



## NAASR ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2019 SONA ARONIAN ARMENIAN STUDIES BOOK PRIZES

The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) is pleased to announce the winners of the 2019 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prizes for Excellence in Armenian Studies: Prof. Tamar M. Boyadjian for *The City Lament: Jerusalem Across the Medieval Mediterranean* (Cornell Univ. Press) and Prof. Jennifer M. Dixon for *Dark Pasts: Changing the State's Story in Turkey and Japan* (Cornell Univ. Press); and Prof. Peter Balakian and Aram Arkun for the translation of Krikor Balakian's *The Ruins of Ani* (Rutgers Univ. Press). The 2019 awards are for books published in 2018.

Boyadjian, Assistant Professor of Medieval Literature at Michigan State University, and Dixon, Associate Professor of Political Science at Villanova University, were named as co-winners for their monographs, each of which, coincidentally, was published by Cornell University Press.

Dixon's *Dark Pasts* analyzes the trajectories over the past sixty years of Turkey's narrative of the Armenian Genocide and Japan's narrative of the Nanjing Massacre, while Boyadjian's *The City Lament* focuses on elegies and other expressions of loss that address the spiritual and strategic objective of the early Crusades—i.e., Jerusalem—through readings of city laments in the English, French, Latin, Arabic, and Armenian literary traditions.

Via email, Prof. Dixon commented: "I am thrilled and honored to have my book recognized as a co-recipient of the 2019 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prize for Excellence in Armenian Studies. I am deeply grateful for the recognition of my work by NAASR, and I am happy that, in spite of its comparative nature, my book is being recognized for its contribution to Armenian Studies. I am particularly appreciative of Marc Mamigonian's long interest in and encouragement of my work, and of the feedback, insights, and connections gleaned from NAASR, where I presented an early version of my work and attended academic talks during the three years I was a fellow at the Kennedy School. I benefitted from the interactions and feedback at NAASR, so it is especially gratifying to have my book honored with this award."

Prof. Boyadjian conveyed that she is "deeply honored by the 2019 Dr. Sona Aronian NAASR book prize in excellence in Armenian Studies," and explained that "for over a decade the subject of medieval lamentation has been on my mind. The idea for this book came from the desire to understand how other cultures translated the loss of their land and spaces deemed sacred to them. As someone whose grandparents survived the Armenian Genocide, and who along with my parents were forcefully deported from their homes, I started to examine more closely what it meant in the medieval Mediterranean world to mourn the loss of fallen cities—to lose the place one called 'home.' I came to find that despite differences, many ethno-religious groups reflected on this matter in similar ways in their literary traditions. I am indebted to the continuous support and encouragement of my family, friends, and colleagues, without whom this book would not be possible."

Balakian, the Donald M. and Constance H. Rebar Professor of the Humanities at Colgate University, and Arkun, Executive Director of the Tekeyan Cultural Association and assistant editor at the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, were recognized for their efforts as editor and translator of *The Ruins of Ani*, which was first published in 1910 in Armenian as *Nkaragrut'iwn Anii aweraknerun*. *The Ruins of Ani* combines the genres of history, art criticism, and travel memoir in looking at the medieval Armenian capital of Ani almost on the eve of the Armenian Genocide; more than a century later, the

city's history has been falsified in its presentation by the Turkish government as part of its campaign of denial and erasure of Armenian history.

Prof. Balakian remarked that "it's an honor to receive the Aronian Prize given by NAASR—book prizes matter because they remind the wider world that artistic and intellectual work matter, that books and works of imagination are the center of any culture's communal life. Without literature, art productions, and scholarship there is no glue to keep a culture cohesive and vital, to keep a culture—a culture." Aram Arkun observed that "NAASR and the Aronian Prize are playing an important role in supporting intellectual work in a period where social media seem to have taken first place in the attention of many in the West and in the Armenian community as well. The extended work of research and writing on Armenian history and culture must continue so that there is a reliable and perpetually renewed foundation for popularized transmission of knowledge."

In announcing the Aronian Awards, NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian noted that Boyadjian's and Dixon's books, while not focusing solely on Armenian subject matter, "both serve to help extend the parameters of what Armenian Studies can be, and do so in ways that are, I think, consistent with what we might call the best traditions of the field." He added that "it was very much the hope of the late Dr. Aronian that the prize will serve as an encouragement to translators making available works of Armenian literature and scholarship for an English-language readership, and Balakian and Arkun have performed a great service in making Bishop Balakian's work accessible to non-Armenian readers."

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