



# The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research

## *NAASR to Name Its New Headquarters After Distinguished Historian and Philanthropic Leader Vartan Gregorian*

NAASR will name its new headquarters in Belmont, MA, after Dr. Vartan Gregorian, President of the philanthropic foundation Carnegie Corporation of New York, fulfilling the request of the building's principle benefactors, Edward and Pamela Avedisian of Lexington, MA. The new building's official name will be the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building.

"Vartan Gregorian embodies the values at the heart of NAASR's mission. He has dedicated his entire life to educational advancement and the pursuit of knowledge, engaging in public service throughout his career, and working to better the human condition. We are grateful that we can acknowledge and memorialize his tremendous accomplishments by naming the institution's new



Dr. Vartan Gregorian and Edward Avedisian

headquarters the NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building," said Edward Avedisian.

"I am overwhelmed by this most generous and selfless offer and accept it with humility, and with gratitude," said Gregorian. "I thank NAASR for bringing Armenian history, culture, and values to life through its programming and collections, now visible and accessible to anyone."

"We are proud to recognize Gregorian's distinguished life of service and dedication through our new global center," said Yervant Chekjian, Chairman of the Board. "He is an inspiration for generations to come. We are also sincerely grateful to the Avedisians for their generosity and vision."

see GREGORIAN, page 7



NAASR's new headquarters under construction, August 2, 2019.

### **NAASR Capital Campaign for New Building Reaches \$6.2 Million**

With construction of its new headquarters advancing rapidly, NAASR has reached the \$6.2 million mark in its capital campaign to raise \$6.5 million. The new Vartan Gregorian Building will be opened on Friday, November 1, 2019, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and celebration, followed on November 2 with a gala at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, MA.

NAASR Chairman Yervant Chekjian expressed his gratitude for the outpouring of support for the campaign, noting that "it has taken a lot of hard work to get to where we are today, but the response has been inspirational. People have seen our commitment to the future and have been moved to give generously."

"Even under construction, the building looks magnificent. We could not have gotten here without the artistry and talent of our architects, engineers, and designers at SMMA as well as the excellence and meticulousness of our general contractor Altair Construction," said NAASR Executive Director Sarah Ignatius. "We will forever be grateful to our exceedingly generous building donors who have made this dream a reality."

see CAMPAIGN, page 6

## **ANEWERA** *Building on Our Legacy*



**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2019**

RIBBON CUTTING AND OPENING PERFORMANCES - NAASR  
395 CONCORD AVENUE, BELMONT, MA  
4:00 - 7:00 PM

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2019**

GALA - ROYAL SONESTA HOTEL, CAMBRIDGE  
6:00 PM

**NAASR**



# Brick by Brick: Preserving the Diaspora

## NAASR Vartan Gregorian Building

Belmont, Massachusetts



*The renovated NAASR design is rooted in deep observation and imagination. SMMA studied Armenian architecture and craft as a means to explore new ideas.*

Cultural preservation has a unique meaning for a nation whose people are scattered across the globe. For the Armenian Diaspora, their rich, 3,000-year-old history is both a foundation for cultural unity and a gateway for cultural evolution. Over the past six decades, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) has advanced this cultural project by encouraging scholars and the Armenian community to explore the narratives informing their heritage, many of which are housed in the headquarters' renowned library.

The modern-day importance of the library's ancient texts is a reminder that Armenian heritage is not isolated in the past; instead, it permeates the cultural present and enriches its future. Due to their growing collection of texts, community events, and expanding outreach efforts, NAASR chose to renovate their headquarters to ensure that their already-established global hub of cultural activity would have the flexibility to adapt over time and the increased visibility to continue to protect the tangible aspects of Armenian cultural identity. Both through the building design and the narratives it shelters, NAASR will invite modern users to connect with their past while finding inspiration for their next steps.

### Engaging with Ancient Texts

Central to the project is expanding the headquarters' Mardigian Library: a celebrated library for the diaspora. Armenia's rich scholarly history—which dates back to the inception of the Armenian alphabet in the early 5th century—is reflected in the library's literature and research.

Just as the alphabet gave early Armenians access to scholarly studies, so too does the library welcome scholarly engagement. Community members and visitors, re-



ardless of age, can explore over 29,000 titles of rare and ancient texts across the expanded library. A book restoration area will allow for the repair and preservation of books requiring special attention, ensuring their accessibility to future readers.



### Welcoming a New Generation

The historic-laden space also connects generations. A stone lobby with tile floor, accented wall, and wood ceilings greets new visitors. Upon further exploring the space, they find an alluring bookstore display with a new adjoining lounge café. Both new and tenured scholars benefit from an expanded study and research space. The books themselves allow different generations to partake in cultural meaning-making: each visitor reads them differently depending on the context in which they live. As readers, we inform the texts’ meaning as much as the texts inform our cultural knowledge. Ultimately, the new headquarters is a building that both tells and protects stories, stories of an evolving culture built upon a rich and explorative history. The intangibility of cultural identity—so often reliant on oral traditions, rituals, and events—suddenly becomes tangible, and thus available to all ages of curious future visitors.

