



The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research

NAASR Holds 54th Annual Assembly

NAASR held its 54th Annual Assembly of Members on Saturday, May 17, at its Belmont headquarters. In addition to holding elections and business sessions, the Assembly heard a lecture by Dr. Sergio La Porta entitled "Armenian Studies in Jerusalem and the Challenges of the 21st Century." (See summary of Dr. La Porta's lecture elsewhere in this *Newsletter*.)

Prior to Dr. La Porta's talk, NAASR Chairman Nancy R. Kolligian paid tribute to two special individuals. First, Alice Kalustian of Arlington, MA, was honored for her long-time dedication to NAASR and regular attendance at NAASR events. Alice had recently turned 99



NAASR Chairman Nancy R. Kolligian and Dr. Sergio La Porta

and continues to follow NAASR's activities with interest. Next, Kolligian acknowledged the 45 years of extraordinary service of Sandra L. Jurigian to NAASR.

see ASSEMBLY, page 5

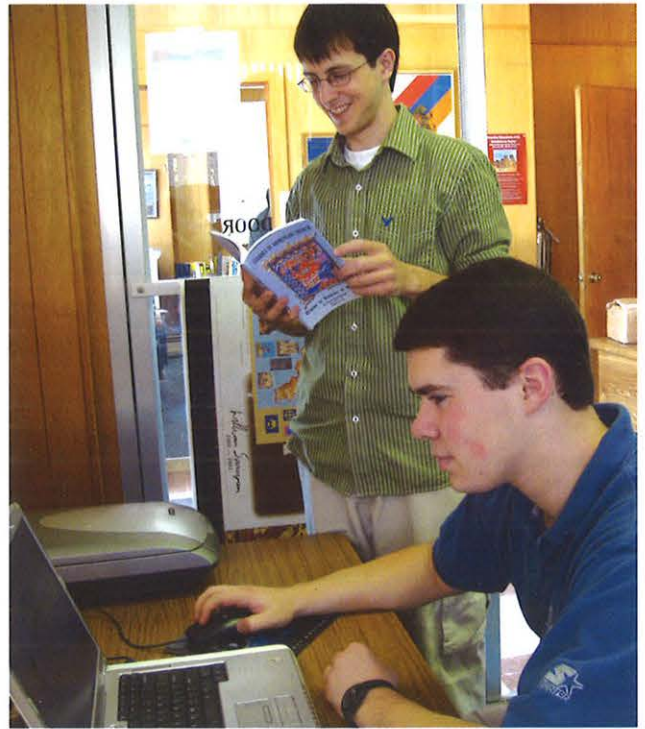
Redesign of NAASR Website and Launch of Online Bookstore

NAASR has completed a full overhaul and redesign of its website, www.naasr.org, including the launch of our online bookstore. The online bookstore is available for use now, and throughout the summer months it has been extensively updated with images and descriptions for virtually all items by our team of student interns, Vartan Babikyan (here for his second consecutive summer), Joseph McNamara, and Alec Almasian.

In addition to purchasing books from the NAASR bookstore, you can now pay NAASR membership dues and make donations through www.naasr.org. We hope you will renew your dues, or reinstate your membership for 2008, in order to take advantage of the 15% membership discount available for book purchases.

In order to navigate through the bookstore online, customers will first have to register as online users. The login area is on the far right side of the bookstore page. If you are visiting for the first time you should create a profile and set up your username and password. We will be sending out information about new and

WEBSITE, page 6



Vartan Babikyan (standing) and Joseph McNamara at work in the NAASR bookstore.

NAASR and Knights of Vartan Continue Joint Administration of Fund for Armenian Studies

NAASR and the Knights of Vartan have completed a full fiscal year during which the two organizations collaborated on administering the Knights' Fund for Armenian Studies (FAS). The organizations have agreed to continue the partnership.

The first grant under the new relationship was issued in November 2007 to Hasmik E. Khalapyan from Yerevan, currently

a Ph.D. degree candidate in History at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. Khalapyan received a grant to attend and present a paper at the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) annual conference in Montreal.

In 2008, several additional grants have been disbursed. Dr. Erna Manea Shirinian, Lecturer at Yerevan State University in

the Department of Theology and Head of Researching and Editing of Ancient Armenian Texts at the Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran), was awarded a publication grant for the continuation of the publication *Armenica*, of which she is the founding editor. *Armenica* is an annual publication aimed at providing greater see K OF V, page 7

News from NAASR's Edward and Helen Mardigian Library

NAASR Library Receives Grant from Mardigian Foundation

NAASR has received a \$50,000 grant from the Michigan-based Mardigian Foundation in order to carry out much-needed short-term improvements in its Edward and Helen Mardigian Armenian Reference and Research Library.

The scheduled improvements include interior repairs and repairs to the roof and ceiling of the library. A dedicated computer and a microfiche reader/printer for researchers will be purchased and working areas for researchers will be upgraded.

NAASR Library to Receive Books of Prof. George Bournoutian

A major addition to NAASR's Mardigian Library will begin arriving in the Fall of 2008 as the first part of the personal library of Prof. George Bournoutian of Iona College finds a new home. Over the course of the next several years, the entire contents of Prof. Bournoutian's collection will become the Ani and George Bournoutian Collection at NAASR.

The collection of more than 2,000 volumes has been amassed over Bournoutian's several decades of activity as a historian and has been instrumental in researching many of his publications, which include important works and translations on Armenian history with particular attention to interactions with Russia and Persia. These interests are reflected in the holdings of the Bournoutian collection in such important reference works as the two-volume *Cambridge History of Islam*, the seven-volume *Cambridge History of Iran*, thirteen-volume *Encyclopedia Iranica*, the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, and the rare fifty-volume *Dehkhoda Persian Dictionary*. It includes complete runs of several vital periodicals, including the *Journal of Iranian Studies* and *Patmabanavarakan Handes*, and innumerable rare and important titles.

The collection, when transferred in its entirety to NAASR, will remain in separate rooms from NAASR's 22,000 volume Mardigian Library. A significant number of titles in the collection are all but inaccessible anywhere else in the region. The Bournoutian Collection will begin to be open by appointment to researchers in the near future. More



Helen Mardigian and the late Edward Mardigian, NAASR library benefactors.

information about the collection will be announced as it is received.

NAASR Library, Armenian Genocide Museum of America, Receive Collection

NAASR and the Washington, D.C., based Armenian Genocide Museum of America are the joint recipients of an interesting archive that belonged to the late Rose Keyian of Vestal, NY, who passed away in 2006 and had been a NAASR member.

The collection comprises a large amount of material assembled by Keyian in the course of her personal research on the Armenian Genocide. There are numerous books, copies of books, articles, and detailed notes with sources cited on many aspects of the genocide.

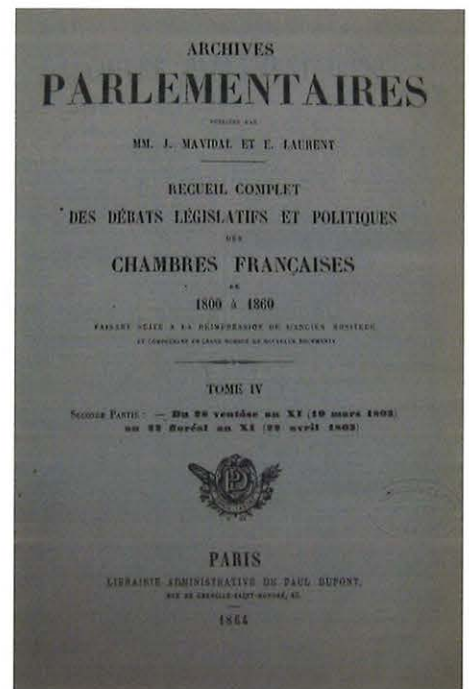
Of central importance in the collection are more than 30 audio cassettes of interviews Keyian conducted with Armenian Genocide survivors in the 1970s along with written material from survivors describing their experiences. For example, there is a thirteen-page English translation of the recollections of Mr. Nahabed Apikian, who was born in 1900 in the village of Zivelg in Zeitun province. Sent to the desert as part of the deportations from the Marash region, he managed to survive and reached Der Zor and eventually a small Arab village near Mosul.

It will be necessary to digitize both the fragile original recordings and the written material in order to make it available to researchers. NAASR is grateful to the Keyian estate for this thoughtful and significant bequest and to the Armenian Genocide Museum of America, and in particular Dr. Rouben Adalian, for their cooperation in working out an arrangement whereby the materials will be housed at NAASR under joint ownership.

Mardigian Library Receives French Parliamentary Volumes

NAASR's Mardigian Library has received an unusual and welcome donation from Prof. Paul Jankowski of the Department of History at Brandeis University: a collection of more than 100 volumes of French Archives Parlementaires. The donated collection consists of 54 volumes of the Premiere Serie (first series), 1789-1800, and 76 volumes from the Deuxieme Serie (second series), 1800-1860.

NAASR appreciates the donation of these reference works which, given the extensive in-



One of the French Archives Parlementaires volumes

teraction between France and the Near East in the era covered, should be very valuable to researchers.



Board Member Steve Kurkjian Speaks at Sage Colleges in Troy

On the evening of April 3, the Armenian lecture series of the Sage Colleges presented Stephen Kurkjian as its guest lecturer. Mr. Kurkjian, a Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter for the *Boston Globe*, gave an overview of the year's Armenian Genocide-related developments in a sometimes emotion-filled speech titled, "Beyond Genocide Recognition." The talk took place before a sizable crowd at Bush Memorial Auditorium on the Troy campus of Russell Sage College.

According to Kurkjian's reckoning, 2007 proved to be the most meaningful and tumultuous year for Armenian-Turkish relations in a generation. While the year witnessed several high-profile developments touching on the Genocide, Kurkjian noted especially the assassination of Hrant Dink in Istanbul, and the U.S. Congress' consideration of the "Armenian Genocide resolution," H.R. 106.

He said he is looking forward in a positive way to see what the future holds for bridging the differences that have long divided the two peoples. In the wake of the Dink assassination, Kurkjian actually traveled to Istanbul to attend the funeral, and said he was amazed to see such an emotionally-charged display of respect for the victim, by Turks and Armenians alike. He suggested that Hrant Dink's death is destined to play a greater role in the future for those Turkish people who believe in the resolution of the Armenian Genocide.

Among recent positive developments along that path, he noted several Turkish writers who have, for the first time, begun to broach this subject in a daringly truthful way, at the risk of being sent to prison or even being killed.

In remarks that touched on a variety of important Armenian issues of the past, present, and future, Kurkjian said that Armenians should be prepared to approach opportunities arising from these issues, and to take responsibility in a timely and proper manner when decisions need to be made, both pro and con.

Regarding recognition of the Genocide in Turkey itself, he said he believes that it will come, but warned that it cannot be just a "word-recognition," but instead needs to be accompanied by a genuine change of

mind on the part of the Turkish people.

Leadership as regards this change had come from the late Hrant Dink, whom Kurkjian called "an ardent supporter of Turkey's EU entry process." Dink "believed there were more than a million Turkish citizens of Armenian ethnicity who would gain the courage to come out and become a political power in Turkey," he said, "and that recognition and activism must originate in the grassroots from the Turkish people."

The subject came up in the Q-and-A session that followed the formal talk, when Kurkjian was asked how important Armenian Genocide recognition would be to Turkey's future as a nation. He responded by saying, "Confession is good for the soul. For a democracy to survive it has to rely on the maturity of its citizenry. When a government hides or represses the truth, you have to confront that, or leave your people in the Dark Ages."

Asked about the presence of Muslim political extremism in Turkey, and whether such fears would constitute a valid reason to prevent its EU accession, Kurkjian said: "Turkey is not a country that espouses terrorism; its problems are how it deals with its minorities."

Mr. Kurkjian also related an apropos anecdote about his trip to Kayseri (the ancestral city of his father) and his tour of surrounding villages that had been Armenian prior to 1915. When he asked his tour guide how he knew the villages had once been Armenian, the guide told him: "The windows will tell you. Muslims don't build houses with large windows; Armenians do. They have nothing to hide."

