



# The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research

## 2011 NAASR Armenian Heritage Tour

### *Some Reflections*

In June 2011 NAASR, working with tour leader Armen Aroyan and scholarly leader Prof. Richard Hovannisian, organized another in a series of tours of historic Armenian lands. A number of the travelers have shared their thoughts with us and Roupén Berberian shared a few of his beautiful photographs.

#### Mihran Aroian (Austin, TX)

Raise your hand if you have not heard the story about the Armenian Genocide! Seems like a ridiculous question to ask anyone reading this NAASR article. If I ask the same question to my class of 300 students at the University of Texas at Austin, I'm willing to see REFLECTIONS, page 4



Cousins Bruce Roat and Mihran Aroian visit ancestral Hussenig

## Armenian Books on Display in Harvard's Lamont Library

by Daphne Abeel

Special to the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*  
(published 4/20/12)

Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies James R. Russell expressed justifiable satisfaction as he oversaw the final details of an exhibit of Armenian books that opened at Harvard University's Lamont Library on Monday, April 9.

The contents of the exhibit have come from a number of different sources including NAASR, ALMA, Widener Library, and Russell's private collection. Funds were provided by the Mashtots Chair, Tufts University, Boston University, NAASR, ALMA, and the Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF).

Said Russell, "We started planning this about a year ago. Our core group included Marc Mamigonian from NAASR [National Association for Armenian Studies and Research], Barbara Merguerian from ALMA [the Armenian Library and Museum of America] and Michael Grossman from Widener Library. Grossman is chief cataloguer for Armenian and Georgian books. Todd Pattison, who is in charge of conservation for the entire Harvard library system, organized the space and set up the exhibit." Mark McKertich served as the exhibit designer.

Russell says he was moved to mount the exhibit out of the knowledge that few Harvard students know very much about Armenian history and culture. Said Russell, "Harvard is a place where students come to study large things in the world. Most Armenian students here are involved in that endeavor. Few people are interested in language and history and I wanted to undertake this exhibit to display the scope of Armenian culture and history." The exhibit itself is mounted on the third floor of Lamont Library and consists of two horizontal cases of books, periodicals, and scrolls and one large vertical glass case that contains a copy of Russell's text, "The Armenians and the Book," and additional materials.

The display contains materials ranging from the



Prof. Russell inspects the exhibition

ancient and precious to the more modern. To name just a few, there is a facsimile of the Friday Book, the first text to be actually printed in Armenian in 1512 in Venice. There are also tiny, delicate, intricately illustrated books of Aesop's fables, a copy of the first edition of *Hairenik*, texts by the poet Yeghishe Charents and more contemporary works such as the novels of William Saroyan and the new edition of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* by Franz Werfel. There are also magical scrolls with the explanatory text written and illustrated by Russell.

"This is the 500th anniversary of the start of Armenian printing, so this seemed the right moment to put this exhibit up," said Russell.

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# Sebouh Aslanian Named to Prestigious Armenian Chair at UCLA

by Meg Sullivan, May 18, 2012

An award-winning young historian has been selected to fill a chair originally occupied by retired UCLA historian Richard Hovannisian, who is widely regarded as the world's dean of Armenian Studies.

Sebouh David Aslanian, who joined UCLA's department of history in September 2011 as an assistant professor of history, will be installed May 22 in the Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair.

"It was a challenge to find a scholar who could one day fill Richard Hovannisian's large shoes," said David Myers, chair of UCLA's history department. "But we believe that Sebouh Aslanian is that person, and we are delighted and honored to have him."

Born and raised in Ethiopia, Aslanian is the grandson of Armenian immigrants who fled the Ottoman Empire in the 1890s. His maternal grandfather, George Djerrahian, co-founded the first privately owned printing press in Ethiopia in 1931. The family emigrated to the United States in 1976, on the heels of the Ethiopian Revolution, and then settled in the United Arab Emirates, where Aslanian attended middle school, before moving to Canada.

After completing his undergraduate degree at McGill University in Montreal, Aslanian received his Ph.D. with distinction from Columbia University. Before joining UCLA's faculty, he taught at California State University, Long Beach; Cornell University; the University of Michigan; and Whitman College. From 2009 to 2010, Aslanian was a Mellon Foundation postdoctoral fellow in world history at Cornell.

Able to conduct research in a range of European languages (French, Italian, and Spanish) as well as classical Armenian, Aslanian is fluent in the western and eastern dialects of modern Armenian. In addition, he is one of the few scholars active today who is able to conduct research in the dialect of Julfa—the home, until the early 17th century, of a group of Armenian merchants near today's republic of Armenia.

The history of the merchants, who were resettled under the Persian empire in New Julfa, a suburb of today's Iranian metropolis of Isfahan, is a central theme of Aslanian's scholarship. He also is involved in global microhistory, a new trend in world history scholarship that explores the details of the lives of marginal or previously-overlooked figures as windows onto larger processes and trends shaping global history.

"With the skill of a detective, he traces the entwined byways of commerce and culture traveled by Armenian merchants as they made their way from Julfa to India to Europe and back," Myers said.

Aslanian is the author of *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean:*

*The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants From New Julfa* (University of California Press, 2011), a history of the emergence and growth of a global trade network operated by Armenian merchants. Tracing a network of commercial settlements that stretched from London and Amsterdam to Manila and Acapulco, from the early 17th to the late 18th centuries, the book was selected for the PEN Center USA literary award for the most outstanding first book of 2011 to come from the UC Press.

"Sebouh David Aslanian has been tireless in his consultation of archival sources in India, Armenia, and Iran, throughout Europe, and even in Mexico," said a review of the book that appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*.

With the goal of illuminating the little-told history of French expansion into the Indian Ocean, Aslanian is now working on a micro-history of an Armenian merchant from Julfa, Marcara Avachintz, who in 1666 was appointed by Louis XIV and his minister of finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, as the first regional director in the Indian Ocean and Iran of the newly created French East India Company.

He also is working on the history of the Santa Catharina, an Armenian-freighted ship that was seized by the British navy in 1748 against the backdrop of the War of the Austrian Succession. Using more than 2,000 pieces of family and mercantile correspondence that were on the ship at the time of its capture, Aslanian plans to illuminate the larger history of globalization in the Indian Ocean arena during the 17th and 18th centuries.

In addition, Aslanian is gathering material for a third book, on the history of diasporic Armenian print culture across a range of areas, including Venice, Amsterdam, and Madras. In a related activity, he is organizing a two-day international conference at UCLA on the history of Armenian print culture. Entitled "Port Cities and Printers," the Nov. 10–11 conference will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the printing of the first Armenian book in Venice.

At UCLA, Aslanian has taught a sweeping, two-quarter survey of Armenian history from its genesis to the 18th century. He has also taught a seminar in one of his areas of specialization—the early modern period of Armenian history (1500 to 1800).

Aslanian was selected for the chair in April 2011 after a yearlong international search.

"It's a wonderful honor to have this position," Aslanian said. "I'm extremely grateful, and it's an excellent fit because I get to do both things I can't live without—researching and teaching."

Richard Hovannisian retired last year after a 50-year career at UCLA. While earning an international reputation as a pioneer in the field of Armenian Studies, he organized both the undergraduate and graduate programs in Armenian history at UCLA and amassed one of the largest collections of oral histories by survivors of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923.

"As the towering figure in the study of modern Armenian history, Professor Hovannisian not only undertook path-breaking and far-reaching research," Myers said. "He established UCLA as the major center of instruction and research in modern Armenian history in the world."



Prof. Sebouh Aslanian with Harvard's Prof. James Russell

## Armenian Books on Display in Harvard's Lamont Library

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Extended captions, which in some cases are short essays, help to explain and amplify the visual materials. In addition to Russell, others who contributed their knowledge and research include Prof. Christina Maranci of Tufts University, Michael Grossman of Widener Library, Prof. Simon Payaslian of Boston University, Merguerian and Mamigonian. Russell, whose multi-lingual interests and mastery extend to both Western and Eastern Armenian, provides a brief history of the Armenian language noting that, "... it is related to Phrygian, an Indo-European tongue like Greek or Persian, that was spoken by the defenders of Troy. It is possible that the first bearers of Armenian migrated east into the highlands of Urartu, Biblical Ararat; and Armenian contains a number of Urartean words...." Russell also notes several important milestones. As mentioned above, the first Armenian printed books appeared in Venice in 1512; and further, the first printed Bible was issued in Amsterdam a century and a half later. The first Armenian newspaper was published in Madras, India, in the late 18th century.