### Team



**Ara Krafian**  
PE  
Chairman |  
President | Chief  
Executive Officer



**Michael Pardek**  
AIA  
Principal  
Architect



**Emily Modoono**  
Associate IIDA  
Senior Associate  
Interior Designer



**Genevieve Messina**  
Interior Designer

### A Global Community

With NAASR’s building having remained virtually unchanged since its initial purchase in 1989, the community is welcoming the new look with open arms.

*“NAASR will be a true gem and a draw for everyone—Armenians and non-Armenians alike,” says Sarah Ignatius, Executive Director. “Since NAASR is a leading global center for Armenian Studies, our new headquarters building will incorporate a multitude of beautiful Armenian features that will reflect our mission and give Armenian traditions new life.”*

(Source: <https://www.smma.com/work/brick-brick-preserving-diaspora>)



Master artist Mels Yeghiazaryan hand carved NAASR’s new front door in Armenia from a native walnut species.



# NAASR Spring Benefit Hosted by Dr. Seda and Vartan Keshishian

By Aram Arkun

The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) held a benefit dinner at the historic home of Dr. Seda and Vartan Keshishian on May 18. The Keshishian home, which used to belong to Gov. William Weld of Massachusetts, was recently renovated and formed an impressively elegant backdrop to the brief formal program and dinner, at which more than 80 guests were present. The fundraising was to support NAASR's operational expenses, not the construction of its new building.

Dr. Keshishian welcomed the guests to their home on behalf of her husband and herself. She declared, "We are here tonight to help NAASR in its mission, which is to promote the field of Armenian Studies and research."

Nancy Kolligian, former chair and current vice-chair of the NAASR

Board, as well as member of the NAASR host committee, thanked the Keshishians for their generosity as hosts and gave the couple a present from the new lineup of Michael Aram. She acknowledged the rest of the host committee, including Yervant Chekijian, Nicole Babikian Hajjar, Sarah B. Ignatius, Marc Mamigonian, and Laura Yardumian, and recognized NAASR librarian and curator Ani Babaian, as well as Vartan Varadian, who had designed the invitations for the evening.



Nancy Kolligian (photo:Aram Arkun)

Kolligian then introduced the two main speakers, Julia Hintlian and Khatchig Mouradian. Hintlian is a doctoral student of religion at Harvard University. Her main research interests are Eastern Christianity, including the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church, as well



Guests listening to the speakers (photo:Aram Arkun)



Dr. Seda and Vartan Keshishian addressing the guests

as pre-Islamic Persian religions.

Mouradian is a lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. He has served as the Kazan Visiting Professor at California State University-Fresno and has taught courses at Rutgers University, Worcester State University, and Stockton University. He holds a PhD in history from the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. He is the former editor of the *Armenian Weekly* and the current editor of the *Armenian Review*. He has received support from NAASR and the Knights of Vartan.



Julia Hintlian (photo:Aram Arkun)

Hintlian addressed the crowd and said that for the last three years, "NAASR has played a very pivotal, a very crucial role in my academic career." She explained that NAASR helps people make connections, and gave some examples. NAASR sponsored a conference at Harvard in which scholars from all over the world participated, allowing them to get to know each other. It also provides scholarships for travel to conferences which allow new audiences to become exposed to Armenian topics. It helped Hintlian locally too, on a community level, by providing a personal level of support.

Hintlian noted: "I think this organization brings people together to exchange ideas in order to consciously and deliberately define what it means to be Armenian today and in the future by looking at the past. When I share a seventh-century Armenian idea with a scholar of 20th century Armenia and that scholar gives me a lens through which to reinterpret the





Khatchig Mouradian (photo: Aram Arkun)

seventh century, we both walk away with a more complete, more comprehensive, and more nuanced picture of what it means to be Armenian. Together, we reinterpret, we rediscover and we recreate an Armenian identity. And that identity formation and celebration has connotations and implications that travel far behind scholarly circles and indeed far beyond Armenian circles.”

She concluded by thanking NAASR and all those who work in it and by promising to make them all proud and pass on its worthy mission.

Mouradian took Hintlian’s place on the staircase and began his talk by remarking that he just returned from a conference on genocide in Thessaloniki. When viewing one of the photographs taken there, it struck him that everyone in the photograph had benefited from NAASR’s support.



From left, Jirair Balayan, Larry Welch, Alice Avanian, and Yervant Chekijian (photo: Judith Saryan)

He added that NAASR has been supporting scholars constantly even while embarking on an ambitious building project.

Much of its work is also non-financial. Many authors published in the last decade thank NAASR and its academic director Marc Mamigonian for scholarly assistance.

Mouradian personally benefited in many ways both as a doctoral student and now while teaching at Columbia. He gave as one current example that Mamigonian annually comes to New York to speak to Mouradian’s

students on genocide denial. Mouradian’s own students apply and now get travel grants from NAASR. NAASR has also supported Mouradian’s own doctoral professor, Taner Akçam, thus the chain of support continues over the generations. Mouradian expressed his deep thanks for this.

Mamigonian commented after the event that “It meant a lot to hear from Julia Hintlian and Khatchig Mouradian, since supporting scholars is fundamental to what NAASR does. The fact that our support has made a difference to them and their development is extremely gratifying.”

