somewhere around three million and about two million Armenians outside the Armenian Republic in the countries of the former Soviet Union. As was true before the Revolution, the largest group of the latter is in Georgia, mainly in Tbilisi, the capital. According to official Soviet figures, they total was more than 200,000. So there is a total of seven million or so Armenians worldwide, about one third of them in Armenia and the most spread through the rest of the world.

Maintaining the traditions of the old Armenian colonies, the Armenians of the diaspora did not fail to achieve considerable success in financial affairs, of course, as was traditional, and in practically every other sector of human activity. Let us recall the names of a few famous persons of Armenian origin: the writers William Saroyan, Michael Aden, Henri Troyat, the singers Charles Aznavour and Katy Berberian, the painter Jean-Marie Carzou, the film director Henri Verneuil (Achod Maghakian), and, of course, Calouste Gulbenkian, father of the foundation of the same name in Portugal.

Italy has barely 2,000 Armenians or a few more perhaps, apart from the monastic community on the island of San Lazzaro and the Moorat-Raphael College of Venice, and these are concentrated in Milan and Rome. But in spite of their small numbers, the Armenians in Italy have achieved notable successes in the country's cultural life: we may mention the book and film critic Glauco Viazzi (Jusik Achrafian, 1921-1981), the art critic Eduardo Arslan (Yetwart, 1899-1968), the musician Angelo Efrikian (1910-1982), the Arslan family of ear, nose, and throat specialists in Padua and Genoa, and Alessandro Megighian (1928-1981), former president of the European Academy of Gnathology. The first three were commemorated in a praiseworthy initiative from 1982 to 1984 in Venice, under the general title "Armenians in Italian culture."

It could be said that the history of the colonies and of the diaspora is the image or reflection of the whole history of the Armenian people. In spite of promising signs in the last ten years, agitation within the diaspora is also an expression of a certain malaise that cannot be discussed within the terms of reference of this work. What we can wish - and not only for the Armenians - is that the troubles in the Middle East may soon be over and that, in turn, the Western countries, which have been culturally monolithic in the recent past, may find a better and greater sense of pluralism, not only in their political parties and elections, but also in a *de facto* and *de jure* acknowledgement of the linguistic and cultural rights of every ethnic group, independent of its relations or connection with any given territory.