While survivors of the Armenian Genocide wrote privately published Memorial Books (*bushamatyan*), many of those who might have written more widely distributed works were massacred.

The breakup of the Soviet Union has freed the Armenian press in many ways, and Russell notes that many texts are now far more available on the internet. Included in the exhibit is a 19th-century Western Armenian translation of Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, taken from Baudelaire's French.

Maranci's caption focuses on the importance of manuscripts in the history of Armenian literature. She notes that the largest collection of Armenian manuscripts is housed in the Matenadaran, the manuscript library in Armenia's capital, Yerevan. Other important collections are preserved in the Monastery of St. James in Jerusalem and the Mekhitarist Monasteries of Venice and Vienna.

Grossman has contributed commentary on the availability of Armenian language and re-



First edition (Calcutta, 1827) of Chamich's *History of Armenia* and 1852 Venice printing of Eghishe's *History of Vardan*

lated collections held in the Harvard libraries. The supervision of Harvard's Armenian collections—acquisitions, cataloging, preservation, and reference—falls at present to Widener's Middle Eastern Division, as it has done since 1954. The earliest catalogued item dates back to the 1700s, while Houghton Library today is the holder of Harvard's earliest Armenian items. Grossman pays tribute to the Boston-area Armenian community for establishing a lasting home for Armenian Studies at Harvard. In 1959, the Mashtots Chair, now held by Russell, was created at Harvard.

Payaslian of Boston University contributes an essay on modern Armenian history, noting especially the publication in the 18th century of Mik'ayel Ch'amch'ian's *History of Armenia* and Fr. Ghevond Alishan's *Memories of the Armenian Fatherland*. Said Payaslian, "Their works encouraged a new generation of intellectuals in the 19th century to engage in the modernization of their nation, its culture, and its institutions to bring about an Armenian enlightenment."

In a commentary titled "Armenian Women and the Book," Merguerian notes that in the 19th and 20th centuries, "The role of women in a rapidly changing society became a controversial question explored extensively in the constantly growing number of publications appearing in the vernacular Armenian literary language... Circumstances have

changed radically, but the role of women in Armenian society still remains a much debated topic."

Mamigonian, in a piece titled "The Armenians in America," writes that the Armenian presence in the United States dates to around 1618, "when one Martin the Armenian came to Colonial Virginia." There was, of course, increased immigration

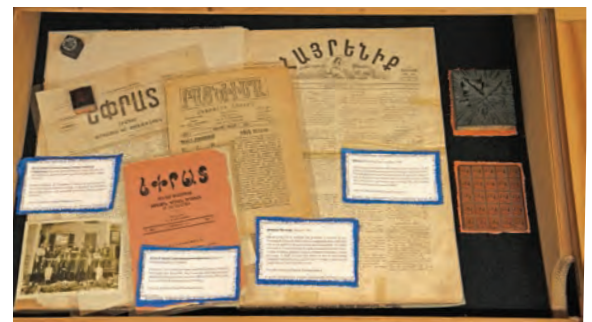
after the massacres in Ottoman Turkey under Sultan Abdul Hamid in 1894-96, and after the Genocide, nearly 100,000 Armenians had arrived in the U.S. by 1924. These immigrants opened libraries and bookstores and eventually established newspapers such as the *Hairenik* and the *Baïkar*. The Armenian-American Diaspora has since produced its own writers such as William Saroyan, Peter Balakian, and Peter Sourian, amongst many others, who have reached a broader reading public.

Russell hopes, with reason, that the exhibit will increase the interest in the Armenian language at Harvard.

"Right now, I am shifting my attention to the teaching of Western Armenian because it



Arakk' Ezovbosi (Aesop's Fables, 3rd ed.), Venice, 1849. This copy comes from NAASR's Mardigian Library.



Display of newspapers, including *Yezrad* (Eprat), published in Kharpert in 1912; a Worcester newspaper of the same name from 1898; *Rahniwma*, an Armeno-Turkish weekly printed in 1915 in Constantinople; and the first issue of the *Hairenik*, from May 1, 1899

is a language in danger of disappearing. Without some speakers in the Middle East, we would truly lose it," he said.

*Addendum: Following its display at Lamont, "The Armenians and the Book" was re-mounted at ALMA where it remains on display.*

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wager that the only students that have even heard of the Armenian Genocide are aware of this tragedy because they listen to System of a Down.

I must admit that before the trip with NAASR to historic Armenia, all the Genocide meant to me was one tragic story after another. We have all seen the various movies and mind-shocking photos of the Genocide. We all know the significance behind April 24th and can easily recite the fact that over 1.5 million Armenians were victims of genocide. But what this trip did for me was to allow me to experience the Genocide first-hand as an eye witness—albeit a century later. I stood in the same Armenian churches that our brothers and sisters stood in. I sang the same hymns that they sang. I walked the death marches and saw the images of thousands of dead Armenian souls at the pit in Yozgat. I saw the unmarked graves of our people covered by the growing population of Turkey. I stood on the grounds of Anatolia College and saw the Armenian students from a century ago rushing to class just like I see my students today. I saw what was once the home of my grandmother and could see her running up the hills in Hussenig just like I see my daughters running up the hill behind our home. I saw the vast Turkish military everywhere—just like our ancestors did—ready to take action against threats to the state. I saw the depths of hell our people had to endure—from the comfort of an air-conditioned motor coach.

Even today, the Turks we met asked us where they could find the buried treasures of Armenians who had fled the region 100 years ago. “Tell us where the Armenians buried their treasures and we will share the bounty with you,” they said. Many of the ruins we visited had been dug up by those searching for gold and valuables. The answer to their question was simple—the buried treasures were the bones of the people that were murdered. Many of the areas of Eastern Turkey are impoverished and people live in squalor. If they had allowed the Armenian treasures to live, they would have had the benefit of learn-



The travelers dwarfed by the grandeur of Ani Cathedral's interior

ing from educated people who would have helped lift them from the poverty they live in today. The Armenian treasures they seek were the teachers, tradesmen, architects, doctors, and artisans that lived here. The people were the real treasures, not their possessions.

I even had an opportunity to meet two of the greatest treasures that we have today—Armen Aroyan and Richard Hovannisian. Their love for our people, our culture, and our history is a great inspiration. As long as we have people that truly care, our great gifts will never be buried.

I also experienced a self-realization. My people were murdered, butchered, and tortured in the most heinous ways. Yet to this day, I have done little to change the inhumanity that was cast upon our people nor have I done anything to change the current inhumanity that still exists in our world today. I think that the time has come for me to change and that the greatest gift that NAASR provided was the impetus for me to rise to the challenge of bringing about change.

### Yervant Chekijian (Boston, MA)

It was educational and important to see historic Armenia and to witness the unjust loss that we suffered as a nation. The lands of the Republic of Armenia have a different history: Armenians have had a major presence or were the majority in these lands for less than a hundred years. To me historic is a longer period. To see Wilsonian Armenia and its fertile and beautiful lands was most hurtful. This would have given the Armenian nation her breadbasket, and would have made a more complete and balanced country.

### Sona Aronian (Kingston, RI)

On this, my third NAASR trip, I visited my mother's birthplace, Maden, a small mining town in the Taurus Mountains on the right bank of a tributary of the Tigris River, a visit that made all the natural beauty I had seen thus far of mountains, lakes, rivers, and fertile



plains, the created beauty of numerous architectural wonders still standing whole or in remnants and ruins, including Aghtamar and Ani, fade into a background mosaic for an intensely personal experience. As we drove up the central, narrow, and winding road to the wide square at the top of the hillside town, I kept searching and guessing on which side and exactly where my Grandfather Toros Opsoyan may have had his butcher or haberdashery shop. When we had emerged at the top where police were located, I stood, both numb and frozen in time, and viewed the town's expanse. Only my eyes kept darting from house to house, road to road, and square to square as I tried desperately to imagine where my pretty blue-eyed, teenaged mother, Arousiag, might have been standing when she saw her father beheaded along with all her male relatives but for one, who had been out of town that day. Or was she already sitting in the cart with her friend Hasmig in the army convoy that was to take her to Constantinople to marry the Turkish cavalry officer who had warned my grandfather that it was all over for the Armenians and that he was ready to save his daughter through marriage. Was her 12-year-old brother Mardiros, who "disappeared" before they reached Konya, sitting with her and also watching the gruesome spectacle? All I could understand, when I was roused to return to our waiting bus, was that my mother had been too traumatized by living through this nightmare to ever share it with her daughters, and I had lost her too young to have thought to question her on my own. I could only be a belated witness to her sorrow.