Judith Saryan, NAASR Board member and treasurer said: “Every detail was beautiful from the stunning fresh flowers to the creative food. I loved



Guests on the terrace included Raffi and Carol Yeghiayan and Stephen Kurkjian

how we all came together at the grand staircase to reflect on NAASR’s legacy and plans for the future.”

NAASR Executive Director Sarah Ignatius first declared, “We extend heartfelt thanks to our very generous hosts for sharing their beautiful home with us in support of NAASR’s mission,” and then reflected: “A lot of people see that we are stepping into a new era at NAASR and the evening made that evident, bringing together a lot of people who are supporters but whom we do not always see at our regular programs.”

*(Armenian Mirror-Spectator, May 30, 2019)*



Sarah Ignatius, Amy Ignatius, Susan Piligian, and Stepan Piligian



# NAASR Welcomes Tavitian Scholars and Features New Building Designs at 65th Annual Assembly

The presence of the fifteen talented Tavitian Scholars at Tufts' Fletcher School as well as an inspiring presentation by SMMA CEO Ara Krafian and lead architect Michael Pardek on the new NAASR headquarters building enlivened NAASR's 65th Annual Assembly of Members on May 4, 2019. Held at Nahigian Hall at the First Armenian Church in Belmont, MA, with a view across the street at the under-construction headquarters, the Assembly provided members and attendees with up-to-date information on NAASR's activities and accomplishments.

## Chairman Chekijian Reports

NAASR Chairman Yervant Chekijian convened the Assembly and provided an overview of what has been an exceptionally busy year for the organization. Emphasizing the tremendous progress being made on NAASR's beautiful new building as well as the outstanding response to the \$6.5 million capital campaign, Chekijian also looked ahead to the completion of the building and the grand opening and ribbon cutting on November 1 and the gala banquet and celebration on November 2.

Hailing NAASR as "the most active Armenian organization in the country," Chairman Chekijian noted that NAASR has increased its national and international reach and relevance, sponsoring its first programs ever in Heliopolis, Egypt, in April 2019, and in Shushi, Republic of Nagorno-Karabagh, in August 2018, and observing that the more than 64 programs that had taken place under NAASR's aegis since the last Assembly featured presenters from around the world, including many from Armenia appearing in person or by Skype, as well as France, Switzerland, Turkey, and several other countries.

Among those programs were several major conferences at UCLA, UC-Irvine, Columbia University, Clark University, Harvard University and MIT, as well as more than a dozen NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Contemporary Armenian Issues programs.

## Welcoming the Tavitian Scholars

Each of the fifteen visiting Tavitian Scholars, who participate in a six-month training program in public policy and administration for Armenian government officials at Tufts' Fletcher School, introduced themselves and spoke briefly about their work in Armenia. Dr. Joyce Barsam, a NAASR member and supporter of the 20-year-old program who is the vice president of The Tavitian Foundation, as well as a Member of the Board of Advisers of The Fletcher School, was also present and helped facilitate the attendance of the scholars. During the luncheon following their remarks, the Tavitian scholars engaged in lively discussion with the NAASR members present for the Assembly.

## SMMA Team Gives Impressive Presentation

Following lunch, SMMA architect Michael Pardek and SMMA CEO Ara Krafian, gave a detailed and inspiring presentation on the NAASR headquarters building. While also discussing some of the nuts-and-bolts issues relating to the progress of the building from the earliest stages until that point, they focused especially on some of the special Armenian-inspired design elements meticulously planned for the new building. For example, the front door to the building will be a beautiful, hand-carved door crafted in Armenia, and will visually echo the khatchkar across the street at First Armenian Church, and the pre-cast stone panels will adorn the sides of the building are inspired by the monastery doors believed to originate in Mush, as seen at The Met's Armenia! exhibition last year.

Pardek emphasized the careful thought that has gone into incorporating these images, motifs, and designs into what is a modern structure, not merely trying replicate the past but to create a meaningful and forward-looking building design. Krafian, in turn, conveyed how much of a labor of love the NAASR project has been for him personally and for all at SMMA who have been involved in it and who have invested much time and care. All who were in attendance—including several local architects—were thoroughly impressed by the presentation.

## Elections and Recognition of Longtime Members

The highlight of the business portion of the Assembly was the election of NAASR directors. Re-elected to the NAASR Board were Stepan Piliagian of Westford, MA; Van M. Aroian of Worcester, MA; Edward Avedisian of Lexington, MA; Jirair Balayan of Auburn, MA; Marta T. Batmasian of Boca Raton, FL; Dr. Bedross Der Matossian of Lincoln, NE; and Shushan M. Teager of Belmont, MA. Arlene Saryan Alexander of Washington, D.C., was newly elected to the Board, filling a slot left vacant by Gregory Aftandilian of Vienna, VA, who stepped down after many years of Board service.

Also during the business session, Chairman Chekijian presented 60-year and 25-year certificates to dedicated NAASR members. Those receiving 60-year certificates (members continuously since 1959) were Dr. Robert Mirak and Leon Semonian; 25-year certificates (members continuously since 1994) went to Adrienne Amirian, Joseph Dagdigian, Harry Parsekian, Dorothy Piranian, and Elsa Ronningstam.