A reception followed the lecture, at Buchman Pavilion. As an added bonus, Mr. Kurkjian was invited to speak the following morning in two classes, on Asian history and communications, at the Sage Colleges. Also at the institution, an exhibit of Armenian history books, tapes, and maps was shown at both the Troy and Albany campus libraries throughout the month of April.

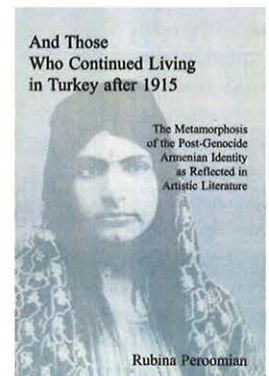
The Armenian lecture series is funded through an endowment at the school.

(By Lucille Gochigian Sarkissian, *Armenian Reporter*, April 19, 2008)

New Book by NAASR Board Member Rubina Peroomian

NAASR Board Member for Southern California Dr. Rubina Peroomian's new study, *And Those Who Continued Living in Turkey After 1915*, has been published by the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan.

In her earlier book *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience* (1993), she analyzed Armenian and Jewish literary works written in response to the horrors of genocide. Peroomian's new work focuses on the representation of Armenians who continued living in Turkey after the Armenian Genocide. In the introduction, she writes, "I shift my focus to trace the effects of that past traumatic experience on the formation and metamorphosis of the identity of generations of Armenian survivors who continued living in Turkey."



With the recent political developments in the world, the wall of silence that had separated these Armenians from the outside world has been breached. The events of 1915 and the plight of the Armenian survivors in Turkey, be they Christian, Islamized, or hidden, have been depicted in literature produced in Turkey. Artistic expressions echo the continuing trauma in the life of these "rejects of the sword," as these Armenians are sometimes called in Turkey.

The stories that Turkish writers such as Kemal Yalcin have unearthed and the daring memoirs of Turkish citizens such as Fethiye Cetin with an Armenian in their ancestry, as well as obscured references to these same stories and events in Turkish-Armenian literature, have unveiled the full picture of survival, of lost family members, and of forced conversions and the dehumanization and sexual torture of men and women. A multifaceted image of what is broadly generalized as Turkish-Armenian thus emerges.

Dr. Peroomian's pioneering study is available from the NAASR Bookstore.

RICHARD ELBRECHT (1937-2008)

A FRIEND TO NAASR AND ARMENIANS EVERYWHERE

By Shushan Yeni-Komshian Teager
NAASR Board of Directors

Editor's note: In the next issue of the Newsletter, we will print a listing of NAASR members who have passed on since the last appearance of a necrology in these pages. Until then, we offer this tribute to the late Richard Elbrecht.

It was on a trip to Syria in the spring of 2000 that I first met Richard and Anne Elbrecht. We quickly discovered that we had very many interests in common and soon became good friends.



Our trip, "Footprint in the Sand," organized by Armen Aroyan of the Armenian Heritage Society, Monrovia, CA, retraced the route Armenian deportees had been forced to take through the Syrian desert in 1915, as they were marched to their doom. On a prior trip, some members of our group had followed that route in Eastern Anatolia (Turkey) as far as Birejik on the Euphrates River, where the bodies of so many who had perished had altered the course of the river. We reconnected with that route in Syria at Rasafa, on the same river, continued on to the railway junction at Ras ul Ain, going all the way to Deir Zor, where hundreds of thousands of Armenians met their deaths. It was an emotional journey. Several members of our group were the children of survivors of that march. That route was deeply etched into their consciousness and they had come to see those places of horror and tragedy for themselves as an act of pilgrimage.

Richard's compassionate, generous, and kind spirit as well as his empathy for the Armenians and the agony of the tragedy they had suffered, soon became very evident in the way he reacted to the sites and to the emotions of our fellow travelers. This was especially true at Ash Shadadieh and Marqadeh (in the desert) where, even some ninety years later, the bones of genocide victims are still so numerous and so very near the surface.

Richard took very many photographs during that trip, especially at the churches in Kessab and at the Holy Martyrs Genocide Memorial

church in Deir Zor. He spoke of his passionate desire to photograph as many of what remains of Armenian churches in Eastern Turkey (Historic Armenia) as he could in order to preserve as much evidence as possible before their traces entirely disappeared.

During our trip Richard described the exhibits that he had put up in various churches in California and how well they were received. Just as he had mastered California's laws on consumer affairs, continuing to update a handbook for small-claims court judges and consumer advocates during his retirement, Richard had mastered Armenian history, incorporating that knowledge into captions for his remarkable photographic displays that enriched each and every viewer. His photographs had become an integral part of Prof. Richard Hovannisian's series of conferences "Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces" at UCLA, adding another dimension to these events. In 2006, Richard and Anne arranged for NAASR to mount an exhibit of Hrair "Hawk" Khacherian's photographs of genocide memorials from many countries, which had previously been exhibited at a UCLA conference at the California State House, enriched by Richard's detailed captions.

A meticulous photographer, each of Richard's own pictures was displayed on a separate easel together with the footprint of the church and a carefully crafted caption with in-

formation on the church's location, architecture, donor, builder, history, and other pertinent details. I was privileged indeed to have been of help in editing those captions to fit the 20 line limit, being careful not to omit any useful information as I did so. We were about to embark on the task of editing the captions for the web site he was working on at the time of his death. Richard and Anne had recently agreed to donate their collection of 157 prints to the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno. Indeed, Richard was in Fresno to meet with Prof. Dickran Kouymjian in order to complete this process at the time of his sudden and unexpected death.

Richard's extraordinarily warm personality, tremendous energy, vitality, enthusiasm, and passion enhanced everything he did. Both Anne and Richard were especially interested in NAASR's library and frequently referred to its collection of compatriotic books to enrich their photographs and captions.

Richard was an enthusiastic NAASR member, while Anne, also a longtime member, serves on the Board of Directors representing NAASR in Northern California. It was an honor to work with him and to have him for a friend. I shall miss him very much and cannot quite believe that a fat manila envelope with material to be edited will no longer be arriving in the mail. I share Anne's sorrow and loss. Richard left us a precious and unique legacy.

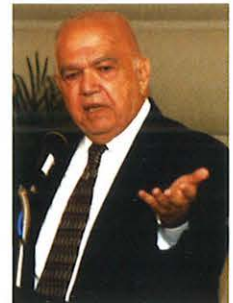
Marta and Jim Batmasian Sponsor Armenian Lectures At FAU

NAASR Board Member Marta Batmasian and her husband Jim Batmasian of Boca Raton, FL, have funded a visiting Armenian Genocide professorship at Florida Atlantic University. The initial visiting professor was Richard G. Hovannisian, the Armenian Educational Foundation Chairholder in Modern Armenian History at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Hovannisian taught a seminar on "Recent Historiography on the Armenian Genocide" at the FAU Holocaust center and gave a series of public lectures. The lectures were met with a high level of interest and were very well attended.

The lectures were sponsored by the Batmasians, along with Alan Berger, FAU's Raddock Family Eminent Scholar Chair in Holocaust Studies, and the Center for the Study of Values and Violence after Auschwitz in the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters.

Plans are under way at present for another visiting professor to come to FAU in the spring of 2009.



Richard G.
 Hovannisian

NAASR Holds 54th Annual Assembly

ASSEMBLY, from page 1

Jurigian recently stepped down as full-time Administrative Director and is now the part-time Executive Assistant. Both Kalustian and Jurigian were presented with beautiful floral bouquets.

During the luncheon hour, new Administrative Director Cathy Minassian provided a demonstration of the new NAASR website and online bookstore, walking the audience through the process of registering and purchasing books online from NAASR.

Following lunch and Dr. La Porta's lecture, those attending the Assembly heard reports about NAASR's ongoing efforts to further Armenian studies, research, and publication, as well as the reports of the Assembly's special committees on Nominations, Constitution and Rules, New Business and Resolutions, and Auditing. The chairmen of the special committees were Stephen Kurkjian of Manomet, Nominating; Aram Karakashian of Waltham, Constitution and Rules; Roxanne Etmekjian of West Newton, New Business and Resolutions; and Edward Der Kazarian of Watertown, Auditing.

Newly elected to the Board of Directors is Dr. Simon Payaslian of Worcester, who replaces Leon Janikian, stepping down from the



Alice Kalustian, 99 years young, with Nancy Kolligian, Manoog Young, and Alice's nephew Philip Kalustian and his wife Marsha.

Board after several terms of dedicated service. Re-elected Board Members were, from Massachusetts, Robert Bejoian of Cambridge, Yer-

vant Chekijian of Boston, Roxanne Etmekjian of West Newton, Dr. Aram Karakashian of Waltham, Stephen Kurkjian of Manomet, and Dr. Suzanne Moranian of Winchester; from Central California, Michael Kilijian of Fresno; and from Southern California, Dr. Rubina Peroomian.

Continuing as the members of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, elected in a meeting subsequent to the Assembly, are Nancy R. Kolligian, Chairman; Raffi P. Yeghayan of Lexington, First Vice-Chairman; Jack M. Medzorjian of Winchester, Second Vice-Chairman; Van M. Aroian of Worcester, Secretary; Robert D. Bejoian, Treasurer; Roxanne Etmekjian, Assistant Treasurer; and Stephen A. Kurkjian, Assistant Secretary.

The remainder of the NAASR Board of Directors consists of: Daniel G. Adamian, New York, NY; Dr. Gregory H. Adamian, Medford, MA; Gregory L. Aftandilian, Vienna, VA; Marta T. Batmasian, Boca Raton, FL; Anne E. Elbrecht, Davis, CA; Dr. Seda E. Keshishian, Lincoln, MA; Armand K. Mirijanian, Morton Grove, IL; Bertha Mugurdichian, Providence, RI; Anna Marie Norehad, Glenview, IL; Bruce W. Roat, Los Angeles, CA; Luder Tavit Sahagian, Needham, MA; Shushan M. Teager, Belmont, MA; S. Frances Weisberg, Alexandria, VA; and Manoog S. Young, Belmont, MA.



Sandra Jurigian received flowers from Chairman Nancy Kolligian at the 54th NAASR Assembly.

Funds Provided To UCLA Armenian Graduate Student Colloquium

For the third consecutive year, NAASR has provided funding to the Armenian Graduate Students Colloquium at the University of California, Los Angeles. The colloquium is organized under the direction of Prof. S. Peter Cowe, who holds the Narekatsi Chair in Armenian Studies at UCLA. The chair was established by NAASR in the 1960s, and we are pleased to be able to provide support to this worthy undertaking.

The article below appeared in the *UCLA Daily Bruin* on February 19, 2008.

The Armenian Graduate Students Association held its sixth annual colloquium on Friday afternoon – an event that featured speakers from domestic and international universities in panels pertaining to topics in Armenian Studies. This year, graduate students attended from Armenia, Hungary, Germany, and Turkey, as well as from the University of California, Irvine, and California State University, Northridge.

The topics discussed were “art and architecture,” “identity construction in the diaspora,” “ritual and cultural performance,” and “narrative and community.”

“There is no other event like this in the world,” Raffi Kassabian, ex-

ecutive director of the Armenian Graduate Students Association, said. “This (was) organized by grad students for grad students.” Panelists presented from thesis papers and PowerPoint presentations. After the conclusion of each panel, audience members were invited to ask the panelists questions about their research.

Arpi Siyahian, a member of the association’s organizing committee, said the themes of the colloquium vary every year. “We do a call for papers among universities with Armenian Studies,” she said.

After the papers are collected, the committee does a “blind aspect,” in which the names of the authors of the papers are removed. The committee evaluates the material and invites the top ten graduate students to UCLA to speak.

Kassabian, a law student at UCLA, said the association is a mentorship for both undergraduate and graduate students. He said events like the colloquium add to the dimension of Armenian Studies, which, as shown by the diverse topics and speakers at the colloquium, is a very interdisciplinary major.

The committee hopes to expand the colloquium, perhaps to a two-day conference next year, Siyahian said.

Attendees at the colloquium ranged from UCLA professors to alumni. “My old Armenian Studies professor sent me an e-mail (about the colloquium),” said David Abrahamian, a UCLA Class of 2007 alumnus. “There are some unbelievable topics and interesting analysis here.”