When we arrived in Erzerum/Karin, a repeat visit for me, I enjoyed a few happy moments. Though we were never 100% certain that we had found the ruins of the Sanasarian Academy, I was thrilled to be photographed in front of it with Richard Hovannisian, the great his-



NAASR Board Members Bruce Roat, Nancy Kolligian, and Yervant Chekijian with Prof. Richard Hovannisian in Kharpert

torian who has given back to us our historical heritage. I stood there remembering that my father, Arshag Aharonian, had graduated from there around 1910 and had then gone on to medical school in Constantinople. Though he was arrested in 1915 because he was a Zeituntsi and sent on a death march with a labor battalion, he suc-



The travelers at the Church of the Holy Cross, Aghtamar. Back: Bruce Roat, Yervant Chekijian, Roupén Berberian; Front: Mary Dorian, Bob Dorian, David Horton, Nancy Kolligian, Vartiter Hovannisian, Richard Hovannisian, Harry Parsekian, Sylvia Kaloustian, Sona Aronian, Vahe Hacopian, Houry Aroyan, Nubar Aroyan, Miriam Horton, Armen Aroyan

ceeded on a second attempt to escape, and while sick with malaria, he found his way to a missionary hospital in Konya. After the war he returned and finished his medical program and planned to go to Paris to complete a specialization and return to Zeitun to fulfill his and his father Hovhannes's dream to become Zeitun's first physician. Needless to add, history moved in a different direction. Back in Bolis my final search was to walk the length and breadth of Pera, now Istiklal Street, which was the pre-World War I 5th Avenue of the Ottoman Empire with embassies, churches, Greek, Armenian, foreign, and wealthy Turkish homes, including some beautiful turn of the century buildings such as the one designed by Armenian architect Hovsep Aznavuryan as well as numerous photography shops lining the streets. There were a number of buildings the atelier of Sebah & Joallier on "439 Grande Rue de Pera" could have been located in, but the numbering was unclear, and I could only hope I had seen the shop where my parents, who had met and married in Konya, had their wedding picture taken to send to the surviving Aharonians (the two daughters, Antaram and Arousiag, had perished). The Aharonians were living at war's end in Jerusalem, where my grandfather worked for an AGBU orphanage. When we visited the still active Armenian sights in Uskudar/Scutari, I was once again left to imagine where my young parents might have been living while preparing for a new life. Their faces, in the wedding photograph I have only recently acquired, show a serene dignity that masks the unfathomable horrors they witnessed. I stand in awe of them.

#### David Horton (Lexington, MA)

Dear Armen, Richard, Vartiter, Yervant, Nancy, Bruce, Mihran, Sona, Roupén, Mary, Bob, Vahe, Sylvia, Harry, Faith, Vahik, Nubar, and Houry,

First of all, I want to warmly, sincerely, and deeply thank you, Armen (Aroyan), for agreeing to gather and guide all of us on the dis-



At the citadel of Van. Back row: Armen Aroyan, Richard Hovannisian, Vartiter Hovannisian, Yervant Chekijian, Nancy Kolligian, Bruce Roat, Nubar Aroyan, Roupen Berberian; Middle: Miriam Horton, Sylvia Kaloustian, Faith Cass, Sona Aronian, Houry Aroyan, Mary Dorian; Front: Bob Dorian, Vahik Petrossian, Mihran Aroian, David Horton, Vahe Hacopian, Harry Parsekian

covery and uncovering of Armenian life, past and present, in Turkey. I was constantly amazed by all the people you know in the country and where you brought us to reveal the history of the Armenians and the determination of those Armenians who still live in Turkey. I doubt if anyone else could have led us along the highways and the innumerable byways, if you will, to reveal the lives of Armenians as you did. Visits to the towns and villages where parents and grandparents of people with whom we traveled had once lived are absolutely etched into my memory. I could barely look at each of our companions as one after the other visited the home or town where beloved family members had once lived. It was such a personal experience for each that I did not want to intrude.

There were myriad details to attend to before and during the trip, all of which you managed to take care of with your quiet dignity and skill. It was just a perfect trip in all respects! Your concern for me was evident and greatly appreciated.

And to Richard (Hovannisian), our teacher, our professor! Your overviews and “preps” before we set out on the road were so valuable and important! You “opened doors” to our minds and sharpened our perceptions because of the knowledge, history, and information you imparted to us. Being available on the road to answer questions was invaluable and further enriched the experience for me. Both your knowledge of and passion for Armenia were so evident and valuable. And, dare I say, inspiring.

When I returned home, I immediately read *Family of Shadows* and could hardly put it down to do something else during the day or evening! It is a book about a remarkable family indeed with you and Vartiter (Hovannisian) as people worthy of great admiration and enormous respect. Since then, I have read *Snow*, by Orhan Pamuk and *Armenian Golgotha*, by Grigoris Balakian, a shocking window into the Genocide.

Vartiter! Such sensitivity, passion, and grit! Talking with you and sensing your strength and dedication were palpable. You really are an awesome woman. We should all have your strength and wisdom!

Yervant (Chekijian), Nancy (Kolligian), and Bruce (Roat)! What can I say! All the work that you did to organize the trip and to “get it off the ground” was amazing! You also did such a fine job to keep us all focused and on target in your calm fashion while we were traveling. Nothing seemed to faze you. I feel that your ability to handle everything in a warm, calm fashion did so much to create the bond that quickly developed among us. You took care of the smallest detail as well as any potential “disasters” in your unflappable manner. How you acted was “catching” and created a warm and happy ambience for the trip. Thank you! Thank you!

Everyone on the trip has made a lasting impression on me and I valued the time I spent with each of you: riding on the bus, engaging in conversation, visiting historic and contemporary places, dining together, and sharing aspects of our lives.

Mihran (Aroian) and Roupen (Berberian) have posted an abundance of quality photos that represent and present our trip and journey so vividly. Thanking you is barely enough! All of the photos “speak”

so much to me.

While we were traveling together this summer and as I got to know you, I was constantly thinking of all that you and your families have experienced: great loss, disruption, separation, and the unspeakable connection to genocide that killed your relatives and your relatives’ friends and all but eradicated Armenian life in Turkey. Yet, your toughness, resilience, and indomitable qualities, and the same qualities in your parents and grandparents, brought them and you through an ordeal and trial that no one should experience. You all became productive, successful people in your professional lives and in your personal lives, too, within your families. At the same time, you work so hard in so many ways to keep your personal and national history alive and to create a viable, productive, and democratic Armenia. Raffi Hovannisian! What a remarkable man – the son of remarkable parents!

You just need to know how impressive you are and how much I admire all of you for what you are doing with your lives and what you do to benefit Armenians and Armenia!

Some years ago, I heard a presentation on leadership by a woman who was active in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) with Martin Luther King, Jr. Her name is not a household name, but her presentation was one that struck a chord with me. She said that movements need people like Dr. King, but they also need people up and down the line who are committed, resourceful, and productive; leaders in their own way. Not everyone is a Dr. King, but there are roles to fill in movements and they need to be filled by people who will really work! She called this a form of leadership: people who will take the initiative and be leaders wherever they are in an organization.

I see those qualities in all of you. Armenia, Armenians, and Armenian history and culture are significant parts of your lives and you all work on behalf of Armenians one way or another. Commendable!

Continue to bring what is in your hearts to inform what you do, just as you have always done!

### Roupen Berberian (Glendale, CA)

It was a privilege traveling with Professor Richard and Dr. Vartiter Hovannisian, Armen Aroyan, and the remainder of the group on NAASR's trip to Historical Armenia from May 26, 2011, through June 9, 2011. Professor Richard Hovannisian's historical perspective regarding what was lost in 1920 (Igdır, Mount Ararat, Kars, Sarakimis), combined with Armen's 20 years of tour guide experience, was a powerful partnership that made it an incredible trip.