NAASR Chairman Yervant Chekijian presents 25-year membership certificate to Adrienne Amirian, daughter of NAASR Founding Member Thomas T. Amirian.

## NAASR Capital Campaign for New Building Reaches \$6.2 Million

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The lead building donors are Edward and Pamela Avedisian, who wished to honor Dr. Vartan Gregorian. (See related story, "NAASR to Name Its New Headquarters After Distinguished Historian and Philanthropic Leader Vartan Gregorian.") The two other leading donor families are

Margaret C. and Leon J. Atamian and Family, and Marta and James Batmasian. Many NAASR members and the community have also made significant gifts, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has given full support with a capital grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Cultural Facilities Fund of \$225,000 awarded in 2017, primarily for installation of an elevator and other accessibility features under the ADA.

Outstanding naming opportunities are still available for the new building. Interested parties should contact Sarah Ignatius at sarah@naasr.org or 617-489-1610.



NAASR's new headquarters under construction, August 2, 2019.

# NAASR to Name Its New Headquarters After Distinguished Historian and Philanthropic Leader Vartan Gregorian

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## Vartan Gregorian

Gregorian has had a distinguished career as an academic, scholar, historian, philanthropist, and visionary. Born in Tabriz, Iran, Gregorian received his elementary education in Iran and his secondary education at Collège Arménien in Beirut, Lebanon. In 1956, he entered Stanford University, where he majored in history and the humanities, graduating with honors in 1958. He was awarded a PhD in history and humanities from Stanford in 1964. Gregorian has taught European intellectual history and Middle Eastern history at San Francisco State College, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Texas at Austin.

In 1972, he joined the University of Pennsylvania faculty and was appointed Tarzian Professor of Armenian and Caucasian History and professor of South Asian History. He was founding dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Penn in 1974 and four years later became its twenty-third provost until 1981. His outstanding tenure at the university has been honored with endowed professorships in English and in the Humanities and through several graduate fellowships in the humanities.

After an academic career spanning two decades, Gregorian served as President of The New York Public Library from 1980 to 1989. The institution includes a network of four research libraries and 83 branch libraries, and during his tenure, Gregorian was widely credited with restoring the status of the library as a financially sound, cultural landmark. In 1989, he was appointed the 16th President of Brown University, where he led a campaign that raised over \$500 million, bringing the institution's endowment past the \$1 billion mark. Gregorian also oversaw the creation of several new academic departments. In honor of his legacy at the university, a residence quadrangle was named after him, as well as three professorships: the Vartan Gregorian Assistant Professorship, The Brooke Russell Astor Professorship in the Humanities in Honor of Vartan Gregorian, and the Aga Khan Professorship in Islamic Humanities created in honor of Gregorian. In 1997, the City of Providence renamed the Fox Point Public Elementary School after Gregorian to acknowledge his role in strengthening relationships between the university and the community.



In 1997, Gregorian assumed the presidency of one of the country's oldest grantmaking foundations, Carnegie Corporation of New York. His philanthropic work and scholarly accomplishments have been recognized with more than 70 honorary degrees and dozens of significant awards, including the National Humanities Medal, awarded by President William J. Clinton; and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded by President George W. Bush. President George H. W. Bush appointed Gregorian to the J. William Fulbright Board of Foreign Scholarships, and President Barack Obama appointed him to the selection committee of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships. Gregorian has also been decorated by the Austrian, Italian, Portuguese, French, and Armenian governments.

Gregorian is known for his leadership in support of democracy, human rights, and civic engagement, and his efforts have been recognized with honors from numerous nonprofit organizations such as the Council on Foundations' Distinguished Service Award; Aspen Institute's Henry Crown Leadership Award; the Africa-America Institute's Award for Leadership in Higher Education Philanthropy; and a special recognition from PEN America. Civic honors from state legislatures and municipalities include Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Houston, San Francisco, Fresno, Austin, and New York City.

Throughout his illustrious career, Gregorian has written extensively about Armenia and has maintained close ties to the Armenian community. When he was appointed Tarzian Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, Gregorian recruited three professors to teach Armenian history, language, and literature: the late Vahé Oshagan, the late Robert Hewsen, and Michael Stone. In 1999, the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, his Holiness, Karekin I, bestowed upon Gregorian the St. Gregory the Illuminator Medal, the church's highest honor; and His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Cilicia, honored him and his wife, Clare, with the Prince and Princess of Cilicia Medals.

Gregorian is a member of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, which awarded him an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in 2001, following an honorary degree awarded by Yerevan State University in 1995. He is a former trustee of the American University of Armenia, a trustee emeritus of the Dilijan International School of Armenia, and a co-founder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative with Ruben Vardanyan and Dr. Noubar Afeyan, who established the Vartan Gregorian Scholarship Program in 2018 to support scholarly research of Armenian history. In 2012, Gregorian was presented with the Republic of Armenia's Medal of Mkhitar Gosh, and in 2017, he was the recipient of the

country's Order of Honor.

