



NAASR ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 2021 SONA ARONIAN ARMENIAN STUDIES BOOK PRIZES

The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) is pleased to announce the 2021 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prizes for Excellence in Armenian Studies, jointly awarded to Dr. Stephen Badalyan Riegg for *Russia's Entangled Embrace: The Tsarist Empire and the Armenians, 1801-1914* (Cornell University Press, 2020) and Dr. Marc David Baer for *Sultanic Saviors and Tolerant Turks: Writing Ottoman Jewish History, Denying the Armenian Genocide* (Indiana University Press, 2020); and to Nareg Seferian for his translation of the novel *Mayda* (Մայմա) by Srpuhi Dussap (Սրբուհի Տիսաթ) (Armenian International Women's Association Press). The 2021 awards are for books with a 2020 publication date.

NAASR's Aronian Book Prizes were established in 2014 by the late Dr. Aronian and Dr. Geoffrey Gibbs, to be awarded annually to outstanding scholarly works in the English language in the field of Armenian Studies and translations from Armenian into English.

NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian commented that "this year's prize-winning books—in a year with a number of very valuable publications also worthy of attention—really reflect the diversity of Armenian studies and its inextricable relationship with other fields such as Russian studies, Ottoman & Turkish studies, and Feminist studies to name just three. I think that Dr. Aronian, with her own diverse interests, would be pleased."

Stephen Badalyan Riegg is Assistant Professor of History at Texas A&M University. *Russia's Entangled Embrace*, his first book, examines the complex relationship between the Russian imperial state and the Armenians who lived in the empire and in areas that over the course of the long nineteenth century would come under Russian control. In doing so, Stephen Badalyan Riegg explores, at the meeting point of territoriality and religion, the "dramatic vicissitudes of policy and perception [that] characterized Russo-Armenian ties" in this period. The author examines the Armenian case as a vehicle to explore Russia's colonization of the South Caucasus and to disentangle the "complex processes by which imperial Russia mobilized certain groups into loyal minorities."

Via email, Riegg wrote that "it is a true honor to learn that my book is a winner of the Dr. Sona Aronian Award. My sincere gratitude goes to the members of the selection committee and the esteemed NAASR organization, which is a model of how to bridge the gap between the public and academe." Riegg commented that "the work of historians remains as important today as ever. We must resist the illusory search for 'the truth' in history; instead, we must embrace the fact that the past was no less complicated than our present."

Marc David Baer is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. *Sultanic Saviors and Tolerant Turks* provides both the history and analysis of the mythology and stereotypes of Ottoman and Turkish philo-Semitism, and

how members of the Jewish community in Turkey and certain scholars leveraged this mythology in the service of denial of the Armenian Genocide. Baer adopts a long historical perspective as he sets out to answer the questions, “How can we understand that group’s identification and alliance with the perpetrators and their propagation of denial? What emotional world or affective disposition compels them to take this public stand?”

Baer responded to the news of the prize by email, commenting, “I am greatly honoured to receive this prestigious award from your organisation. It is much-appreciated acknowledgement of my effort integrating the histories of Jews and Armenians, genocide recognition and genocide denial.”

Nareg Seferian is a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech’s School of Public and International Affairs in the Washington, D.C., area. His dissertation will focus on the province of Syunik and geographical imaginations in flux following the emergence of new borders after the Second Artsakh War. The translation prize awarded to Seferian for Dussap’s groundbreaking feminist novel *Mayda*, first published in Constantinople in 1883, recognizes not only the excellence of the English-language version but also the enormous historical significance of making available what is one of the earliest novels in Western Armenian, the first known novel by an Armenian woman, and a landmark in the formulation of an Armenian feminism.

Also deserving acknowledgement is the effort of the Armenian International Women’s Association to make this and other important works by Armenian women writers available; and specifically, the role of the volume’s editor Dr. Lisa Gulesserian, with Dr. Barbara Merguerian (who wrote a short biography of Dussap for the book), Dr. Joy Renjilian-Burgy, Judith A. Saryan, and Danila Jebejian Terpanjian must be noted, as well as Dr. Valentina Calzolari who wrote the learned introduction.

Seferian commented, “I felt very privileged indeed when I was invited to take on the translation. I owe Barbara Merguerian a special debt of gratitude in this regard. Now I feel doubly privileged to be in the company of past recipients of the award. This publication was in truth a team effort, so a great deal of credit is due to the hard-working committee at AIWA. The dedication of AIWA members and supporters is exemplary. I hope our work together reflects Dr. Aronian’s hopes and expectations in establishing this award. God bless her memory.”

Authors or publishers wishing to submit books for consideration for future Aronian Prizes may contact NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian at marc@naasr.org.

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