I must admit, I felt many emotions on this trip. I felt anger for a very long time at being deprived of visiting these sites, as part of regular school field trips during my adolescence. Traveling to these areas became possible after 1991. However, there was fear and apprehension about coming. So I previously contented myself by reading books, looking at pictures, and attending Professor Richard Hovannisian's conferences on Historical Armenian Cities and Provinces. However, the yearning to see the sites remained.

I felt tremendous exhilaration once I arrived. The land was overwhelmingly beautiful, very pristine, undeveloped, and pollution free. I will remember the sunset leaving Aghtamar Island on Lake Van, the majesty of snowcapped Mount Sipan, Mount Nemrut, and Mount Ararat, the waterfall at Muradiye (Perkri in Armenian), the dairy pastures of the Kars region, the forests of Sarakimis, the muddy color of the Halys River in Amasya, the Tigris River near Diyarbakir, and the desert near Mardin.

Both the natural environment and the man-made, Holy Cross Church on Aghtamar Island, Lake Van, are impressive. The Japanese and German tourists staying at our hotel decided to come to Van, primarily to see the Holy Cross Church. The raised reliefs of the Church are spectacular, especially at sunset, when the sun's rays facilitate seeing every detail. It was nice to see the recent Church renovation, including the placement of a cross on top of the Church.

We were also amazed at the multi-million dollar restoration currently going on at the Surp Giragos Church in Diyarbakir, especially since the Kurdish mayor committed his city to paying for 1/3 of the construction costs. Surp Giragos is huge, with seven altars. But we left with mixed emotions, because there are virtually no Armenians left in Diyarbakir, so Surp Giragos will essentially be a destination for Armenian visitors, not residents.

Some members of the group were very emotional connecting with the land of their ancestors in Hussenig, Hin Akarag, Palu, Gurun, and Erzurum. Some found what used to be the family home, or the vacant lot, or ruins, where the family's home used to be.

While visiting Mar Gabriel, the Syriac Christian Monastery outside of Midyat (near Mardin) we learned about that community's troubles dealing with the Turkish government, in terms of retaining their properties, or renovating them (how similar to the plight of the Armenians). The Syriac minority is also experiencing an emigration problem which has drastically reduced their numbers in recent years. Finally, it was interesting to see a Surp Sargis banner in their church, and we were amazed at how much they knew about the Armenian experience of 1915.

Amasya was probably the most modern and most picturesque city we visited. Armen called it the Salzburg of Turkey. The father-in-law of Tigranes the Great, Mithridates VI, and the other Mithridates Kings of Pontus are buried there, in tombs carved into the Mountain.

My respect for the Istanbul community (including Kadikoy and Uskudar) increased since my first trip. Despite everything, they have kept their patriarchate, churches, schools, hospitals (Surp Prgitch), museums, cemeteries and their traditions. The Sisli cemetery is in the middle of prime city real estate, surrounded by the Trump Tower and other major buildings. We were fortunate to witness a very special ceremony in the Sisli cemetery, with almost a dozen Armenian priests singing. The headstone and other ornate memorials to the previous patriarchs and other notable Armenians (like Daniel Varoujan) are the biggest and best I have seen anywhere. We saw the very special Hrants Dink memorial in the Balikli cemetery, and the Balian architect tomb-

emony in the Sisli cemetery, with almost a dozen Armenian priests singing. The headstone and other ornate memorials to the previous patriarchs and other notable Armenians (like Daniel Varoujan) are the biggest and best I have seen anywhere. We saw the very special Hrants Dink memorial in the Balikli cemetery, and the Balian architect tomb-



Roupen Berberian

stones in another cemetery on the Asiatic side of Istanbul.

I should not have been, but I was surprised to see the Armenian flag flying outside of hotels in Kars and Sarakimish.

I must admit, I felt envious regarding the population growth, the general standard of living, and the very well developed infrastructure. However, one never forgets how lucky we are in America with respect to freedom. For example, I really got mad when they would not let me use my tripod on Aghtamar Island or in Ani. It should not have bothered me so much, but it did.

In the final analysis, I definitely felt a bond with the land, the remaining Armenians, and what was left of the Armenian history and culture. I also experienced a tremendous sense of loss, which at times, was very difficult to deal with. However, this was my second NAASR trip, and I would not be surprised if I return on a future NAASR trip.

### *Is NAASR In Your Will?*

There are many ways you can help NAASR and its programs for the furtherance of Armenian studies and research. One of the most significant is including NAASR in your estate planning. There are many possibilities – please make an appointment with NAASR to discuss the best plan for you. Call us at 617-489-1610, e-mail us at [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org), or visit us at the NAASR Center in Belmont.

# University of Michigan Workshop Continues Assessment of the State of Armenian Studies

Leading experts in Armenian Studies from around the world gathered at the University of Michigan to assess the current state of Armenian Studies in academic institutions in North America, Europe, and the Middle East. The cross-disciplinary meeting took place from October 14-16, 2011, as part of the ongoing project to assess "The State of Armenian Studies." The gathering was organized by the Armenian Studies Program of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and convened parallel to events marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the first endowed chair in Armenian Studies at the University in 1981 and of the Program itself.

The special project has been able to gather a huge amount of information on Armenian Studies and had made that information available to the participants for their analysis and comments.

Ambitious in its scope, the three-day meeting sought to have the input of these scholars to survey a wide array of programs, activities, and publications in Armenian Studies over the last 30 years throughout the world, not including Armenia. The research team at the University had prepared lists of books published in French, German, Farsi, English, Spanish, Turkish, Italian, and Russian; the gathering made a general assessment of publishing interests and trends and laid the groundwork to complete even more extensive surveys of works published in Armenian, Polish, and other languages. The meeting sought to bring to light all of the undergraduate and graduate courses that have been offered in Armenian Studies over the last decade in order to better grasp how the next generation of scholars is being trained, and to make recommendations regarding what kinds of courses need to be offered in the future. The continuing relationships between Armenian Studies as it stands in the university system and other institutions outside of that system—such as research centers, and archival and cultural organizations—were also surveyed and discussed. Additional reports were prepared separately to address the state of the field regionally, such as in the U.S., in Europe, and in the Middle East.

The goal of the meeting was to gain a more complete understanding of recent advances in scholarship relevant to the field as well as to survey avenues for future research, to discuss the relationship between Armenian Studies programs and the general public, to brainstorm how to attract both established professors already in the university as well as new students, and to ensure that scholars in Armenian Studies continue to produce work that is cutting-edge in terms of recent methodological and theoretical developments within greater academia.

The director of the Armenian Studies Program, Gerard Libaridian, has been at the helm of the State of Armenian Studies Project for the last four years, and the recent gathering of scholars to discuss the findings of the project represents a milestone—but by no means an endpoint—in the ongoing project. Most recently, scholars were in-



Prof. Gerard J. Libaridian and Prof. Robert W. Thomson at the Michigan workshop

vited to respond to a series of questions about various dimensions of Armenian Studies. All respondents to the questionnaire were invited to continue the discussion at U-M in Ann Arbor. The participants included many seminal and active figures in the field, such as Robert Thomson, Ara Sanjian, Barlow Der Mu-grdechian, Peter Cowe, Susan Pattie, Sergio La Porta, Robert Hewsen, Khachig Tololyan, Asbed Kotchikian, and Marc Mamigonian, as well as the faculty of the Armenian Studies Program at U-M: Kathryn Babayan, Kevork Bardakjian, Ronald Suny, and Gerard Libaridian. Post-doctoral fellows and graduate students associated with the Armenian Studies Program at U-M also

participated in the discussion. Many others from around the world had participated in the preparation of the charts, lists, and special reports.

Generally, organizations that are dedicated to one academic discipline will assess overall trends in scholarship and make recommendations for future research and pedagogical practices every five to ten years. The problem, however, is that Armenian Studies is not a discipline—that is, a specific methodological approach to train a certain type of scholar, such as a historian, literary critic, anthropologist, sociologist, or political scientist—but rather a field related to every

aspect of Armenian life past, present, and future. This is not a weakness of Armenian Studies, but is generally believed to be a strength of the field, as it is informed and shaped by many different kinds of scholars working together across multiple disciplines to create new bodies of knowledge. The flourishing of Armenian Studies programs, however, has merited a report on par with what other disciplines produce every five to ten years. To this end, the meeting concluded with preliminary plans to publish a report on the state of Armenian Studies which could be put to good use by scholars around the world, as well as serve to inform the



Prof. Sebouh Aslanian with NAAASR's Marc Mamigonian in Ann Arbor

general public of what topics are of utmost importance today in Armenian Studies, how to continue to grow the field, what still needs to be done, and why it matters within and beyond academia.