## Edward Avedisian

Avedisian, a NAASR Board member, is a world-class clarinetist who performed with the Boston Pops Orchestra and the Boston Ballet's orchestra before changing careers to focus on investments. Through his philanthropy, Avedisian has donated generously to the Armenian community and beyond. He is a trustee of the American University of Armenia (AUA), where he was the principal benefactor of the new 100,000 square foot Paramaz Avedisian Building. He is also the principal benefactor of the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian K-12 School and Community Center in an underprivileged section of the capital city, Yerevan.

Avedisian is a 2016 recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. He is a director on the board of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA), and he recently gave a transformative gift to the Rhode Island College of Pharmacy in honor of his late brother Paramaz Avedisian.

## NAASR's New Headquarters:

NAASR's new headquarters, designed by a talented team from the architectural, design, and engineering firm of Symmes, Maini and McKee, led by Ara Krafian, will be a stunning three-story building with a soaring glass façade, allowing natural light to illuminate the interior. A variety of Armenian features are incorporated into the design, including a hand-carved wooden door, which a master artisan in Armenia is carving, and an Armenian Alphabet Wall.

The general contractor, Altair Construction, anticipates completion by the fall of 2019. "We invite everyone to attend our Grand Opening and Gala Celebration next year on November 1st and 2nd," said Chekijian.

The building will have many welcoming spaces for the public to gather as well as a secure environment for NAASR's rare book Mardigian Library, one of the top five Armenian libraries open to the public in the diaspora. It will soon total 40,000 books, with some dating back to the 1600s, and rare periodicals dating back to the 1800s, as well as the unique personal archives of prominent scholars, early Armenian-Americans, and religious leaders.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has given full support with a capital grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Cultural Facilities Fund and MassDevelopment of \$225,000 awarded in 2017, for installation of an elevator, other accessibility features, and fire suppression.

The NAASR staff is working in temporary offices at the AGBU-New England headquarters on Mt. Auburn Street in Watertown and continuing its programming and bookstore on-site and online at [www.naasr.org](http://www.naasr.org).



# Publications and Talks by NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs

NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian spoke at the First International Conference of the Center for Holocaust, Genocide & Human Rights Studies, at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, in April 2019. The paper, "Weaponizing the First Amendment: Denial of the Armenian Genocide and the U.S. Courts," discussed the advancement of denial of the Armenian Genocide through court cases arguing that the official position of the Turkish state was not merely protected speech under the First Amendment but also a legitimate "counter-genocide narrative" that therefore warranted representation in public school and university curricula. Mamigonian focused in particular on the cases *Griswold v. Driscoll* in Massachusetts (2005) and *Turkish Coalition of America, Inc. et al v. Bruininks* in Minnesota (2010). The conference paper will provide the basis for a future article.



Dr. Kristin Comment, Heather Krafian, Prof. Christina Maranci, and Marc Mamigonian at Belmont High School.

Columbia University's Dr. Khatchig Mouradian invited Mamigonian to speak to his students about genocide denial and opened the talk to the public. The April 17, 2019 program was entitled "Facts Are Stubborn Things: How Denial Erodes Truth," and provided an overview of how genocide denial works and the ways in which it uses similar tools to other forms of denial, such as those employed by the cigarette industry and global warming deniers.

For the second straight year, Mamigonian worked with Belmont resident Heather Krafian and Belmont High School teacher Dr. Kristin Comment to organize a program during the school's March diversity week, arranging for a talk by Tufts' Prof. Christina Maranci entitled "The Culture of Armenia Through Its Art." Also as part of NAASR's outreach to area public schools, Mamigonian gave a talk at Lexington High School in May 2019 on the Armenian Genocide and denial.

In addition, in June 2019 Mamigonian presented the paper "Don't Steal, Don't Lift: James Joyce and Bob Dylan, Borrowing and 'Stolentelling,'" at "The World of Bob Dylan," the first conference organized by the University of Tulsa Institute for Bob Dylan Studies and the Bob Dylan Archive. His article "Hunter and Gatherers: On the Trail of the *Dubliners* 'Ulysses' and Its Mysterious Hero," was published in the summer of 2018 in the *James Joyce Quarterly* Volume 54, Number 1-2. Finally, the book *Annotations to James Joyce's Ulysses*, co-authored with Sam Slote and John Turner, has been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press and will likely appear in 2021.



## Meet NAASR Grant Recipient Whitney Kite

In the summer of 2017, I received a NAASR grant to fund my first introduction to learning the Armenian language. I used the funds to travel to Venice to participate in the Padus-Araxes intensive language program in Western Armenian. My experience in Venice gave me the skills required to parse Armenian inscriptions on medieval Bagratuni monuments at the monastery of Horomos. This research developed into a qualifying paper for my master's degree at Tufts, as well as conference presentations at the New England Society of Architectural Historians, hosted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Medieval and Renaissance Forum at Keene State University in New Hampshire. I have continued to study the Western Armenian language at Columbia University, where I am a PhD student continuing to work on the architecture of Bagratuni Armenia. My NAASR grant set all of this in motion, and I would not have been able to progress so far in my academic career without it. Thank you to the NAASR staff and the donors who support them for allowing student such as myself to pursue Armenian Studies without financial impediments.