In panelist Anna Harutyunyan’s paper, “Cultural Diversity and Belongingness,” she specifically focused her analysis on the identity crisis of Armenian communities in Berlin. She said while Armenians identify strongly with their culture, they have difficulty naming Armenia or Germany as their homeland. She added that she also had this crisis, as she is Armenian but grew up in Berlin.

An audience member asked if intermarriage between Armenians and non-Armenians existed in a country where Armenians were the minority culture. Harutyunyan replied that while it was not common, intermarriage did occur.

Abrahamian added that before entering UCLA, he did not speak the Armenian language well at all. “Now I love topics like these,” he said.

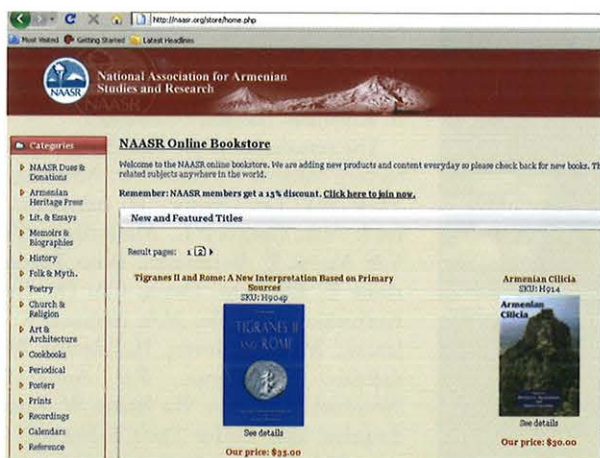
Redesign of NAASR Website and Launch of Online Bookstore

WEBSITE, from page 1

noteworthy bookstore titles at regular intervals.

The NAASR website now has a much-improved appearance and easier navigation. In due course we will be adding a great deal of additional content to the pages. For instance, at present a complete listing of NAASR events since 1955 is available, but in time we will be adding audio, video, images, and press accounts of these programs. The searchable catalogue of the Mardigian Library is available on the library page.

We urge you to spread the word about the NAASR website and bookstore to all your friends and relatives interested in Armenian books and NAASR lectures. Much time and effort has gone into creating these new outlets for NAASR; we now need you to assist in making our efforts produce results.



NAASR Online Bookstore Homepage

Changes in Armenian Chairs

2008 has brought a number of changes to the world of Armenian Studies in the United States as longtime chairholders Prof. Dickran Kouymjian of California State University, Fresno, and Prof. Lucy Der Manuelian of Tufts University have retired. Kouymjian has taught at Fresno since 1977 and held the Haig and Isabel Berberian Chair in Armenian Studies since its inception in 1989. Der Manuelian has been the sole holder of the Arthur H. Dadian and Ara Oztemel Chair in Armenian Art and Architectural History since its creation in 1989. NAASR extends its congratulations to these two distinguished scholars who have contributed so much to the field of Armenian Studies.

Dr. Christina Maranci, Assistant Professor in the department of Art History at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, will succeed Der Manuelian at Tufts University beginning in fall 2008. An announcement regarding Prof. Kouymjian’s successor is expected.

At Clark University, the Kaloosdian/Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies and Modern Armenian History, which has been vacant since Prof. Simon Payaslian assumed the Kenosian Chair at Boston University in 2007, will be filled by Prof. Taner Akçam beginning in fall 2008. Akçam was visiting associate professor of history at the University of Minnesota from 2002-2008.



NAASR and Knights of Vartan Continue Joint Administration of Fund for Armenian Studies

K OF V, from page 1

access to Armenological studies carried out in Armenia to scholars worldwide by presenting English summaries of Armenological publications written by the scholars of Armenia that appeared during the particular year. To date, volumes have appeared for the years 2000-2002.

A research and travel grant was issued to Dr. Marlen Eordegian, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University, to develop her dissertation "Church and State Relations in Israel: The Case of the Armenian Patriarchate, 1948-1967." Eordegian completed her Ph.D. in 2007 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the Department of Iranian and Armenian Studies and the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. Her dissertation is the first original study of the relations between the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the State of Israel.

Research grants were awarded to Dr. Jasmine Dum-Tragut and Dr. Igor Dorfmann-Lazarev. Dr. Dum-Tragut received a Ph.D. in General Linguistics from the University of Graz and teaches in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Salzburg and at the Mayr-Melnhof Institute of the Christian East, also in Salzburg. She will be travelling to Armenia in the fall to conduct research for a project entitled "Animacy and Humanness in Modern Eastern Armenian." Dr. Dorfmann-Lazarev, who is currently a researcher at the Istituto per le ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa, Vicenza, Italy, is conducting research on "The Role of Stephen of Siwnik in the Shaping of Armenian Theology." He holds a Ph.D. in the History and Philology of the Christian Caucasus from the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne).

All grants issued by the FAS are reviewed by the NAASR Academic committee, which consists of Prof. Richard N. Frye, Chairman (Harvard University), Prof. Michael J. Connolly, Secretary (Boston College), Prof. Kevork Bardakjian (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Prof. Dennis R. Papazian (University of Michigan, Dearborn), and Prof. James R. Russell (Harvard University). Proposals approved by the committee for a grant under the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies are sent to the FAS Board secretary, currently Jack Medzorian, for approval by the FAS Board.

Did You Know...

The distinguished men and women who were the NAASR Founders undoubtedly formed an exceptional and farseeing group. Certainly each one has a story well worth telling. One name stands out in that his fame extends far beyond Armenian circles and, indeed, he is recognized as one of the

he analyzed poetry in 16 languages. His study of phonology was only a facet of his work, which continued until his death. In 1981-82, he added to the list of his publications two books and 15 articles, the last of about 500 he produced in his lifetime."

Not mentioned is one of Jakobson's interests, albeit not one for which he is well known: a deep knowledge of and enthusiasm for medieval Armenian literature and Armenian folklore. Jakobson received his bachelor's degree at the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in Moscow (established in the early 19th century by the Armenian Lazarev/Lazarian family), where he learned Armenian and became inter-



Prof. Roman Jakobson, a NAASR founding member

intellectual giants of the 20th century: Prof. Roman Jakobson (1896-1982).

Jakobson is considered the father of modern structural linguistics and one of the leading Slavicists of his time. A founder of the pre-revolution Moscow Linguistic Circle and later the famed Prague School of Linguistics, his work has been a profound influence on all who have followed him, including Claude Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Paul Ricoeur, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Lacan.

His obituary in the *New York Times* (July 20, 1982) stated: "Best known as the founder of phonology, the study of abstract properties of the sounds of speech, Dr. Jakobson was Institute Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the fields of linguistics and philosophy and was the Samuel Hazzard Cross Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and General Linguistics Emeritus at Harvard University."

It added, "Dr. Jakobson could read 25 languages, and in one of his works

ested in Armenian affairs.

Jakobson was the Samuel Hazzard Cross Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Harvard when NAASR was developing in the 1950s, and NAASR Chairman Emeritus Manoog S. Young recalls meeting Jakobson through Prof. Richard N. Frye, also a NAASR founding member. He took a keen interest in NAASR's early development and the growth of Armenian Studies and participated in the first ever NAASR symposium in June 1955 on "Armenian Studies and Research—Problems and Needs." He also spoke at NAASR's second anniversary symposium in 1957, giving a talk on "The Importance of Ancient and Medieval Armenian Literature." In 1964, Prof. Jakobson gave a NAASR-sponsored lecture at Harvard on "Slavic and Armenian Questions in the Middle Ages."

Sound recordings of the first two talks exist – but not of the 1964 lecture. If anyone has a recording of this lecture – please contact NAASR.

Winter/Spring 2008 Lecture Series

NAASR's Winter/Spring 2008 lecture series represented an unprecedentedly busy six months for the organization in the area of public programs. Beginning on January 25 with the "Commemoration of the First Anniversary of the Assassination of Hrant Dink" held at the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church in Burbank, CA, through the June 9 lecture by Dr. Razmik Panossian, NAASR has held sixteen programs in eight cities in five states. The lectures have covered the Armenian genocide, Armenian merchant networks, ancient Armenian kings, Armenian art and architecture, Armenian Studies in Jerusalem, and other topics.

The full listing of programs is provided below, as well as overviews of the lectures whenever possible. We continue to be grateful for the extensive coverage of NAASR events in the Armenian-American press.

Jan. 25: "A Commemoration of the First Anniversary of the Assassination of Hrant Dink." At the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, Burbank, CA. Featuring talks by Prof. Taner Akçam of the University of Minnesota, Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Stephen A. Kurkjian, formerly of the *Boston Globe*. Co-sponsored by the Organization of Istanbul Armenians of Los Angeles, the Armenian Educational Foundation Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, under the auspices of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, His Eminence, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate.

Feb. 3: Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, author of *The Knock at the Door: A Journey Through the Darkness of the Armenian Genocide*. At the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Mission Hills, CA. Co-sponsored by the Museum and NAASR.

Feb. 25: Prof. George Bournoutian, "Tigran the Great and Rome." At the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, New York, NY. Co-sponsored by the Zohrab Information Center and NAASR.

March 2: Prof. George Bournoutian, "Tigran the Great and Rome." At Saint David Armenian Church, Boca Raton, FL. Co-sponsored by St. David Church and NAASR.



Left to right: Steven A. Kurkjian, Nancy R. Kolligian, Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian, His Eminence Abp. Hovnan Derderian, Dr. Taner Akçam, and Abp. Vatché Hovsepian

March 13: Dr. Sebouh Aslanian, "Honor Among Merchants: The Armenians of New Julfa and the Growth of Modern Long-Distance Trade." At the NAASR Center.

April 3: Dr. Levon Abrahamian: "Fighting with Memory and Monuments: Reshaping Post-Soviet Armenian Identity." At the NAASR Center.

April 8: Dr. Verjine Svazlian, "Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors: Irrefutable Historical Documents of the Armenian Genocide," at St. Mary's Armenian Apostolic Church, Glendale, CA. Co-sponsored

by the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and NAASR under the auspices of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America.

April 10: Dr. Levon Abrahamian: "Fighting with Memory and Monuments: Reshaping Post-Soviet Armenian Identity." At Armenian Euphrates Evangelical Church, Providence, RI. Co-sponsored by the Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island and NAASR.

April 23: Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, author of *The Knock at the Door: A Journey Through the Darkness of the Armenian Genocide*. At Harvard University's Center for Government and International Studies (CGIS), Cambridge, MA. Co-sponsored by the Harvard Armenian Society and NAASR.

May 4: Dr. Vahram Shemmasian, "The Rescue of Enslaved Armenian Women and Children in Syria at the End of the World War I Genocide," at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Mission Hills, CA. Co-sponsored by the Museum and NAASR.

May 5: Prof. George Bournoutian, "Tigran the Great and Rome." At the NAASR Center.

May 17: (Preceding 54th NAASR Annual Assembly of Members): Dr. Sergio La Porta, "Armenian Studies in Jerusalem and the Challenges of the 21st Century." At the NAASR Center.

May 22: Dr. Lynn Jones, "Between Islam and Byzantium: Aghtamar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Kingship." At the NAASR Center.

May 31: Edward Minasian, "*The Forty Days of Musa Dagh: The True Story of a Film Denied*," at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum. Co-sponsored by the Museum and NAASR.

June 5: Prof. Donald Bloxham, "The Role of the Great Powers in the Armenian Genocide." At the NAASR Center.

June 9: Dr. Razmik Panossian, "Change Without Transition: Politics in Post-Soviet Armenia." At the NAASR Center. Co-sponsored by the Armenian Relief Society Summer Youth Program and NAASR.



NAASR LECTURE SUMMARIES

A Commemoration of the First Anniversary of the Assassination of Hrant Dink

Several hundred people filled the Nazareth and Sima Kalaydjian Hall on January 25 at the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church to commemorate the first anniversary of the assassination of journalist and editor Hrant Dink.

Dink, 53, was fatally shot in Istanbul on Jan. 19, 2007, outside the bilingual Armenian and Turkish newspaper *Azot*, where he served as editor. *Azot* is considered one of the foremost voices for Turkey's Armenian population.