The project is co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, based in Belmont, Mass., and the Society for Armenian Studies, currently chaired by Professor Bardakjian.

(Courtesy of Armenian Studies Program, University of Michigan)



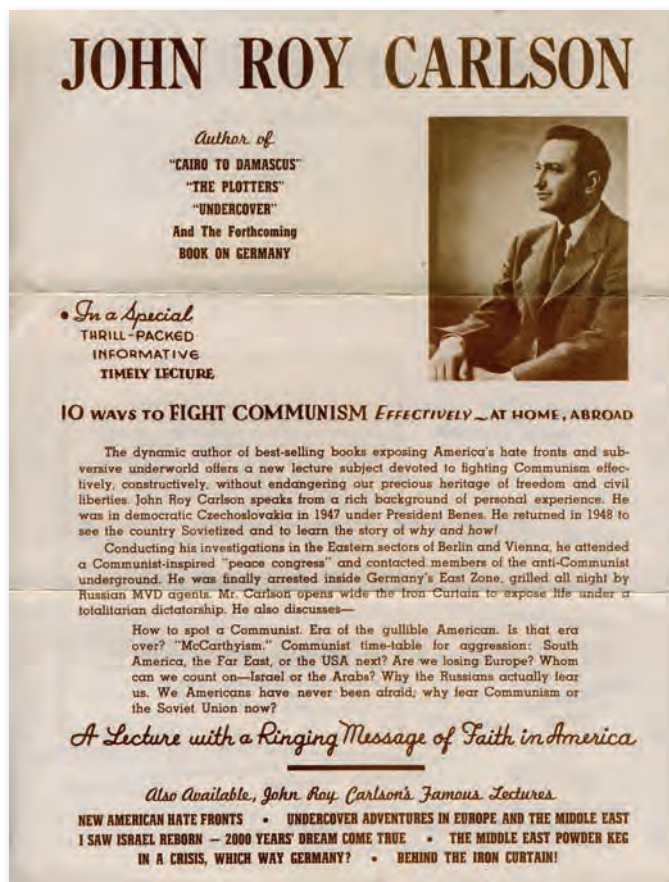
# UConn Scholar on Importance of Derounian Archive at NAASR

*Editor's note: We thank Prof. Christopher Vials of the University of Connecticut for sharing his thoughts on his experiences using the Derounian archive at NAASR.*

The Avedis Derounian papers at NAASR comprise the most useful archive I have yet discovered, and I feel very fortunate to live in range of this excellent resource. I am an Assistant Professor of English and American Studies at the University of Connecticut, and am currently writing a book on antifascism in the United States from the 1930s to the present day. Antifascism, as I define it, is a set of cultural politics through writers, artists, and activists who try to thwart "fascist" trends around the world, including in their own countries. Since the 1930s, it has generally involved a vigilance toward authoritarian trends on the political right, and an attempt to curb the influence of far right organizations and movements. Tentatively titled *Dark Tendencies: the Fight Against Fascism in the United States*, this book is forthcoming from the University of Massachusetts Press.

In the 1940s, Derounian was a key antifascist on the American scene whose books *Under Cover* (1943) and *The Plotters* (1946) were best-sellers. His alarm over fascism was clearly informed by the knowledge of the Armenian Genocide transmitted to him by his refugee parents.

The Derounian papers are not only a vital resource for those like myself who study antifascism, but, more broadly, they are incredibly



**JOHN ROY CARLSON**

Author of  
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"THE PLOTTERS"  
"UNDERCOVER"  
And The Forthcoming  
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Flyer for a 1950s lecture by Avedis Derounian, aka John Roy Carlson

fruitful for anyone studying the history of the American right or the social movements—left, right, and center—of the 1930s and 1940s. Derounian went "undercover" to research individuals and organiza-

tions he suspected of harboring fascist tendencies. His resulting contributions to the world are not only the published books in which he revealed his findings, but the research he left behind of well over 100 organizations and individuals, from the American Legion to the German American Bund. In his papers are detailed reports of what transpired at their meetings, correspondence in which public figures reveal their anti-Semitic and bigoted attitudes, literature which reveals the various (and often surprising) reactions to the Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco regimes in the United States, evidence of politicians' ties to right-wing extremism, and many more materials not available anywhere else.

I am so thankful to the supportive staff of NAASR for allowing me to visit their archives and for their generous assistance at all levels. I sincerely hope that these rare and significant papers are preserved for future use.



Photo of a pro-Nazi rally in New York City in 1939, from the Derounian archive

# “To Honor”:

## James Russell Salutes Taner Akçam

*Editor’s note: The response to Prof. Russell’s introduction of Prof. Taner Akçam, given on February 16, 2012, prior to Akçam’s lecture “Judgment at Istanbul: The Armenian Genocide Trials,” co-sponsored by the Zoryan Institute, Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard, and NAASR, was so strong that we are presenting it to our members and friends. We thank Prof. Russell for giving permission to do so.*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I invite you to imagine a counterfactual historical fiction, an alternate reality, a nightmare. Nazi Germany has committed the crimes of the Holocaust and has lost the war. A new German government supported by the Allies takes power and begins to bring the culprits of the Final Solution to trial— let us say, at Nuremberg. The trials are flawed, even perfunctory, but they are an admission by the perpetrators of the reality of the crime. The Cold War between the Western powers and the USSR begins earlier than was the case in fact; and as a result, Allied control over the defeated country falters as the great powers compete with each other. Elements of the Nazi military and state apparatus from the Wehrmacht, SS, and Gestapo regroup, begin a war of reconquest which unites most Germans behind them, and take over much lost territory including the killing fields of Poland where the extermination camps had been. They repudiate the trials held by the short-lived, Allied-sponsored postwar administration, and create what purports to be a new Germany, presenting themselves as a stable and increasingly prosperous, if strictly disciplined, society that is a bulwark against Communist expansion. They are savvy politicians, though, and as a price for joining the U.S. against the Russians, they deny the Holocaust and insist Washington do the same. The new Germany manufactures a warped history of the events of the war, citing the Warsaw Ghetto uprising as proof that the Jews were dangerous and disloyal. Yes, they admit, it was a pity some died, but many Germans died as well, and that’s war. Widespread anti-Semitic prejudice makes the lie easy to swallow—the Allies never did anything to stop the Holocaust or rescue its victims in any case—and the world, anxious for peace and quiet, acquiesces.

Nearly a century on, there are no feature films about the Holocaust, and only one major novel about it, which nobody reads. A few German writers have raised their voices about Nazi crimes, but have endured legal harassment for defamation of the nation. Every American president, after tepidly courting the Jewish vote in the primaries by promising to recognize the genocide, goes back on his word the instant he takes office, and Secretaries of State loftily aver that historical controversies are best left to academic debate by specialists. One German historian, imprisoned in his homeland for his work on behalf of human rights, escapes. He resolves to study the Holocaust, and the more he looks, the more he finds, publishing one book after another. He even writes a monograph about the



James Russell and Taner Akçam

record of those long ago aborted, forgotten trials at a place called Nuremberg. He is a modest, studious man, simple in his courage, speaking openly, never once complaining of the hardships his quest for the truth have caused him.

Change Jew to Armenian; and Germany to Turkey—and it is now. This is a mind game I think many of us have played, in an effort to wake those around us to the waking nightmare of the real world that we are actually living in. They are, like the world of my alternate reality, anxious for peace and quiet. They do not want to know, and anyhow it was a long time ago, so why should it matter? What these sleepwalkers do not understand is that the longer a crime is covered up, the worse its effects are. Indifference and inaction have emboldened the murderers and their heirs, and genocides have become ever more frequent, over more and more of the globe. What began as a sin shunned became the policy of criminal states but is now a part of the normal human psyche at large. The actuality of genocide as an everyday occurrence is changing human nature and compromising the essence of civilization in ways we, who are after all within the process, may only just be starting to sense.