## NAASR Profiled on Watertown Cable TV

In June 2019, Bob Kaprielian of Watertown Cable TV sat down with NAASR Board Member Stephen Kurkjian, Executive Director Sarah Ignatius, and Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian. They talked about NAASR's past and present and especially about NAASR's future and the new headquarters building. You can watch the conversation online at <https://wcatv.org/>.

## Dr. Tara Andrews Receives Sona Aronian Book Prize from NAASR

The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) is pleased to announce that Dr. Tara Andrews of the University of Vienna has been awarded the 2018 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prize for Excellence in Armenian Studies.

NAASR's Aronian Book Prize was 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. The 2018 award was for a book published in 2017.

Dr. Andrews was given the prize for her monograph *Matt' eos Urhayec'i and His Chronicle: History as Apocalypse in a Crossroads of Cultures*, published by Brill as part of their "The Medieval Mediterranean" series. The book is the first ever in-depth study of the history written by Matteos, also known as Matthew of Edessa (also called Urfa or Urha), around the turn of the twelfth century and an eyewitness to the First Crusade and the establishment of the Latin East.

In announcing the Aronian Award, NAASR Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian remarked that "we are very glad to bring greater attention to Dr. Andrews' important contribution," and that "it is especially meaningful for NAASR as

we have long been aware of the great value of Matthew's Chronicle to scholars." NAASR was the co-publisher (with University Press of America) of the first English-language translation, by Dr. Ara Dostourian, of the Chronicle, published in 1993 as *Armenia and the Crusades: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* and republished by NAASR with revisions in 2014. "It is exciting to see this important historical source being explored in such a rewarding manner,"

noted Mamigonian.

Dr. Andrews, via email, commented that "it is gratifying, not only to have the recognition of the significance of Matthew's Chronicle, but also to have the attention drawn to his time and place. I hope, through this book and through ongoing work, to bring to light the sometimes underrated influence that the Armenians had (and continue to have!) on the world around them, even while maintaining their distinct culture and identity through a time of tumultuous change."

Dr. Tara Andrews became University Professor of Digital Humanities at the Institute for



History at the University of Vienna in 2016. With a Bachelor of Science in Humanities and Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1999), and the degrees of Master (2005) and Doctor (2009) of Philosophy in Byzantine and Armenian studies from the University of Oxford, her dual scientific training as well as her professional experience in the software industry has provided valuable and rare perspectives on the use of digital and computational methods in humanities domains. Andrews' fields of expertise include the history and historiography of the Christian Near East in the tenth to twelfth centuries, the application of computational and statistical methods for reconstruction of the copying history of ancient and medieval manuscripts (stemmatology), and reflection on the implications of employing digital media and computational methods in humanities contexts.



## INDULGE YOURSELF

### NAASR Has a Book for You!

When it comes to books on Armenian topics, whether it is a new book or one published years ago, look for it first in the NAASR Bookstore. From history to cookbooks, art, religion, language, literature, music, memoirs, and more, the NAASR Bookstore has hundreds of hard-to-find titles, a modest selection of books in Armenian, and a variety of the latest publications on Armenian themes. Laura Yardumian, NAASR's Program and Administrative Associate, is always ready to help with suggestions.

Not in the area? Not a problem! Visit the NAASR Bookstore online ([www.naasr.org](http://www.naasr.org)). The re-designed online bookstore now has a search icon just for books and easy to use filters to target your interest. Organized into categories, the books are easy to browse by title, topic, or author. Can't find a particular book? Call NAASR at 617-489-1610 to ask if it is available.

We're happy to help!



# NAASR Hye for Armenia! Exhibit and Symposium at the Met

By Nancy Kalajian

Kind, the name on the breakfast bar, said it all, and set a welcoming tone for the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) bus trip to view the “Armenia!” exhibit and attend the Symposium: Honoring the First Scholars of Armenian Art in America, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Setting out on a luxurious coach from Watertown, Massachusetts, during a miserably drenching early morning rainstorm on Saturday, November 3, Laura Yardumian, NAASR’s Program and Administrative Associate, and Sarah Ignatius, Executive Director, brightened up the crowd by kindly serving coffee, breakfast snacks, and fruit, with happy smiles thrown in for extra measure.

After the group settled in, Ani Babaian, NAASR’s expert library curator, independent artist, and art conservator, introduced a brief history of Armenian art and noted that the second most important pilgrimages were made to the fourth century Saint Garabed Monastery, northwest of Moush, which was founded by St. Gregory the Illuminator. Speaking of Armenian gold, she reflected on the global influences of New Julfa and Amsterdam.

When the bus arrived in New York after a four-hour journey, the roofs of some high rises were visible as the weather began to clear up and participants eagerly entered The Met Fifth Avenue to attend the day-long symposium in the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium. The symposium focused on various monuments, paintings, manuscripts, and unique items that portray the Armenian impact on international trade during the Middle Ages and its artistic global outreach. Mark Momjian, chairman of the Board of Directors at the Armenian Center at Columbia University, which organized the symposium, gave opening remarks. Dr. Helen C. Evans, the Mary and Michael Jaharis Curator for Byzantine Art at the Met and curator of “Armenia!,” recognized and honored three special professors for their pioneering efforts in starting Armenian Studies programs: Dr. Richard G. Hovannissian and Dr. Nina G. Garsoian were welcomed onto the stage, and Dr. Thomas F. Matthews, unable to be there, was represented by his student, who read a prepared statement. Dr. Sirarpie Der Nersessian and Dr. Vartan Gregorian were also acknowledged.