The event featured talks by Prof. Taner Akçam of the University of Minnesota, Prof. Richard G. Hovannisian of the University of California, Los Angeles, and Stephen A. Kurkjian, formerly of the *Boston Globe*, and was co-sponsored by the Organization of Istanbul Armenians of Los Angeles, the Armenian Educational Foundation Chair in Modern Armenian History at UCLA, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, under the auspices of the Western Diocese, His Eminence, Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate.

The program Friday opened with a slide presentation showing snapshots of Dink's life, including several trips to the United States and a shot of him cradling the Henri Nannen Prize for the Freedom of the Press.

In some of the photos, Dink was posing in the same room where mourners celebrated his memory Friday.

Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter Stephen Kurkjian, who traveled to Turkey for Dink's funeral in January 2007, painted a picture of the scene in Istanbul after the editor's death, where Armenians and non-Armenians alike "came out of nowhere" to celebrate his memory.

"The blood was still evident on the ground outside his office," Kurkjian said. "And they were crying out in their tears and their grief, 'We're all Hrant; we're all Armenian.'"

Nancy Kolligian, Chairman of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, called Dink a man who understood the power of the written word, harnessing "brilliant jewels of thought" which continue to affect Turkey.

"His courage to express his words for Turkey to advance true democracy ultimately cost him his life," she said. "However, his accomplishments outweigh his defeats."

During his life, Dink faced constant threats and intimidation in his home in Turkey.

He advocated protecting human rights and fostering dialogue and reconciliation between Turks and Armenians.

Dink's assassination came two and a half months after visiting Glendale in November 2006 during a nationwide speaking tour. Glendale city officials — including Police Chief Randy Adams, Officer John Balian, Mayor Ara Najarian and former Councilman Rafi Manoukian — met with Dink during his visit, discussing crime and politics as Senior Assistant City Atty. Lucy Varpetian served as a translator.

Dink said he was interested in the life of Armenians in America and that Armenians in Glendale, which has the largest population of Armenians in the United States, is an often-discussed topic abroad.

Dink first rose to the international stage in October 2005 when the Turkish government convicted him on charges of inciting racial hatred and insulting Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, in an article about the Armenian Genocide.

A court sentenced him to six months in jail but postponed the sentence, ordering him to serve the time only if he was found guilty on the charge a second time. Dink was awaiting a second trial at the time of his death.

Turkish police say nationalist militant Yasin Hayal confessed to helping coordinate Dink's murder and recruiting the alleged gunman, Ogun Samast, 17, according to reports.

(By Chris Wiebe, *Glendale Press News*, January 26, 2008)

Prof. George Bournoutian: "Tigran the Great and Rome"

With the erudition of a teacher and the enthusiasm of a student, George Bournoutian spoke about his latest scholarly subject: Tigran the Great — one of the pre-eminent figures of Armenian antiquity.

"Tigran the Great was the sole Armenian king who not only succeeded in unifying all the lands inhabited by the Armenians, but extended Armenian rule into Syria and northwestern Iran. In the first century B.C. he created an Armenian empire which lasted for 20 years, taking the title of 'Kings of kings,' which until then was only held by the kings of Iran."

Dr. Bournoutian sat down for an interview with this writer before delivering a fascinating lecture on Monday, February 25, at the New York headquarters of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church.

But as he went on to explain, his interest lay not only in Armenian history's greatest king, but also in the eminent Armenian historian who brought Tigran's world to vivid life more than half a century ago: Hakob H. Manandyan (1873-1952).

Dr. Bournoutian's latest publication is an English-language translation of Manandyan's groundbreaking work, *Tigranes II and Rome*. This new edition promises not only to bring the story of Tigran to a broad English-speaking audience, but also to bring long-overdue popular recognition to one of Armenia's greatest historians.

Among its many interesting features, Manandyan's *Tigranes II and Rome* "attacks Rome as an imperialist regime," said Dr. Bournoutian, a professor of Middle Eastern and European History at Iona College. "It's important today because it is the only book about Tigran, [who] received a very unbiased treatment [at Manandyan's hands]. It is an accurate depiction of Tigran."

Manandyan's original study — published in Armenia in 1940 during the World War II Stalinist period — saw the light of day as a "concession to the Armenians," Bournoutian noted. In 1941 a Russian translation surfaced, with very few copies published by the Armenian Academy of Sciences; and in the 1950s there was a French translation in Lisbon, which is out of print.

Despite Manandyan's acknowledged stature as an historian, only one of his many published history books had been translated into English prior to this: *The Trade and Cities of Armenia in Relation to Ancient World Trade*, translated by Professor Nina Garsoian some 40 years ago.

Manandyan was a "critical figure in writing Armenian history at a time when very few historians had written [on these subjects]. As a serious academic subject, Armenian history was being born during the World War II period," Bournoutian related. "The beginning of the Armenian intellectual and academic fields occurred from the late 1930s all the way to 1951."

Adonts and Manandyan stood apart as the great academics who began forming the Armenian Historical Institute, he said. "Before Manandyan, the only major books on Armenian history had been done by the Mekhitarists of Venice." But in the late 1930s, the schol-

ars Nicholas Marr, Adonts, and Manandyan came to the Caucasus, and wrote until the beginning of the 1950s.

Manandyan's works "are still used today by all well-known academics as the definitive works in Armenian history," Dr. Bournoutian continued. "The trouble is that academicians can take advantage of this, but not students." Dr. Bournoutian (like Dr. Garsoian before him) has brought the book up to date, providing footnotes that offer "new theories" and more recent discoveries about the period.

Notwithstanding its age, the book is still "totally solid," Bournoutian said. He noted that Manandyan's greatest study is the four-volume work, *A Critical History of the Armenian People from the Beginning to the Eleventh Century*.

During the carefully researched February 25 lecture, Dr. Bournoutian related a detailed picture of the period, calling Tigran "an Eastern emperor, a potentate, who probably did not know Armenian, conducted his affairs in Greek and Persian, and had several wives and a harem."

Manandyan was aware that the history of ancient Armenia during the Tigran II period "had been studied only in a cursory fashion by those European scholars who were primarily interested in the history of Rome or the kingdom of Pontus, and not in the history of Armenia."

Almost all European sources "relied heavily on Roman historians, and not only gave an inaccurate description of Tigran's period but portrayed Tigran as a grotesque caricature, ridiculing the 'feudal' nature of his kingdom. The celebrated ancient historian Flavius Josephus states that even eyewitness Roman accounts had a strong tendency to either alter the facts in Rome's favor or to praise the Romans, while defaming their enemies. European historians also displayed an open enmity to the East and its people," Bournoutian said.

Manandyan also categorically rejected the prevalent notion of Western historians who viewed Rome's wars with Pontus and Armenia, which Dr. Bournoutian said were "primarily for pillage and financial gain, as a revolt of the barbarians of the East against the civilized West." In reality, the wars were not against "two Eastern barbarians, but against cultured monarchs who not only were trying to foster Hellenistic culture but also wanted to expand trade, crafts, and manufacturing in their countries and throughout the Middle East."

By the year 70 B.C., Armenia was an empire which stretched from the Black Sea and the Cyrus River to the Mediterranean Sea and the borders of Egypt and up to Roman Mountainous Cilicia and Cappadocia. Tigran ruled in Armenia until age 85 and died in 55 B.C.

Tigran's outlook in retrospect was more Hellenistic, and occasionally Persian, than that of a modern Armenian, said Dr. Bournoutian in summary. Together with the king of Pontus, he strived to free Asia Minor from Persian military and political threats in the east and those of Rome in the west. His greatness lay in his attempt "to forge an independent and powerful state, and to break away from the constraints imposed upon Armenia by its geography."

The February 25 lecture was sponsored and funded by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) and the Diocese's Krikor and Clara Zohrab Information Center. A portion of the publication cost for the book was provided by NAASR, and the Ardemis Nazarian, Raffy Hovanesian, and Sevazlian families. The book is available for purchase in the bookstore of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, the NAASR Bookstore, and elsewhere.

(By Florence Avakian, *Armenian Reporter*, March 8, 2008)

Dr. Sebouh Aslanian: "Honor Among Merchants: The Armenians of New Julfa and the Growth of Modern Long-Distance Trade"

On March 13, Dr. Sebouh Aslanian, visiting assistant professor of history at Whitman College in Washington, spoke at NAASR on "Honor Among Merchants: The Armenians of New Julfa and the Growth of Modern Long-Distance Trade."

Aslanian discussed the role of trust and cooperation in the Early Modern period (17th-18th centuries) of long-distance trade by focusing on the Armenian merchants of New Julfa and Isfahan during the Safavid Empire of Iran and their extensive trade network.

Aslanian was born and raised in Ethiopia and was educated at McGill University in Montreal, the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research in New York, and Columbia University, where he received a Ph.D. in 2007. His dissertation, "From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: Circulation and the Global Trade Network of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa, Isfahan, 1605-1747," was selected as the best dissertation in the humanities at Columbia in 2007.

He is currently writing a book with his wife, Dr. Houri Berberian, on the trans-imperial activities of the Venetian-Armenian family the Scerimans/ Shahrmanians, originally from New Julfa.

"What interests me in general is that the Julfan Armenian community was the only Eurasian community of the Early Modern period whose merchants operated in all the land and sea-based empires of the world," Aslanian began.

"They were very active in the Russian Empire and the three major Islamic 'gunpowder' empires of the world at the time: the Persian Empire, the Mughal Empire, and the Ottoman Empire."

Aslanian stated, "The second element is that out of all the Eurasian commercial communities, they are the ones to have left us historians a very rich paper trail to follow, in excess of over 200,000 primary source documents. This makes them incredibly unique. My colleagues are all very jealous because other communities, other cultures, did not leave such records."

"Julfa dominated the [silk] market for 200-300 years of their history. It used to be a backwater until the Safavid silk empire spread to the region. It then became incredibly important, the way petroleum has become important to communities in the past century. The Julfans went on to create this amazing trade empire from London and Amsterdam, to Manila, to Mexico and Acapulco—all within 50 years of being forcibly relocated to New Julfa from Old Julfa, near today's Iranian-Azerbaijani border, by Shah Abbas."

He noted that the Julfans were given a great deal of autonomy and that they governed themselves. Aslanian recounted, "In 1619 the Julfans won the right to sell Iranian silk at a state auction bid.



Sebouh Aslanian
Photo courtesy of the
Armenian Weekly.



They were granted a quasi-monopoly on the selling of silk to Europe over very zealous European merchants."

Showing pictures of the distinct Julfan churches and cathedrals (which have an onioned or mosque-like dome rather than the traditional Armenian conical roof), Aslanian stated, "The Islamicate look is an important part of Julfan culture."

On a map, he pointed out the various ports and trade route cities where Julfan Armenians had established colonies, churches, and business dealings. He noted that many of them were the result of the severity of monsoon zones around the Indian Ocean. "Wind direction is a very important factor as to why some communities got built and others did not," he explained.

Aslanian added, "In the 18th century, London and Cadiz, Spain (the gateway to the Americas), Marseille, and Amsterdam also became important Julfan centers."

Explaining the dynamics of the Julfans, Aslanian said, "Surrounding the nodal center in a trade network, there are sub-nodes [churches, colonies, etc.] all of which contribute to circulation" of information and capital.

Speaking of the importance of gossip in commercial dealings, Aslanian said, "Some merchants wrote up to 20,000 letters of commercial correspondence. The language they used was a peculiar mercantile 'Julfa dialect' that only a handful of people can read—though the characters are in Armenian."

Turning his discussion to the nature of trust, Aslanian explained that in the context of the 16th-18th century, where there are no international agencies to ensure trust, the structures established to ensure honesty were crucial.

He continued, "The Julfan operation acted essentially as a coalition. Think of it like a gentlemen's club with strict rules and codes of conduct. You also had to demonstrate you had direct lineage going back to 'Old Julfa,' and they did not mingle with other Armenians when they traveled."