What is to be done in the face of this metamorphosis, which is far worse than any reverie of Kafka, worse than the transformation

of a man to an insect? Insects, the majority population of the planet humans dominate, do not imagine mass murder. What is to be done when evolution has done an about face? Resist the transformation, resist the numbing quality, the novocaine of indifference, hold keenly and consciously to the truth and the right and do so knowing that to do anything else is to surrender the very idea of life. The Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, a Communist, who died in exile in Moscow, wrote that "You must live as though one never died," that is, without any sense of futility, without despair, even without gloom. I have a Turkish scholar who is the hero of my story, better than one could invent in a fiction. This is the man who broke out of prison, wrote tirelessly, moved from one place of exile to another, who has written of all the crimes, of those trials, and they really did take place, after World War I, in Constantinople and other cities till 1922, before the Kemalist takeover, before the century-long cover-up. But I also know how he drives a car, how he and his daughter are good company at a dinner table, how he drinks raki, how he enjoys his colleagues' friendship.

Do you know a novel about a Swedish journalist who, assisted by a young girl with a dragon tattoo, investigates a murder two generations before that most people would rather forget? As their work progresses, the two are threatened, for they find out about a chain of other, related murders that were not so long ago, that are happening now, for the first killer had his disciple and impunity became habit. That was one murder, and the longer justice lay

fought this good fight and died without seeing victory. An almost forgotten film about the almost forgotten heroes of the Spanish Civil War is called "The Good Fight": the Abraham Lincoln brigade fought that good fight, and they lost. The Fascists won in Spain. But the survivors did not surrender, and many got up to fight again in World War II. Professor Taner Akçam will keep on fighting. The gentle, humorous, brilliant writer Orhan Pamuk has faced arrest for his words, for "insulting Turkishness." Nazim Hikmet closed his eyes for the last time far from home, but he lives undefeated in his poems. Every man and woman in Turkey who holds up a sign that said *Biz Ermeniyiz*, "We are Armenians," bids us carry on. Students like Akin Sefer in my own classroom, this year, remind you and me that we still must try, hope against hope, to "play the man," as Latimer bade Master Ridley on a dire morning in England centuries ago.

The man you are about to hear is a fighter in the good fight. The time will come when not to honor these witnesses for the truth will be the crime against Turkishness; when, looking at these brave and decent people, everyone in the world will say, *Ne mutlu Türküm diyene*, "How fortunate is he who can say, 'I am a Turk.'" No noble task was ever easy, proclaims a motto of the Scottish Labor Party, and if you are in this you are in for the long haul. Think of this country. Remember the evils of slavery, then segregation, the lynch mobs, then Rosa Parks not giving up her seat on the bus, then the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, whom I saw with my own eyes when

I was a boy and my Dad was doing legal volunteer work for him, and how he said, just before he was murdered, and I heard that, too, my friends, as millions did, transfixed with sorrow, "I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land!" That is what I think of when I think of the Armenian cause, a hundred years on. We will get there.

And though some of the oppressed of the earth have come a long way there are many more and a long way to go. Sometimes it seems terribly dark to me. When Dr. King passed, I did not think I'd ever again see right in front of me a hero of the mind, and of the spirit, a champion of human liberation and of truth. I saw Taner Akçam in a Dutch TV documentary, "The Wall of Silence" on the screen, to be sure. I watched it a score of times. But God had other plans, and one not only met the man, but, as I said, drank raki with him in one's own home. And God willing, we will raise our glasses again soon.

Taner reminds me, reminds us all what the traditional Turkish toast to *şeref*, "honor," really is about. True scholarship is the essence of honor in a man, of courage to fight the good fight without expecting to win, of caring for the oppressed wherever they are, of service to mankind, to nature, and to Nature's God. It examines the reasons and causes of events without fear or prejudice, and wakes the world from its sleep. Here in a good corner of the real world, in this company of the working people and students of this fine community, on behalf of the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies of Harvard University, then, I have the high privilege and distinct honor to introduce a scholar, a fighter, a man, and my friend: Professor Taner Akçam of Clark University.



Akçam with audience members

dormant, the worse matters became. And what of the murder of a nation? What of a cover-up a century old? What of accomplices not just in Ankara but in the White House and the State Department? Bestsellers fade before reality of the historian who takes on the topic; and the obstacles are endless, the conspiracy of silence is immensely tenacious, and you wonder, will the hero ever bring the villains to justice? Yes, he will.

The time will come when the truth will be victorious and as Christ promised it really will set us free. In a short time it will be a hundred years since 1915, and the last known veteran of World War I died only a few days before I wrote these lines. People have

# Now Embarking: An Artistic Interpretation of the 1947 and 1949 Armenian Repatriation

by Hazel Antaramian-Hofman

*Editor's note: We are pleased to bring this project to the attention of NAASR's members.*

I was born in 1960, Yerevan, Armenia, but spoke little Armenian and what I did speak was Western Armenian. As a young child, I always wondered why I came from such an exotic background when my father was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and my mother from Lyon, France. Only after years of hearing stories did I realize that I was the product of two Armenian diasporan repatriate children, who were compelled by their father and mother's Hayrenik to leave one cultural and ideological ground for another.

The 1947 and 1949 repatriation movements uprooted many Armenians from diaspora countries to the land of their forefathers. But where they were heading was to a "Sovietized" Armenia under Stalin. It was a migratory event complete with personal and spiritual dispossession, and cultural contrasts. As an artist and the daughter of repatriated youth, I want to document and artistically interpret the culture shock, loss of freedom, and the ideological turmoil that shaped this historical time in Armenia for the "akhbars".

I have just begun this artistic historical journey. Thus far I have collected over 30 black and white photographic images of repatriate children and families taken in Armenia from 1947 to 1966. I plan to use these pictures to interpret cultural and economic issues through drawings, paintings, mixed media, and installation art. I have also been collecting short anecdotal stories that help narrate chronologically the circumstances and emotions of the people during these times. I am interested in collecting more, so if you are a repatriate or know of a repatriate who is interested in my project, please contact me at hazelantaramhof@yahoo.com, with "repatriate project" in the subject line. I would be pleased to discuss my project with you in greater detail.



## NAASR Works with Arlington International Film Festival

by Betty Athanasoulas

The inaugural Arlington International Film Festival was held at the Regent Theater in Arlington, MA, from October 6 through 9, 2011. The Armenian community was represented by *Finding Zabel Yesayan*, a documentary by Lara Aharonian and Talin Suciyan. As a festival team member, I had the privilege of participating in the conversations about the mission of the festival. The recurring theme was appreciation of the diversity of Arlington and the surrounding communities. The festival offers a unique opportunity for cross-cultural education by promoting understanding of the many cultures represented in our town. The festival is a means for recognizing that such diversity enriches our community.

I owe Marc Mamigonian and Nancy Kolligian of NAASR a debt of gratitude for facilitating the process of soliciting *Finding Zabel Yesayan*, which was selected for inclusion and

screened on October 7.

Several members of NAASR and the Armenian International Womens Association (AIWA), who had collaborated on a screening of the film at NAASR earlier in the year, attended the screening.

My knowledge of Armenian culture and history has been acquired informally over the years through Nancy Kolligian and Adrina Goshgarian Kletjian, my former Spanish students and now friends of many years. Their personal stories of their own experiences in their ancestral lands have fascinated me. What has impressed me the most is their passion to preserve their Armenian heritage and deepen their knowledge of Armenian history and culture. My eagerness to learn more and my strong belief in the festival's mission moved me to include an Armenian film. The festival organizers, April Ranck and Alberto Guzman, gave their enthusiastic support to the idea of having the Armenian community represented in the festival.

*Finding Zabel Yesayan* went far beyond being informative and enlightening. I was moved by the narratives that evoked a deep respect for Yesayan as a human being who had to endure many personal hardships and by her accomplishments as a scholar, a thinker, and a writer. I found the discussions of her literary works particularly engaging. I hung on every word from the different speakers but was frustrated at times because I did not have the background knowledge fully to comprehend the historical and political references. The documentary reinforced my wish to increase my knowledge and understanding of Armenian history and culture.

*Betty Athanasoulas was the Outreach Coordinator to High Schools and liaison to the Armenian community for the 2011 Arlington International Film Festival. She is currently teaching ESL to international employees at Biogen Pharmaceuticals. Previously she was a Spanish teacher at Needham High School.*



# A Surprising Discovery in a Florence Church

by Marc A. Mamigonian

In April 2011 I traveled with my family to Italy for a vacation. The trip included a short (one-day) visit to Florence, which I had previously visited some ten years before. On that earlier visit, we were unable to enter one of the great churches of the city, the basilica of Santa Maria Novella, consecrated in 1420, with its iconic façade by Alberti; we could only admire its spectacular exterior. This meant I did not see, importantly, Masaccio’s key early Renaissance fresco “The Holy Trinity” (ca. 1427). I was determined not to miss out on this visit.