The symposium speakers, all top-notch with impressive resumes, spoke for about a half hour each and gave unique presentations connected to many items on display in The Met Armenia! exhibit. First, Dr. Benjamin Anderson spoke on “The Great Kosmos of All Armenia: On the Sarcophagus of Isaac (Sahak).” Dr. Lynn Jones spoke next on censors from Medieval Armenia. A midday lunch rounded out the morning session and provided an opportunity for socializing and camaraderie as scholars, symposium organizers, and NAASR attendees mingled.

The afternoon program included Dr. Antony Eastmond’s talk on “Stepanos Orbelian and Monumental Painting in Armenia under the Mongols” and Dr. Kristina L. Richardson’s “Portrait of an Armenian Merchant Family in the Diary of a 16th Century Aleppine Silk-Weaver.” Intense international research by Dr. Sebouh Aslanian was evident in his topic, “Their Commercial Arms Stretched over Europe: New Julfa and the Khwaja Guerak-Mirman Family of Venice and Isfahan.” The symposium concluded with Dr. Peter Balakian’s “The Ruins of Ani: From Sacred Landscape to Political Soil.”

During the day, there were opportunities for NAASR’s symposium attendees to explore the “Armenia!” exhibit. Sonia Dixon, a graduate student in art history at Florida State University, heard about the symposium through Dr. Lynn Jones, one of the symposium’s speakers, and was very

impressed with the exhibit. “Looking at an old wooden door, the lack of symmetry in the details is fascinating and shows the artisan’s talents,” Dixon remarked. “This is a phenomenal exhibit.”

On the bus ride home, if there were a snack named High, it would have fit right in with this crowd, so thrilled with the opportunity to experience the art, history, and culture of Armenia with like-minded individuals in one sweeping day. Driving through the Bronx, eager NAASR participants, energized to share their thoughts with one another, were facilitated by two brilliant young scholars, Dr. Lisa Gulesserian, lecturer on Armenian at the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University, and Julia Hintlian, a PhD student in religion at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Having just experienced “Armenia!” and the symposium, these scholars were as excited as other NAASR attendees and shared their impressions. Gulesserian remarked, “We were impressed by the sheer number of artifacts exhibited,” while Hintlian, who has spent time in Echmiadzin, reflected on seeing some of the items from Echmiadzin’s collection now on display thousands of miles away in a different environment and setting.

As they fielded many questions pertaining to the symposium and the “Armenia!” exhibit, their knowledge and instant responses to questions piqued even further inquiry and discussion, and the setting felt more like an upbeat classroom with dynamic interplay and discussions than a humdrum bus ride home. Time flew by quickly as such topics as maps, manuscripts, liturgical vestments and vessels, and the Armenian language were discussed. Sonia Iskenderian said, “This was very interesting. They know their subjects very well, especially the differences between Western and Eastern Armenian and krapar.”

Snacks were again served by NAASR’s kind hosts, and though some people shut off the overhead light to take some shut eye, for others it was a time to further connect with old and new friends or make plans to continue the day’s mutually shared experiences. Anahid Mardiros remarked on The Met exhibit, “It was the first cultural representation of Armenia. It was such a wonderful, organized trip. NAASR should do more programs like this.” Sonya Merian chimed in, “I really enjoyed the symposium. I learned so much, for example, about the trade routes. It was beautifully organized; Laura Yardumian did a terrific job organizing the day. It was a very pleasant day from start to finish.”

Artist Marsha Odabashian, who has a studio and gallery in Boston’s South End concurred, “It’s not very often when a bus trip to NY includes three actively engaged experts. Artist and conservator Ani Babaian shared her first-hand knowledge on Armenian art of New Julfa and Isfahan on the way to The Met. Dr. Lisa Gulesserian and PhD candidate Julia Hintlian, on the way home, facilitated a lively open ended discussion on participants’ impressions of the exhibit and the way in which it was presented. The background knowledge, which they generously supplied, on the Armenian language and the art objects themselves added significant depth to the conversation. Without a doubt, the NAASR team arranged a well-organized, delightful, and worthwhile trip to Armenia!—a very important symposium and exhibition in NYC.”

Danny Donabedian, a student at Harvard’s Near Eastern Languages and Civilization program, remarked, “This trip was a great idea. As someone who is unfamiliar with NAASR other than its research in Armenian Studies, I discovered that NAASR has a fun, adventurous side. I thought this trip was extremely rewarding both as a scholar and as an Armenian-American, and have NAASR’s efforts to thank for that.”

(*Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, November 23, 2018)



Standing: NAASR volunteer Adrenna Andreassian and Library Curator Ani Babaian; seated: NAASR Executive Director Sarah Ignatius, Program and Administrative Associate Laura Yardumian, and NAASR Board Member Shushan Teager





# Hairenik Association Makes Significant Donation of Rare Books and Periodicals to NAASR

Rare books from the 1800s published by Armenian presses around the world as well as precious bound volumes of Armenian newspapers from the early 1900s and other hard-to-find treasures comprise the notable donation in July from the Hairenik Association of Watertown, MA, to the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR). This collection represents a significant addition to NAASR's Mardigian Library and will become accessible to the public after NAASR's new Vartan Gregorian Building opens on November 1, 2019, in Belmont, MA.