He explained that one had to abide by the very strict codes of conduct dictated by Julfan law. "You could never defraud a fellow Julfan merchant and you had to contract work exclusively with other Julfans." Trust was also based on an individual's past behavior, he said. "In this way, merchants were always very rational and acted accordingly to ensure long-term gains and not short-term profits."

Aslanian explained how the Julfans maintained their system, stating, "There could be corporal punishment for offenders. People found out about dishonest behavior through merchant correspondence and gossip."

He said of its efficiency, "In the time it took information to travel in that period (four months), you can bet that the first letter received would be a letter about someone's cheating behavior."

Aslanian read a quote from a merchant's letter saying of the possibility of being "blotted out" from the community, "I would rather choose to die than be blotted off the list of Julfa merchants."

He detailed that for major mercantile disputes, an assembly of merchants existed as a semi-formal regulatory council. Aslanian explained, "Twenty to thirty very wealthy Julfan merchants provided mediation to Julfan disputes, under the autonomy of the Safavid authority. There were also informal community courts in every network place. If the offender fled their punishment, shame tactics would be directed at their family wherever they resided."

During the question and answer session, it was asked how trust bonds and information networks were maintained when widespread robbery and brigandage occurred. Aslanian answered, "Most Julfan merchants wrote at least six copies of each letter to send through different networks, thus increasing the chance of its being received.

In case of robbery, most long-distance transactions were enacted using letters of credit" in place of hard coinage.

Tightlipped and insular as Julfan culture was, it was not martial based. Quite the contrary, he explained, "the Julfans had to rely on techniques of survival and prosperity" to compete with merchants such as those of the British and Dutch East India Companies who had military might behind them.

He added that solidarity is also universally a form of economics, in that "if you reduce transaction costs [those of legal suits brought by merchants against each other], you reduce overall community profit-loss."

This consensus factor also curtailed merchant growth, Aslanian detailed. "You could not exceed 2,000 merchants in all cities worldwide at any given time and maintain solidarity based upon Julfa's population of 30,000." In 1747, the Julfans' economic backs were broken and the network collapsed, although isolated merchants maintained their status into the early 19th century.

(By Andy Turpin, *Armenian Weekly*, March 22, 2008)

Dr. Levon Abrahamian: "Fighting with Memory and Monuments: Reshaping Post-Soviet Armenian Identity"

Dr. Levon Abrahamian, Visiting Professor in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Head of the Department of Contemporary Anthropological Studies at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia, gave an illustrated lecture entitled "Fighting with Memory and Monuments: Reshaping Post Soviet Armenian Identity" on Thursday, April 3, at the NAASR Center. (He gave the same lecture the following week in Providence, RI.)

In his introduction, NAASR Director of Programs and Publications Marc A. Mamigonian noted that Abrahamian had spoken for NAASR fifteen years earlier on a related theme, "Armenian Identity: Preserving the Past and Creating the Future," indicating his consistent interest in the subject.

Abrahamian described his talk, which featured dozens of images of Armenian and other monuments, as dealing with "the fight for memory." "A monument," he explained, is a coming together of "visualized memory in our world of oblivion." Monuments mark key events, and such events are usually connected with "the great ancestors and often personify them."

During times of crisis, he said, "reevaluation of key events and figures takes place," and at such times what he termed "the fight with monuments takes place." The era of Perestroika in the late Soviet Union and the collapse of the Soviet Union that followed was one of these periods, and much of Abrahamian's talk focused on this era.

In an earlier time, he explained, there was the removal of the monumental statue of Stalin that stood high over Yerevan. One night, the statue was removed with no warning and no explanation after the fact. Noting that some Armenians were actually proud of the statue because it was the tallest statue of Stalin in the USSR, Abrahamian related that the well-known statue of Mother Armenia that still stands in Yerevan eventually took Stalin's place.

Many Soviet-era statues were removed from Yerevan after the fall of the USSR. Undoubtedly the best known was the statue of Lenin that stood in then-Lenin, now Republic Square. Abrahamian showed numerous photos of the dismantling of the statue – which

was beheaded before it was taken down – and he recounted that there were mixed feelings about its removal as the sculptor was held in very high regard. Nonetheless, the statue came down.

Describing the removal of the statue with a fine eye for anthropological detail, Abrahamian said that as it was being wheeled away, members of the gathered crowd began to throw rocks at it in anger; but as there were few rocks at hand, others began to throw coins. The entire mood changed, Abrahamian explained, because there is a different meaning to throwing coins than to throwing stones. In the end, the statue did not travel far, only across the square to the courtyard of the art museum, where it still rests, headless, to this day.

Since Lenin's statue was removed, there has been a great deal of discussion about what to put in its place. The elaborate and rather well-done pedestal on which it stood remained for some time, but no statue was erected on it. Eventually, that, too was removed. At one point, Abrahamian told with evident disdain, a large video monitor was put up on the spot where the statue stood, which could be hired out to couples getting married to display them as they promenaded about the square. Today, though, there is nothing there.



Left to Right: Ramon Zorabedian of the Armenian Historical Association of Rhode Island; NAASR Director of Programs and Publications Marc A. Mamigonian; NAASR and Armenian Historical Association Board Member Bertha Mugurdichian; and Dr. Levon Abrahamian

There exist other alternatives to destroying the monuments, however, Abrahamian explained, including reinterpretation. A historic example that he showed was from Van where Armenians had turned a Urartian stela into a khachkar, and that khachkar had, in turn, had its cross effaced after the Genocide.

Other monuments are granted amnesty. Examples cited and shown by Abrahamian were the statues of the Communist, but Armenian, heroes Stepan Shahumyan and Marshal Baghramyan. In the end, their being Armenian trumped their being Communist and they were allowed to stay in place.

Abrahamian's talk was a unique take on the nature of memory discourse in late and post-Soviet Armenia, and audience members will have a great deal to ponder next time they are in Yerevan observing the many statues and monuments of the city.

Dr. Verjine Svazlian: "Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors: Irrefutable Historical Documents of the Armenian Genocide"

On March 8, Professor Verjine Svazlian presented a lecture on her more than 50 years of research into the testimonies and oral traditions of Armenian Genocide survivors.

Titled "Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors: Irrefutable Historical Documents of the Armenian Genocide," the lecture was delivered at the Armenak Der Petrossian Hall of St. Mary's Church in Glendale. The event was held under the auspices of the Western Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, Los Angeles, and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research.

A leading researcher at the Institute of Archeology and Ethnography at the Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Svazlian began to document the eyewitness accounts and oral traditions of Genocide survivors in the 1950s, when such research was in its infancy.

Her work took her to over 100 localities across Armenia, often at great personal risk. Svazlian had to contend with the scrutiny of the Soviet-Armenian authorities, which forbade explicit discussion of the Armenian Genocide. Apart from the political hurdles she had to overcome, Svazlian had to break through the psychological barriers of the survivors themselves – many of whom feared being deported or unjustly accused if they spoke of their experiences.

Despite all obstacles, Svazlian was able to collect thousands of firsthand accounts and record hundreds of songs and various relics of the survivors' oral traditions. She published much of her findings in *The Armenian Genocide and the People's Historical Memory*, a compendium of rare songs and stories told by survivors of the Turkish deportations and massacres. Published in 1999, the book has been translated into English, Russian, Turkish, and French.

"Numerous studies, collections of documents, statements of politicians and public officials, and artistic creations of various genres about the Armenian Genocide have been published in various languages, but none of these colossal publications included the voice of the people: the eyewitness memories as well as the popular songs which the survivors had created under the immediate impression of the historical events," Svazlian said to a room full of attentive listeners at the Der Petrossian Hall.

Svazlian, the daughter of Genocide survivors from Izmir, was born in Egypt and immigrated with her family to Soviet Armenia in 1947. While studying at Yerevan's Khachatur Abovyan Pedagogical University, she took the initiative to collect Genocide testimonies, often walking from village to village as she searched for survivors from Western Armenia.

As she began to collect their stories, Svazlian came to realize that her quest entailed a possibly never-ending process. She knew that there were still thousands of survivors who lived across the Armenian Diaspora. It would be impossible to find all of them and document their stories. Instead, she continued to focus on survivors in Armenia.

"There is not a single Armenian family who has not suffered human and material losses as a consequence of the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and has not preserved tragic memories," Svazlian said. "For that reason, the theme of the Genocide raises its voice and roars in the blood of the Armenian people."

During her lecture, Svazlian presented some verbatim accounts told by survivors, including recollections of their daily lives before the Genocide, details about the land, their communal-political life,



Dr. Verjine Svazlian, right, with Dr. Rubina Peroomian in Glendale.

and then exile, murders, death marches, and survival.

One of the most striking elements of her interviews were the songs and other oral traditions the survivors remembered. Svazlian recorded their raw and unfettered lamentations, heroic songs, tales, parables, proverbs, sayings, benedictions, and prayers. Through songs and poems, Svazlian was able to develop a more intimate approach when exploring the complexities of the Genocide. She found that the songs, in particular, explicitly expressed the emotional world of the survivors at the time they faced the calamity. Svazlian noted that the authors of the historical songs were mainly Armenian women, many of whom continued to bear the brunt of the Turkish atrocities following the massacres of Armenian boys and young men.

"Those horrifying impressions were so strong and profound that these songs have often taken poetic form," Svazlian said. "An example is the lament woven by a survivor from Mush, Tonoyan (born in 1901). She communicated it to me with tearful eyes and moans:

"... Morning and night I hear cries and laments,
I have no rest, no peace and no sleep,
I close my eyes and always see dead bodies,
I lost my kin, friends, land, and home..."

Svazlian noted that survivors from different regions often sang the same songs, with slight variations. The songs had been passed along extensively through word of mouth. She said many of the ballads were composed and sung in Turkish, especially in towns where speaking Armenian was forbidden by the Turkish government. Numerous survivors attested to the Turkish authorities' practice of cutting out the tongues of those caught speaking or teaching the Armenian language.

The several testimonies which Svazlian read from included that of Harutyun Alboyadjian Gasparian, born in 1904 in Fendejak, who said, "... When they killed my parents they took me and other underage children to Jemal Pasha [a Turkish orphanage] and Turkified us. My surname was '535' and my new name was Shukri. My Armenian friend became Enver. They circumcised us." Despite their Turkification, the children continued to be singled out for being Armenian and brutalized by the Turks. As Gasparian has said, "There were many of us who did not know Turkish. They did not speak for

weeks, with a view of hiding their Armenian origin. If the gendarmes knew about it, they would beat us with *falakkas* [heavy clubs used as implements of torture]."

Of the hundreds of survivors Svazlian interviewed, many were at a mature age when they went through the Genocide. While speaking with Svazlian, they came to certain emotional and political conclusions. After describing in detail the suffering he had endured, Ghoukas Karapetian, a survivor from Moks, concluded, "What happened in 1915 will never be forgotten. The Turks want all that to be forgotten and they don't admit, but may God help us and be a righteous judge for us, the Armenians."

As the lecture came to a close, Svazlian took questions from the audience. A priest asked her to sing a verse from one of the songs she had documented. Svazlian began to sing but stopped in mid-sentence. "I cannot go on," she said. "It is just too emotional for me right now."

(By Lory Tatoulian, *Armenian Reporter*, April 19, 2008)

Dr. Vahram Shemmassian: "The Rescue of Enslaved Armenian Women and Children in Syria at the End of the World War I Genocide"

Dr. Vahram Shemmassian, Assistant Professor of Armenian and Director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge, gave a lecture entitled "The Rescue of Enslaved Armenian Women and Children in Syria at the End of the World War I Genocide" at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum on May 4. The lecture was co-sponsored by the Museum and NAASR.

Shemmassian discussed the efforts to rescue victims in Syria in the immediate aftermath of World War I and highlighted the governments, agencies, and individuals involved in the recovery campaign, the venues of and obstacles to liberation and shelter and disposal.

Shemmassian received a Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1996 with a dissertation entitled "The Armenian Villagers of Musa Dagh: A Historical-Ethnographic Study, 1840-1915."