Santa Maria Novella exterior

that a memorial marker was in Armenian (Classical Armenian, or *grabar*) and Latin.

Not having a command of either *grabar* or Latin, I read what I could, got the gist that it had to do with an Abraham Ghulelian from Constantinople or else his son Bedros who died young in 1769.

Clearly, what I should have done at that point was take a photograph: but unlike most places in Italy Santa Maria Novella seems serious about discouraging photos. Failing that, I should have written down what was on the marker. But I didn’t do that either. Frankly, I was convinced that one of my scholar friends

Nearly a year went by. In February 2012, I heard that my son’s school librarian was going to Florence for vacation. So I implored her to visit Santa Maria Novella and take a picture of the marker. Fortunately, she came through.

Prof. James Russell of Harvard was kind enough to provide a translation of the Armenian text. A transliteration and his translation follows.

Ē

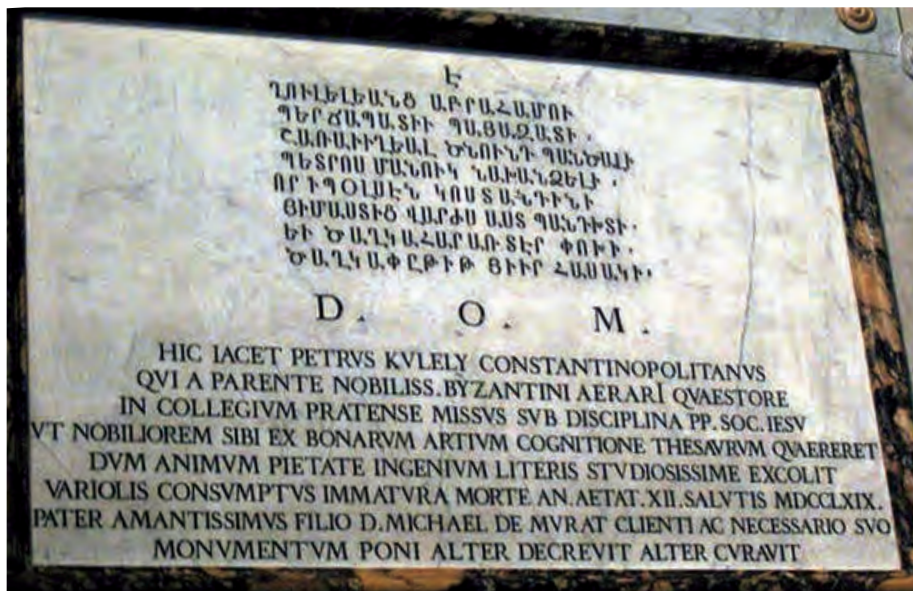
Ghuleleants’ Abrahamu  
perchapatiw payazati,  
shar]awigheal ts’nund pants’ali  
Petros manuk nakhandzeli.  
Or i Polšēn Kostandini  
himastits’ varzhs ast pandkhti,  
ew ts’aghkakar ar Tēr p’okhi,  
ts’aghkap’ēt’it’ hiwr hasaki.

“Existent God!  
Of Abraham Ghulelian,  
Noble scion of honor  
Glorious offspring descended  
The enviable young Petros,  
Who from Constantine’s Polis  
Here for the study of wisdom sojourns,  
and as a flower plucked to the Lord passes,  
At the age of his flower’s blossoming.”

As can be clearly discerned, the Latin text does not convey the exact same things as the Armenian. The Latin reads as follows:

HIC IACET PETRVS KULELY  
CONSTANTINOPOLITANVS  
QUI A PARENTE NOBILISS.  
BYZANTINI AERARI QVAESTORE  
IN COLLEGIVM PRATENSE  
MISSVS SVB DISCIPLINA PP.  
SOC. IESV  
VT NOBILIOREM SIBI EX  
BONARVM ARTIVM COGNITIONE  
THESAVREM QVAERERET  
DVM ANIMVM PIETATE  
INGENIVM LITERIS STVDIOSSIME  
EXCOLIT  
VARIOLIS CONSVMPTVS IM-  
MATVRA MORTE AN. AETAT. XII.  
SALVTIS MDCCLXIX.  
PATER AMANTISSIMVS FILIO D.  
MICHAEL DE MVRAT CLIENTI AC  
NECESSARIO SVO  
MONVMENTVM PONI ALTER  
DECREVIT ALTER CVRAVIT

It is hoped that in making this known that someone with more detailed knowledge of the marker and its inscriptions, and the individuals to which they refer, will come forward, and we may all benefit from their knowledge.



Santa Maria Novella-interior marker

Fortunately, the church was open and accessible, and on a beautiful, sunny spring day we paid a visit. Masaccio’s incredible fresco did not disappoint “in person”: it is awesome in the true sense of the word. As my son and I were moving away from “The Holy Trinity,” we both spotted a marker on the wall and exclaimed (quietly), “Hey, that’s Armenian!” And, indeed, it was clear

would know the full story or, at worst, there would be some readily-accessible documentation online or in a published book: after all, Santa Maria Novella is one of the most famous churches in the world. Unfortunately, I was wrong on all counts, and much to my surprise (and chagrin) no one knew about this and I could not find anything in books on the church or online. Nothing. *Niente*.

# NAASR and Armenian Studies at Columbia: *Then and Now*

NAASR's seminal role in the establishment of chairs and permanent programs in Armenian Studies at Harvard University and UCLA are well known. Less well remembered, however, is NAASR's strong ties to Armenian Studies at Columbia University.

Columbia University can lay claim to having been the first American university to

Bonfante, and Zarian, as well as music by Alan Hovanes and Aram Khatchaturian.

The year 1948 saw the rebirth of Armenian Studies at Columbia University with the appointment of Dr. Armen Jerejian and the formation thereafter of the Society for the Advancement of Armenian Studies of America. A 1955 report gives a great deal of detail about what was envisioned at Colum-

bia: "In the past, the Armenian language has been taught as an isolated course at Columbia by W. Jackson, Grey, and the Rev. A. A. Bedikian, and at Harvard by Blake.... In 1948, a Society and an Academic Council for the Advancement of Armenian Studies were organized, and endorsed by the acting president of Columbia University, Dr. Fackenthal and Profs. Martinet, Fowkes, Jakobson, Lotz, Goodrich, Ayres, and others....

"At Columbia University, since 1948, about 300 registrations were taken for the [sic] Armenian studies. The most students were prepared for scholarly research or for teaching.... SAAS has started a \$50,000 Endowment Fund campaign for the Armenian Chair at Columbia University; \$10,245 has been collected already."

Jerejian and the NAASR leadership were in communication as early as the summer of 1954, before NAASR had been launched publicly, and face to face meetings took place in the fall. A letter of January 8, 1955, from NAASR to Jerejian stated that "[o]ur purpose is not divided, and the establishment of centers of Armenian learning and



Rev. A.A. Bedikian, who taught Armenian classes at Columbia in the 1930s

research in more than one academic center is a likely possibility.... Our hope is that you will reconsider your views that both organizations should carry on their activities separately. We trust that it will still be possible in the time remaining that our groups can merge into one organization."

Such a merger, while logical and perhaps desirable, did not occur. In 1959, in the immediate aftermath of the completion of NAASR's \$300,000 drive to endow the Harvard chair, Jerejian wrote to Chairman Young:

We are very happy to know that the plans for the endowment of a Chair for Armenian Studies and Research at Harvard University have been crowned with such success...

The Committee in New York feels that now is the proper time for us to put in effect similar plans, which as you know have long been in our minds, to raise a similar Endowment Fund for a Chair of Armenian Studies and Research at Columbia University.

The Committee hopes that you can help us in the same manner you did the Committee for Harvard University. We

15 Cents

**NAASR New York Banquet Launches Columbia Armenian Program**

The New York Armenian community contributed \$30,000 towards a full-time program of Armenian studies at Columbia University. The sum was raised at a tenth anniversary banquet sponsored by the Greater New York Chapter of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, at which Dr. Grayson Kirk, President of Columbia, acknowledged the gift personally. Nearly two hundred persons, many of them academicians, scientists and professionals, attended the distinguished event at the Harvard Club of New York City, on Friday evening, March 28.