Margaret Ajemian Ahnert: The Knock at the Door: A Journey Through the Darkness of the Armenian Genocide

Margaret Ajemian Ahnert, the author of *The Knock at the Door: A Journey Through the Darkness of the Armenian Genocide*, spoke at Harvard University's Center for Government and International Studies on the evening of April 23. The event was co-sponsored by NAASR and the Harvard Armenian Society. In her remarks, Ms. Ajemian Ahnert spoke of the mother-daughter memoir she penned to express the experiences of her mother, Ester, during and after the Armenian Genocide.

As related by the author, Ester was born in Amasia and enjoyed an idyllic childhood, until one day there came a knock on the door informing her family that they had to leave town. Had her family decided to convert to Islam, they would have been able to keep their

home and continue living there. In the process of the forced marches, Ester was separated from her family, enduring rape and beatings at the hands of many, and was eventually forced into an abusive marriage with a Turk.

During the years of forced marriage, she was forbidden to speak Armenian or practice her religious beliefs; however, she did not lose her faith or her affinity for her language and culture. Ms. Ajemian Ahnert recalled her mother saying: "While they could stop me from speaking Armenian, they could not stop me from thinking Armenian."

As a religious person, Ester could not allow herself to hate Turks, as she believed that God would eventually judge them. However, Ester's stories justifiably sowed seeds of fear towards Turks in her daughter's heart. It was these feelings, along with the Armenian Genocide's lack of notoriety among the public at large, that convinced Ms. Ajemian Ahnert to conduct research and write a book on the topic.

Having completed the manuscript, she realized that similar books had been written before; so instead of publishing the work, she opted to write a non-scholarly memoir, highlighting the experiences of her mother through the years of the Genocide to reach a wide audience who could relate to the work. The change in "marketing strategy" seems to have worked well, as the author is booked in speaking engagements through the end of 2008.

Ms. Ajemian Ahnert told how, during the early phases of her book tour, she was reading at a Barnes and Noble bookstore in New York City, where five denialist Turks started to shout obscenities and disrupted the book reading. Unbeknownst to the protestors, Robert Morgenthau (the District Attorney of New York County and the grandson of Henry Morgenthau, Sr., the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Genocide period) and Hugh Carey (the former governor of the State of New York) were in the audience. The presence of these high-profile guests in combination with the disruptive behavior of the five Turks in the audience generated widespread coverage of the incident in the local and international press. In the words of Ms. Ajemian Ahnert: "The Turks helped launch my work."

The audience posed a few questions to Ms. Ajemian Ahnert. One question dealt with her assertion about the reluctance of survivors of the Armenian Genocide to speak. She was specifically asked how she got her mother to talk. Ms. Ajemian Ahnert responded that she weaved her questions through stories and daily conversations with her mother.

Another member of the audience asked Ms. Ajemian Ahnert's opinion as to why the survivors of the Armenian Genocide did not want to speak to their children about the horrors that they had endured. The response, coming from within the audience, was that they wanted to protect their children and provide them with a normal childhood, something they never had themselves.

Ms. Ajemian Ahnert was introduced by the Harvard Armenian Society's Nina Kouyoumjian, who also delivered the welcoming remarks. Raffi Yeghiayan of NAASR provided the audience with an introduction to NAASR's activities and mission.

(By Ara Nazarian, *Armenian Reporter*, May 3, 2008)



Margaret Ajemian Ahnert

Dr. Sergio La Porta: "Armenian Studies in Jerusalem and the Challenges of the 21st Century"

Dr. Sergio LaPorta, Lecturer in Armenian Studies and Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and currently Visiting Professor at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York, gave a talk entitled "Armenian Studies in Jerusalem and the Challenges of the 21st Century," at the luncheon program preceding NAASR's 54th Annual Assembly of Members on Saturday afternoon, May 17.

Armenian Studies has a long and distinguished history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The program has existed for more than four decades and has graduated and assisted many prominent scholars. For nearly all of its existence, the program was directed by Prof. Michael Stone, who, although now retired, continues to dedicate his time and energy to its success. The program is currently directed by Dr. Sergio La Porta, who was the first recipient of a Ph.D. in Armenian Studies at Harvard University in 2001.

Before beginning his talk, Dr. La Porta noted that "one of my first public lectures was given here at NAASR many years ago when I was still a graduate student at Harvard and it is therefore a special pleasure for me to return here today."

Overall, his talk offered a general history and overview of the activities of the Armenian Studies program at Hebrew University, its relations with the community, and its goals and challenges.

The program was established by Prof. Michael Stone in 1969 and was directed by him until his retirement a few years ago. Other faculty have included Dr. Nira Stone, Dr. Roberta Ervine, and now Dr. La Porta. Visiting scholars in recent years have included Dr. Abraham Terian, Dr. Robert Hewsen, Dr. Aram Topchyan, and Dr. Gohar Muradyan. In the coming academic year Dr. Jasmine Dum-Tragut and Prof. James R. Russell will be visiting.

The program, which offers BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees, has hosted numerous Armenological conferences on a variety of subjects. The main research interests of the department include the history of the Armenians in Jerusalem, Armenian inscriptions and paleography, Armenian spirituality, Armenian illuminated manuscripts, Armenian theology, archaeology, the Jewish community of Armenia, and the Armenian apocalyptic tradition.

Dr. La Porta conveyed the very warm and cooperative relationship that exists between the Hebrew University program and the Armenian community, singling out the bond with the brotherhood of the monastery of St. James and its spiritual leader, His Beatitude Abp. Torkom. There is a fellowship for members of the brotherhood to attend the university as well as a fellowship for a qualified graduate of Surb Tarkmanchats (Holy Translators) Armenian school in Jerusalem. The program also maintains excellent relations with the Surb Toros manuscript collection in Jerusalem, the second largest in the world, and the Gulbenkian Library of the brotherhood of St. James.

The greatest challenge facing Armenian Studies at the University, La Porta explained in some detail, is the fact that despite widespread belief to the contrary, "there is no position in Armenian Studies at the Hebrew University. There is a common misconception that there is a chair," but there is not. There are "people who have done and people who do Armenian Studies," he clarified. Hence, La Porta was not hired to "succeed" Prof. Stone because Stone's position ended with him, though each of their appointments have been similarly split between the departments of Comparative Religion and the Department of Armenian, Iranian, and Indian Studies.

Under the prevailing system at Hebrew University, tenure-track positions are limited in number and are not given out based on departmental needs but rather based on merit. In 2003, La Porta was granted one of these positions, but if and when he leaves there is no guarantee that another Armenologist will be hired.

This precarious situation notwithstanding, La Porta stated that in his experience Armenian Studies is more highly valued and its importance better understood at Hebrew University than at any other university. A pressing goal, therefore, is to raise sufficient funds to establish a permanent chair in Armenian Studies at the university.

There is also a general movement at the university – and not merely at Hebrew University – away from area studies and more towards an integrative and cross-cultural approach. This demonstrates, La Porta quipped, that the rest of academia is finally catching up with what Armenologists have done all along. The main problem, he said, is that the riches of Armenian are not sufficiently known outside of the realm of Armenology.

In conclusion, La Porta recalled that some dozen years ago he had been asked by Prof. Russell of Harvard to make some off-the-cuff remarks at a NAASR banquet. “I don’t remember anything of what I said except for one thing,” he said, “which in my complete ignorance at the time was quite accurate.” He said, “Armenian culture is like a khachkar. It brings everything from the four directions to the center, but it also radiates all of it out from the center with a new meaning and light whose beauty is there for everyone to appreciate.” The attendees of the Annual Assembly greatly appreciated and enjoyed Dr. La Porta’s talk and NAASR welcomes the day when he can return to speak at NAASR again.

Dr. Lynn Jones: “Between Islam and Byzantium: Aghtamar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Kingship”

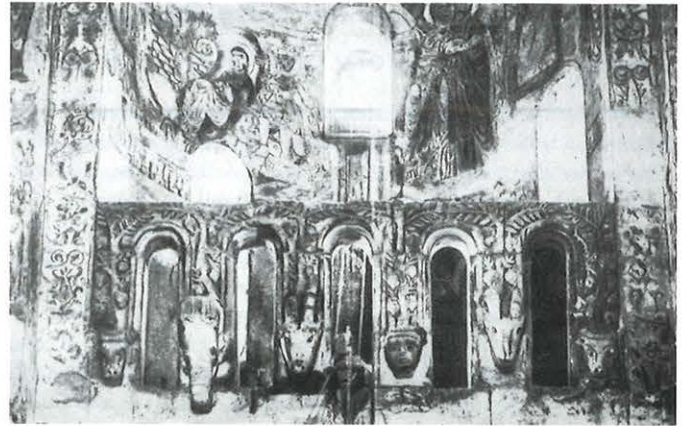
Dr. Lynn Jones of Florida State University gave a detailed illustrated lecture entitled “Between Islam and Byzantium: Aghtamar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Kingship” on May 22, at the NAASR Center in Belmont. This lecture was the second talk given in memory of Arshag Merguerian (1926-2005), architect and an active member and friend of NAASR for nearly fifty years. Jones is the author of the recent study *Between Islam and Byzantium: Aghtamar and the Visual Construction of Medieval Armenian Rulership*.

Noting that the Church of the Holy Cross on the island of Aghtamar is most famed for its elaborate exterior sculptural program, she focused more attention on the less-discussed two fresco cycles in the interior of the church, a creation cycle and a Christological cycle.

Drawing on descriptions contained in the important historiographic work *the House of the Artarunik* by Tovma Artsruni, she explained that the church and the long-destroyed royal city and residence it adorned were commissioned and overseen by the Armenian king Gagik. The church is all that today remains. The palace, too, according to Tovma Artsruni, featured an extensive decorative program; indeed, it was so lavishly decorated that “a viewer attempting to examine just one section of the dome would be utterly overwhelmed and faint.”

Since Jones’ reading of the “royal messages conveyed by the palace and the palace church depends on an understanding of the contemporary political situation,” she provided a short but detailed overview of the history of Armenia in the 9th and 10th centuries.

In her talk, Jones set out to “analyze the royal messages conveyed



A rare photograph of the Aghtamar church interior from the 1930s showing the now-removed interior sculptures.

by the decorative programs of the palace and the palace church [i.e., the Church of the Holy Cross]” and to “demonstrate that the decoration of the palace and the exterior sculptural program of the palace church were linked by their presentation of Gagik as a powerful ruler, using iconography appropriated from Islamic courtly arts.” The overall purpose of the entire visual presentation was “to estab-



Left to Right: Karen Merguerian, Dr. Barbara Merguerian, and Dr. Lynn Jones

lish Gagik’s piety, employing iconography that stresses the orthodox nature of his rule.”

For example, on the west façade of the church, she pointed to the contrasting halves of the grapevine frieze that is above the sculptures of Gagik and Christ. Above Gagik, among the vines, are peaceful representations of natural harmony and abundance; the other half shows violent and combative natural scenes. Jones connected this to similar representations in Islamic royal representations that emphasize the peacefulness and harmony of the ruler’s domain.

Jones’ presentation was a striking and visually rich reminder that no aspect of Armenian history or culture exists in a vacuum, independent from the larger context of its time or place. Her attention to the interior frescoes of the church – in such poorer condition than the more analyzed exterior sculpture – was a welcome departure.

Edward Minasian: “*The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*: The True Story of a Film Denied”

On May 31, Edward Minasian presented an overview of his book *Musa Dagh*, which chronicles the history of thwarted attempts to film Franz Werfel’s classic novel, at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum on May 31 under the joint sponsorship of NAASR and the Museum. Minasian is a Charter NAASR Member, having joined the organization in 1955, and was honored the day after his talk at the Museum by the ARPA Foundation for Film, Music, and Art with an award for “Outstanding Contribution to the History of Motion Pictures.”

Minasian spent many years researching this fascinating and complex story. Having originally presented his research at a NAASR-sponsored conference in 1984, he continued his work and finally published the definitive story of the most on-again, off-again project in Hollywood history.

His presentation drew on detailed research in the MGM archives and the U.S. State Department, the Franz Werfel Papers at the UCLA Special Collections Library, the American Film Institute, and interviews of personalities involved in the film project.

Prof. Donald Bloxham: “The Role of the Great Powers in the Armenian Genocide”

On June 5, Donald Bloxham, professor of modern history at the University of Edinburgh and the J. B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the U.S. Holocaust Museum, spoke at NAASR on “The Role of the Great Powers in the Armenian Genocide.”



Prof. Donald Bloxham

Bloxham based his lecture on his acclaimed book, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford University Press, 2007), for which he was given the Raphael Lemkin Award for 2007 by the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS). Bloxham is the youngest full professor of history in the UK.

He prefaced his remarks by stating to the all-Armenian audience, “I hope you don’t mind if I take for granted a certain knowledge of the Armenian Genocide itself. I’m not going to talk about the Genocide. I am going to talk about the role and culpability of the Great Powers during the Genocide.” He continued, “The Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century was a relatively weak power. This was important in its cultivating a victim mentality that led to the empire later perpetrating genocide.”

Of the period of capitulations, in which Western Europeans were given legal and economic carte blanche in the majority of the Ottoman Empire in exchange for the Great Powers subsidizing urgent Ottoman financial needs, Bloxham noted, “in 1881 the Ottoman Public Debt Association is established, [with the Empire] owing a great deal of money to Britain and France.” He offered a telling quote from the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, who said

upon hearing news of unrest in Balkan Ottoman states, that “a change of Sultan may be expedient.” Bloxham noted, “This is very significant in depicting the power differential at the time. The British government was not really in a position to say such a thing, yet spoke with the authority of being able to depose a foreign head of state with the snap of a finger.”

He continued on this theme of Britain and the Powers dictating policy to the Sultan from afar when he explained that “the Ottoman state only becomes murderous after the treaty of 1878, only after the Armenians are brought to the international table [by Britain]. Then we start to see suspicion of Armenians themselves by the Ottoman state.” Bloxham clarified, “It bears repeating that none of the Great Powers should be thought of as pro-Ottoman, pro-Russian, or pro-Armenian. Britain was only pro-Armenian when it served its interests to be.”

He explained that “Britain was ever concerned about land routes into India. Persia was a very important communications point and sphere of influence to Britain. Russia for the past 100 years had been appealing to Orthodox Christians in Armenia and the Balkans.”

From 1878 onwards, the Balkan nations fought more aggressive guerilla wars against Ottoman dominion, and millions of displaced Balkan Muslims emigrated and settled in Anatolia and the Caucasus.

“This fact of Russia appealing to Ottoman Christians and Britain restricting those appeals is really quite important,” he said. “The ‘1878 Eastern Crisis’ further aggravated the situation for Ottoman Christians in Anatolia because numerous refugees had suffered at the hands of Balkan Christians and Russian forces.”

Bloxham commented on the actual degree of Britain’s genuine concern for Anatolian Christians, saying, “Britain’s position was that an overt Russian influence in the region had to be countered. But they tended to make sure that [in treaties] there were no actual enforceability clauses in documents like the Treaty of Berlin; simply a few roving British consuls that made the [British] empire seem concerned about the Armenian Christians.”

He explained that in the 1890s, the Ottoman state’s resentment towards Armenians and other Christians reached a crescendo with the Hamidian Massacres. But he explained that “punishment is what the 1894-96 massacres are all about, which is very different from genocide. In October 1895, Sultan Abdul Hamid acquiesced to reforms for Ottoman Christians and it’s then that these massacres take place, almost as a reaction to the international community’s forcing the Sultan to reform.”

After 1908 and the CUP takeover of the Ottoman government, “the more territory the Ottoman Empire loses elsewhere, the more important Anatolia becomes to the elites. Christians become ever more anomalous in what used to be a multicultural empire and viewed as ‘inherently treacherous.’ It’s very notable that many of the CUP elites are from families of refugees from the Balkan wars,” Bloxham said.

“It takes the war to make the Ottomans truly genocidal, just as it took World War II to make the Nazis genocidal. The British response, or non-response, is that they didn’t want to upset Muslims in India.” But, he continued, “the opinion in Britain changes, because what’s happening in Armenia is a very moral cause to bring America into the war, which is neutral at the time. It also casts a shadow over the Ottomans’ ally, Germany.”

Of Germany’s role during the genocide, as the primary Western power operating within Turkey’s borders to witness the carnage, Bloxham explained, “Germany is prepared to let Armenians die for the sake of the war alliance. It’s not for the genocide, but it’s not really opposed to it ... They’re not going to lose their favored status to



Ottoman elites by pursuing the Armenian Question.”

Regarding the British position on Armeno-Turkish relations in the war's aftermath, he concluded, “It takes about a decade for Britain to reestablish good relations with a Kemalist Turkey. The new Turkey takes the old strategic role of the Ottoman Empire over now-Bolshevik expansion in the region. This, with some nuances, follows into British policy today.”

Of the U.S.'s role during and following the genocide, speaking in purely political terms with humanitarian advocates aside, Bloxham said, “It never declares war on the Ottoman Empire. After the war the Americans see no commercial advantage at all by pushing the Armenian Question. The U.S. saw Turkey as someone who spoke their language of secularization and modernization. After World War II, Turkey is held to be central to the nations of the ‘Northern Tier’ [alongside Iran and Afghanistan] that made up the Truman Doctrine.”

During the question and answer session that followed, Bloxham filled in any perceived gaps in his talk by noting that the trends he spoke of were political and diplomatic paradigms that should be viewed as separate from the humanitarians who helped Armenians with or without the approval of their home governments. He also noted his non-mention of France's role, as it was considered negligible outside of Cilicia.

Asked why he neglected to speak at length about the fall of the Armenian First Republic to the Bolsheviks in 1920, Bloxham responded, “Unfortunately, nations like the new Armenia were meant to be doomed once the Great Powers reasserted themselves. And as we saw, Kemalist Turkey and Bolshevik Russia cut a deal that the new Armenia had to end.”

Continuing this point to the present and speaking to the Great Powers' use of the same foreign policies to influence the world at present, he ended, “We see this today as our way of ordering nations against ‘new enemies.’ And as usual, the Armenian issue falls between the floorboards.”

(By Andy Turpin, *Armenian Weekly*, June 14, 2008)

Dr. Razmik Panossian: “Change Without Transition: Politics in Post-Soviet Armenia”

On June 9, Dr. Razmik Panossian of the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal, Canada, spoke at NAASR in a lecture co-sponsored by the ARS Youth Educational Program students titled, “Change Without Transition: Politics in Post-Soviet Armenia.”

Panossian is the author of *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (Columbia University Press, 2006), which traces the evolution of Armenia and Armenian collective identity from its beginnings to the present day.

Dr. Asbed Kotchikian, Director of the ARS Summer Youth Program, introduced the event and spoke briefly about the goals of the program in presenting talks by experts like Panossian. “It's a pilot program, the Youth Connections program, and it's to face challenges we have today. We want to try to redefine the diaspora, Armenia, the world, and ourselves today. It's all about gaining information.”

“I'm going to talk about the last 20 years in Armenia and a little about state building,” Panossian said. “In Armenia, something extraordinary happened in 1996 and it's when nationalism politics became about power instead of saving the country.”

He briefly summarized the history of Armenia from the end of the Soviet era to the present, including the recent, disturbing develop-

ments that dominated coverage of the March 1 post-election riots. He noted that, “Unlike in 1996, the army shot on people. Now this year the protesters were also armed, but what you have is a weaker president who suffers from a national feeling of illegitimacy.”

Panossian then explained the most pressing issues bearing down on Armenia and Armenian society today—policy shortcomings and the little actual transition that has occurred in Armenia.

He limitedly praised Kocharian's complimentarism in politics when talking about Armenia's foreign policies and relations with the U.S., Iran, and Russia, saying, “Not many countries can have good dealings with the U.S. and Iran.”

But, Panossian followed, “If there's an Israeli or American strike on Iran, Armenia will suffer because of its close relationship with Iran.”

Of Armenia generally he stated, “It's like a medieval fiefdom to some degree.” He also cited importantly the fiscal reality that “economic policies never left Yerevan. You're completely struck when comparing how developed rural Turkey is to rural Armenia. It's like reverting back 20 years!”

Of the energy situation in Armenia, Panossian noted, “Georgia charges huge amounts for gas. But when you have a monopoly you exploit it.”

He also spoke to the inherent problems in the corrupt Armenian judicial system and the lack or non-existence of rule of law in Armenian courts. “You can buy justice—literally, you can get away with murder. This became highly publicized when it happened after one of Kocharian's bodyguards killed a man in a cafe and got off free when all the witnesses refused to testify.”

Panossian continued that these societal inequities have caused the status and quality of life for women to plummet. He cited the high statistics for Armenian women becoming prostitutes in Turkey or being trafficked, saying these problems are exacerbated because of the lack of political will to stop them. “The UNDP writes pretty powerfully about this. Prostitution and human trafficking are not politics. It's appalling that the average number of abortions an Armenian woman will get in her life is between 8 and 18, and that we don't talk about these social issues.”

Contributing to these problems, he said, is the breakdown of communications networks that could provide the Armenian citizenry with any significant and truthful information. “There is free press in Armenia, if you don't cover controversial issues,” he explained.

Of the diaspora, he said that diaspora Armenians should be wary about being too proud or delusional, and should temper their knowledge of how much of a hand they have and do not have in revitalizing Armenia.

Panossian noted, “Let's not flatter ourselves too much. There are over a million Armenians working in Russia sending home money, along with organizations like OXFAM, etc. In Armenia itself, there's a way of looking after your own, but that's not how you run a structural society.”

He admonished those diaspora Armenians who don't publicize Armenia's many problems in the media, thereby preventing transparency because of fears people will think ill of Armenians.

Panossian chided, “It's shameful that we think we're doing the country a favor by not talking about its problems. We like to compare ourselves to the Jewish diaspora, but look at the vibrant debates in the Jewish media about every part of society in Israel.”

Of the recent March 1 post-election riots in Armenia, he offered this interpretation. “This was not a colored revolution. Those have a lot of civil society backing.”

(*Armenian Weekly*, June 21, 2008)

Kherdian Presents New Anthology at NAASR

Editor's note: The following article was omitted from the previous issue of the NAASR Newsletter. We apologize for this oversight.

Acclaimed poet David Kherdian's most recent project is the major anthology *Forgotten Bread: First-Generation Armenian American Writers*, in which he has taken on the task of recovering a literature many of whose voices are forgotten or too little known today.

Significant work on this important and unprecedented book was done at NAASR. In the acknowledgments Kherdian writes: "My research for this book began at the NAASR library and bookstore in Belmont, Massachusetts, where the Director [of Programs and Publications] Marc Mamigonian and [NAASR Administrative Director] Sandra Jurigian and [library project coordinator] Ruby Chorbajian provided resources, knowledge, and support throughout the long year of my work on this anthology. I can't thank them enough."

NAASR cannot thank Kherdian enough for his tremendous efforts to reintroduce to new generations the remarkable writers whose work he has assembled in this anthology. We are honored to have played a part in this most significant volume.

On October 18, he presented the book at an evening at NAASR which also included Helene Pilibosian, whose poetry is included in the anthology, and Gary Goshgarian, who wrote an essay on Revere-born author Richard Hagopian.

In introducing Kherdian, Mamigonian gave an overview of his prolific output and hailed *Forgotten Bread*, saying "it is more than overdue, it is necessary." Later, he read a powerful statement Kherdian had made about the anthology: "I believe that one of the results of this anthology is that America will see us differently after this, and more importantly we will see ourselves differently. We've been fighting the wrong battle: to be exonerated, understood, appreciated, valued, and to have a place in the world, to point to ourselves with pride, etc. We have looked to the world for this, instead of looking to find and make and reveal this for ourselves and to ourselves. This is what this book is going to make known for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. For those who can't see this, best to close the book of life and go to sleep."