"The teaching of Armenian at Columbia began 71 years ago,"

By Armine Dikjian

Dr. Kirk said. "We have given considerable emphasis to the study of the language and culture of this great people but because of financial considerations, we could not develop it as much as it deserved. It is a source of great gratification to all of us that arrangements have been made for permanent tenure at Columbia for Dr. Nina Garsoian as associate professor in Armenian studies. She will bring strength as well as grace to the program.

"Your concern for this has been shared by us, President Kirk continued "We shall all benefit. Future generations will have greater resources in studying the tradition of which you are legitimately proud."

Dr. V. Lawrence Parsoagian, Rensselaer Professor of Engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, was master of ceremonies. He presented the guests of honor on the dais: Dr. Paul Bedoukian, consulting chemist and numismatist, a NAASR regional director; Prof. Garsoian, currently a professor of history at Smith College; Stanley Salmen, coordinator of Columbia's planning activities; Daniel Kondakjian, owner and president of DKE Electronics, inventor, and major benefactor of NAASR; Armin Kandjian, vice-president of Communication Systems, Inc., formerly an ITT vice-president; and Rev. A. A. Bedikian, NAASR Board member, editor of GOTCHNAG, author and theologian.

Also Prof. Tibor Halasi-Kun, head of Columbia's Middle Eastern Dept.; Mrs. Flora Sarkisian, philanthropist, and former president of the AGBU Women's Central Committee; Dr. Vartges

**DR. GRAYSON KIRK**

York Chapter of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, at which Dr. Grayson Kirk, President of Columbia, acknowledged the gift personally. Nearly two hundred persons, many of them academicians, scientists and professionals, attended the distinguished event at the Harvard Club of New York City, on Friday evening, March 28.

**MANOOG YOUNG**

Migrditchian, chemist and AGBU Benefactor Member; Marjorie Housheian, author; Ned Parsoekian, former New Jersey Motor Vehicles Commissioner; Dr. Deran Hanesian, assistant professor of chemical engineering at Newark College of Engineering and chairman of the Greater New York chapter of NAASR. Board members from Boston were Dr. Joseph Mazmanian, Sahag Dako-

(Continued on page seven)

## 1965 Armenian Mirror-Spectator

offer classes in Armenian, with the earliest known course having been offered in 1894. Later, in the 1930s, Rev. A. A. Bedikian (who would serve on NAASR's first Board of Directors) taught Armenian classes in Columbia's school of general studies, and in 1945 the American-Armenian Cultural Association, spearheaded by writer Gosdan Zarian, organized a "Symposium on Armenian Culture" featuring talks by Henri Gregoire, Sirarpie Der Nersessian, Julian



Lecture by MIT Prof. Lerna Ekmekcioglu at Columbia University, March 21, 2012

would like to confer with you on this matter, and we invite you to New York, at your earliest convenience, to meet the members of the Committee.

In due course, this is more or less what would occur; but Jerejian would no longer be involved. When Nina Garsoian began teaching at Columbia in 1962 as visiting professor, a new era for Armenian Studies



Prof. Nina Garsoian in 1964

began at the university. On June 2, 1965, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* reported that “[t]he New York Armenian community contributed \$30,000 towards a full-time program of Armenian studies at Columbia University. The sum was raised at a tenth anniversary banquet sponsored by the Greater New York Chapter of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, at which Dr. Grayson Kirk, President of Columbia, acknowledged the gift personally.”

In 1965 Garsoian was made assistant professor and NAASR’s support of the Armenian Studies program began, followed by additional support from the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), thus allowing the Armenian program to exist on a full-time basis.

By 1969, when Garsoian was named full professor, Ronald Suny and Dickran Kouymjian had completed Ph.Ds under her supervision. In 1973 a second full-time junior faculty member, Krikor Maksoudian, was added. NAASR’s financial support for the program continued through the mid-1970s, and in 1979 a chair was established, initially called the Centennial Chair and later renamed the Avedissian Chair.

In recent years, NAASR has worked with the Columbia Armenian Students Club, the Armenian Center and Columbia University, and Dr. Nanor Kebranian to organize and co-sponsor lectures and programs. Nurhan Becidyan, NAASR Board Member for New York/New Jersey, is en-

thusiastic about working with Columbia. “It has been some time since NAASR was really visible and well known in the New York/New Jersey area,” he said. “The kind of outstanding programs NAASR has in Boston and Los Angeles can take place in and around New York, too. We are pleased to be redeveloping our connections to Columbia which has such a rich history in Armenian Studies.”

Under the leadership of Mark Momjian, chairperson, and Nicole Vartanian, vice chairperson, the board of the Armenian Center at Columbia University has striven to bring greater visibility to the Armenian Studies program and its related events at the university. The Armenian Studies program is now housed in the Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies (MESAAS) department and is led by Assistant Professor Nanor Kebranian. The Center has partnered with NAASR in order to bring a mix of scholarly and cultural events to the Morningside campus that would be of interest to the wider Armenian-American and non-Armenian community of the greater NY-NJ area. The Center hopes to work more closely with NAASR in developing such programs in the future. Current Board members Peter Balakian and Armen Marsoobian are organizing a scholarly symposium for the fall of 2012 to mark the anniversary of the release of Atom Egoyan’s film, *Ararat*. Many more such partnerships are expected in the coming years.

# Scholarly and Social Gatherings at NAASR

Since Fall 2010, following the impetus provided by Prof. Russell of Harvard and Prof. Payaslian of BU, NAASR has hosted a number of gatherings of Boston-area scholars to discuss works-in-progress, share research questions and concerns, and in general to connect and brainstorm. NAASR also organized an evening social for Boston-area Armenian students. More such events are being planned.



Left to right: Haig Atikian (Harvard), Christian Millian of Harvard (right) talks with NAASR Board Member Gregory Aftandilian and Chairman Raffi Yeghiayan



Left to right: Naira Der Kiureghian (Harvard), Kristen Paonessa (Northeastern), Lusine Poghosyan (Northeastern), and Hermine Poghosyan (UMass-Boston)



A fall 2010 gathering in NAASR's Mardigian Library. Clockwise, from bottom: Prof. James Russell (back to camera), Prof. Taner Akçam, Marc Mamigonian, Christian Millian (graduate student at Harvard), Robert Dulgarian, Prof. Christina Maranci, Dr. Dikran Kaligian, Dr. Eden Naby, and Prof. Simon Payaslian. Not shown but present: Umit Kurt (graduate student, Clark Univ.)

## Grants Issued by NAASR and Knights of Vartan

Research grants were issued in 2010-2011 by NAASR and the Knights of Vartan's Fund for Armenian Studies, which is co-administered by NAASR. The recipients are:

- 1. Prof. George Bournoutian.** Publication grant in support of *The 1825 Russian Survey of the Karabagh Province: A Primary Source on the Demography and Economy of Karabagh in the First Half of the 19th Century*, from Mazda Publishers. Grant issued by NAASR.
- 2. Wolfgang Gust.** Research grant in support of ongoing translation and digitization of German source documents on the Armenian Genocide, on the website [www.armenocide.net](http://www.armenocide.net) (A Documentation of the Armenian Genocide in World War I). Grant issued by NAASR and the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.
- 3. Ohannes Kiliçdağı.** Travel and research grant to conduct work in the Vienna Mekhitarist library using provincial Ottoman Armenian newspapers for doctoral work at Boğaziçi University. Grant issued by NAASR and the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.
- 4. Prof. Robert H. Hewsen and Karen Ketendjian.** Publication grant in support of *A History of the Land of Artsakh: Karabagh and Genje, 1722-1827*, by Archbishop Sargis Hasan-Jalalians, forthcoming from Mazda Publishers. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.
- 5. David Zakarian.** Travel grant to present paper at 2012 UCLA Graduate Student Colloquium in Armenian Studies on "The 'Epic' Representation of Armenian Women of the 4th Century in Pawstos."

In addition, NAASR has continued its annual support of an attendee of the Zoryan Institute's Genocide and Human Rights University Program. We are pleased to continue this partnership with our colleagues at Zoryan.



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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](mailto:hq@naasr.org) • Web: [www.naasr.org](http://www.naasr.org)  
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