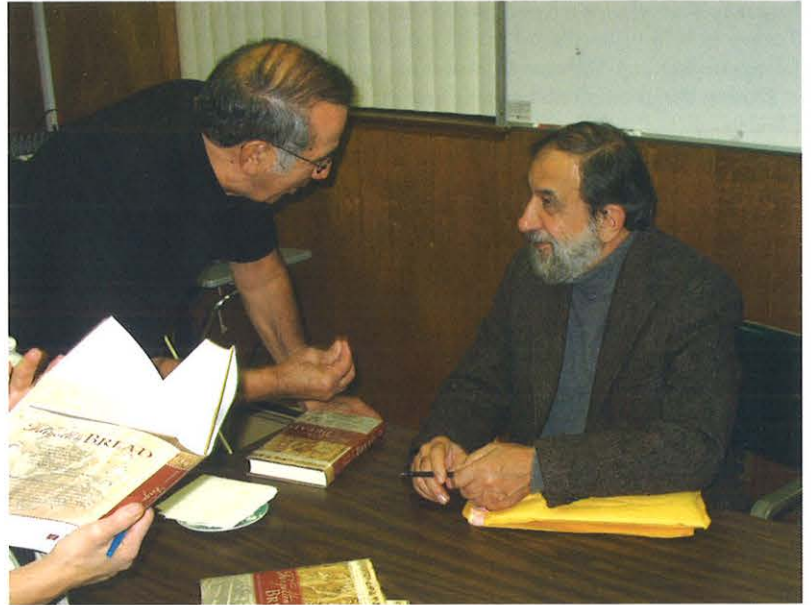
Kherdian detailed the how he came to create this important book, which entailed telling the story of how he came to be a writer in the first place. He related how, in his childhood in Racine, Wisconsin, to be an Armenian-American was to be a second-class citizen. Kherdian said that as Saroyan had "written his way out of Fresno, I would write my way out of Wisconsin." Around 1950 there was a creative outburst of Armenian-American literature: Saroyan was already established, but there also appeared novels from major publishers by Marjorie Housepian, Peter Sourian, and Harry Barba. This opened the door for Kherdian.

Later, he experienced the writings of Saroyan for himself and felt a great kinship with the older writer; Kherdian said that Saroyan "was saying what I didn't know I knew." After graduating from college, Kherdian went to California to meet and get to know Saroyan, to understand his world. He called this "my apprenticeship, my beginning as a writer." He wanted to write the same kind of short fiction pieces that Saroyan had mastered, but found that that was not where his talent lay.

After compiling a Saroyan bibliography and further getting to know him, Kherdian was offered the job of serving as Saroyan's secretary.

He jumped at the opportunity and also asked Saroyan to read his poems. Saroyan was very impressed by what he read; so much so that he retracted the job offer and told Kherdian to go and write.

Kherdian detailed his extensive readings in Armenian-American literature through the years and his discovery of many of the writers whose work fills *Forgotten Bread*. He talked about an intangible "Armenian sensibility" that he felt Saroyan's work had, and that pervaded his own work as well as all the other writers in the anthology. He felt



Author David Kherdian chats with NAASR member Harry Parsekian.

that "he was serving something that is deeply a part of me."

Ethnic literature, Kherdian insisted, is an important part of American literature, and he feels strongly that if there can be such an anthology as *Forgotten Bread* for the Armenians that other ethnicities should and can do likewise.

The anthology is an important contribution, Kherdian feels, because "to know who we are, we have to know our story. Without our story we are nothing."

After Kherdian concluded his account of the creation of the book and his own artistic journey, he invited Gary Goshgarian, a well-known novelist in his own right, to speak about and read a passage from the work of Richard Hagopian, about whom he contributed an essay in the anthology. He also asked Helene Pilibosian to read several of her poems that are printed in the anthology. Marc Mamigonian read a poem by Arlene Voski Avakian, who had planned to be present but could not attend. Finally, Kherdian read a number of his own powerful poems that are included in the anthology.

The evening concluded with questions and discussion followed by a reception. In the NAASR bookstore, a special display had been created of books by the authors whose work is featured in *Forgotten Bread*. The event was a powerful reminder of the richness of Armenian-American literature and a fitting tribute to the enormous work Kherdian has done to recover for us its greatness and importance.

NAASR Provides Funds To Byzantine Studies Committee in Armenia

The NAASR Board of Directors has approved issuing funds to the Armenian National Committee for Byzantine Studies. The funding will allow the Committee to register itself in Armenia, pay fees to the Association Internationale des Études Byzantines (AIEB) for previous years and the current year, and to allow two members of the Committee to participate in the AIEB Congress in September 2008 in Greece.

The Committee was established in 2006 in order to permit a small group of Armenian scholars to participate in the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies in London. In materials submitted to NAASR by the Committee, it was stressed that "at present there is not even any research center or department of Byzantine Studies" in Armenia, which is startling given the very important role Armenians played in the Byzantine Empire and the long history of interaction between Armenian states and Byzantium.

However, within the Armenian Academy of Sciences and the Matenadaran, high quality scholarly work is carried out in this field focusing on historiography, philosophy, theology, literature, and art history. One of the leading Armenian Byzantinists, Prof. Hrach Bartikian, is in the forefront of this research. A new generation of young scholars has also grown whose interests include various aspects of Armenian-Byzantine relations in such various fields as history, literature, art, music, architecture, manuscript illumination, geography, medicine, religion, etc. The fruits of their work can contribute significantly to the development of Byzantine Studies in Armenia and around the world.

The basic purposes of the Committee include:

- to encourage scholars to fill up the relative void of Byzantine Studies in Armenia;
- to work for a formal integration of this research field within Armenian and international research institutions;
- to increase contacts and exchange between different disciplines in Byzantine or related fields;
- to strengthen its members' integration and presence in the international research community;
- to facilitate members' access to information, literature, personal and institutional contacts, and publishing institutions and funding sources;
- to provide information on Armenological-Byzantinist research conducted in Armenia to the scholarly community around the world.

The Board of Directors of the Committee consists of Dr. Hrach Bartikian, President; Dr. Manea Erna Shirinian, Vice President; Dr. Anna Arevshatian, Secretary; and Dr. Zaroui Pogossian, Treasurer.

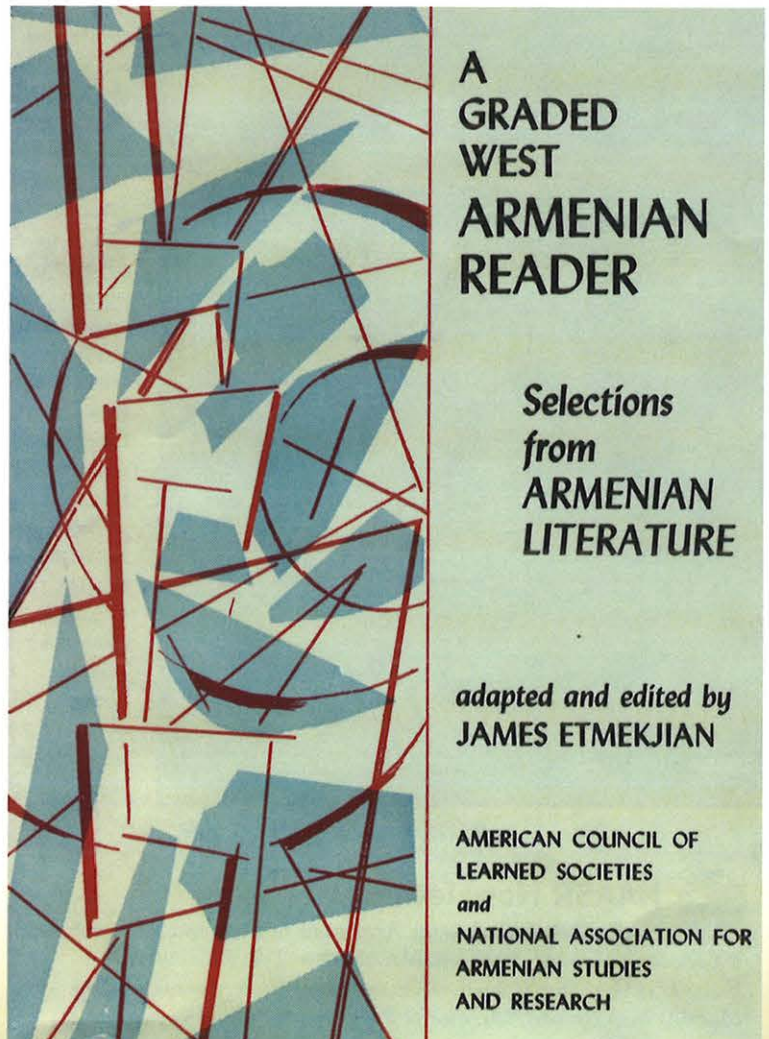
Graded West Armenian Reader Reaches Classrooms

NAASR proudly announced the availability of multiple copies of *A Graded West Armenian Reader* for classroom use to major Armenian day schools throughout the United States in 2008 by sending a review copy to school administrators. The organization soon received a grateful order for 100 copies for students at the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian School in Southern California.

The unique reader was co-published in 1963 by NAASR and the American Council of Learned Societies and was edited and compiled by Dr. James Etmekjian, a former educator, scholar, and NAASR Board member. The selections from Armenian literature appear with definitions of selected words given in English at the foot of the page. The readings become progressively more challenging as the book continues. Biographical information on each Armenian writer is given in English.

The books are being offered at no cost to schools. In so doing, NAASR is bringing Armenian literature to another generation of readers. "NAASR is committed to sharing the Armenian literary heritage," said Chairman Nancy R. Kolligian, "and this is an effective way of reaching young readers."

If you know of interested schools, please have them contact NAASR to request copies of *A Graded West Armenian Reader*. NAASR will request reimbursement only for the shipping costs for the books.



SAVE THE DATE: Nov. 23, 2008

You will want to join NAASR for a daytrip to New York City to attend a special "Sunday at the Met" Armenian program at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Sunday, November 23.

A bus will depart from the NAASR Center in Belmont at 7:00 a.m. for New York. Capacity is limited to 48, with priority given to current NAASR members. Dr. Christina Maranci, the newly-appointed Arthur H. Dadian and Ara Oztemel Professor of Armenian Art and Architectural History at Tufts University, will accompany the group and give a talk during the ride to New York City.

The program is made possible by the Hagop Kevorkian Fund and is being organized by Dr. Helen Evans, the Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator of Byzantine Art at the Met, and will feature talks by Dr. Nina Garsoian, Dr. Thomas Mathews, and Dr. Lynn Jones,

with a concert by Nora Armani. The program commences at 1:30 p.m. and the bus will depart New York City at 5:00 p.m.

The trip is also an opportunity to view the spectacular 12th-century khachkar now on display in the Jaharis Galleries for Byzantine art at the Met. It is on special long-term loan from the State History Museum of Armenia in Yerevan.

The price for the daytrip is \$100 per person (includes transportation, admission to the museum, and continental breakfast and refreshments). Further details will be forthcoming. We strongly encourage interested parties to reserve a seat by October 31st by contacting Administrative Director Cathy Minassian at NAASR at 617-489-1610 or hq@naasr.org.



NAASR Presents an Armenian Heritage Tour

Led By
**PROF. GEORGE
BOURNOUTIAN**
Iona College
 and
ARMEN AROYAN
Armenian Heritage Society

Historic Cilicia and Environs

May 26 - June 9, 2009

(subject to change)

Join us for NAASR's 2009 Armenian Heritage Tour to historic Cilicia and environs. This special tour is open to current NAASR members only and will be led by historian Prof. George Bournoutian and veteran tour guide Armen Aroyan. Highlights of the proposed itinerary will include Istanbul, Kayseri (Gesaria), Sis, Adana, Tarsus, Dordyol, Iskenderun, Antioch, Aintab, Marash, Zeitun, Hromkla, and other historic locations in Cilicia. The tour will conclude with an optional side trip to Kharpert.

The itinerary is subject to change. Space on this tour is limited. Contact NAASR right away to reserve a spot.

Space Available at NAASR

NAASR has office space available on the second floor of its headquarters building at 395 Concord Avenue in Belmont, MA. If you know of an individual or organization who needs office space, please contact us at 617-489-1610 or hq@naasr.org to discuss availability and terms.



NAASR Newsletter ISSN 0890-3794

National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, Inc.

395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA 02478 • Tel.: 617-489-1610

Fax: 617-484-1759 • E-Mail: hq@naasr.org • Web: www.naasr.org

Marc A. Mamigonian, Director of Programs & Publications