George Aghjayan, a member of NAASR's Board of Directors as well as chairman of the ARF Eastern Region Central Committee was key to making this donation possible. "I have been a member of NAASR for over 20 years and well understand NAASR's importance and value to the Armenian community. As a library and beacon of Armenian Studies, NAASR is the natural place for this special collection of works," said Aghjayan.

"These rare books and periodicals are an incredible addition to NAASR's rare book library," commented NAASR's Director of Academic Affairs Marc Mamigonian. "We are truly fortunate to be on the receiving end of such a rich and diverse collection and now have the privilege and responsibility of taking care of these materials and making them accessible to researchers."

Ani Babaian, NAASR's Library Curator, spent many days this summer at the Hairenik with Mamigonian, examining the collection and selecting materials that would augment existing holdings. She has now started to catalogue this significant donation according to Library of Congress standards for inclusion in NAASR's catalogue of over 29,000 rare volumes, accessible online at [www.naasr.org](http://www.naasr.org).

The Hairenik's donation contains 28 boxes of books dating from the



Razmik newspaper from Bulgaria (1905)

19th century to the present, mostly in Armenian (Classical, Western, and Eastern), English, Turkish, and Armeno-Turkish. The donation includes books published by Armenian presses around the world in places such as Boston, New York, Buenos Aires, Constantinople (Istanbul), Tehran, New Julfa, Tiflis (Tbilisi), Cairo, Geneva, Vienna, Athens, Sofia, Yerevan, Echmiadzin, Venice, Jerusalem, Smyrna, Aleppo, Providence, Fres-



Pahak (Bahag) newspaper from Providence, RI (1913)

no, and more—nearly all of them new to NAASR's Mardigian Library.

Of special significance are the 48 oversized, bound volumes of Armenian newspapers and periodicals from the early part of the 20th century, including *Azg* and *Paykar* published in Boston; *Pahak*, published in Providence, RI; *Razmik*, published in Philippopolis (Plovdiv), Bulgaria; *Hayastan*, published in Sofia, Bulgaria; *Azatomart*, published in Constantinople (Istanbul); *Husaber*, published in Cairo; *Horizon*, published in Tiflis (Tbilis); and others.

The donated collection is especially



Azatomart, published in Constantinople, from 1913

strong in titles published by and about the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnaktsutium) and other Armenian political groups, but also contains large numbers of historical and literary works, including titles by the 20th century women diasporan writers Rima Garone, Zaruhi Galemkearean, Ewgine Shahnazar, and Eliz Gampurean.

Another notable part of the collection are a number of hard-to-find pamphlets, most dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, preserved in good condition due to being bound together in single volumes. Such publications otherwise often fail to survive.

George Aghjayan noted, "The Hairenik Association is celebrating its 120th anniversary this year and retains all of the materials we have published, but this particular collection will be more accessible and much better preserved at NAASR, especially as we look forward to the grand opening of NAASR's new climate-controlled headquarters in the fall." He added, "we greatly value our partnership with NAASR and are honored to be able to make a donation that will benefit researchers, scholars, and the Armenian community at large for many years to come."

NAASR continues to expand its holdings through the generous donations of materials, as donations form the core of NAASR's Mardigian Library. Due to limitations of space, however, NAASR cannot accept all donations. Those interested in donating materials to NAASR should contact Mamigonian before doing so at 617-489-1610 or [hq@naasr.org](mailto:hq@naasr.org).



1914 issue of Tiflis-based Horizon



# Unusual and Beautiful Additions to NAASR's Mardigian Library

## *A 17th Century Manuscript*

In the spring of 2019, Mark Markarian of Sterling, MA, contacted NAASR to donate a small collection of Armenian-language books that had belonged to his grandparents: Markar Markarian from Sinamoud, Kharpert, and Hripsime (Roopenian) Markarian, whose father Der Hayr Aristakes (Sahag) Roopenian served at the Surp Garabed Church in the Lower Village of the city of Kharpert; and Harry Adjeleian from Fenesse, near Gesaria (Kayseri) and Macrouhi (Fermanian) Adjeleian from Bolis (Constantinople).

The collection consists mostly of religious books published in the 19th and early 20th centuries. But one item clearly stands out from the rest: a 17th century manuscript consisting of more than 500 pages, a *kanonagirk* (book of canon law).



Pages from the 17th century manuscript donated by Mark Markarian

Although the title page and a number of other pages at the beginning and end of the manuscript are missing, the manuscript contained a handwritten note, probably copied from the missing title page, which states that the manuscript's title is *Kanonagirk ew orinagirk Hayastaneats Ekeghetswoy*, and was written by Vartan Erets in 1679 in Erapolis, during the time of Catholicos Hagop IV Jughaetsi (1598-1680). Erapolis is an old name for Chmshgadzak/Çemişgezek, about 60 miles north of Kharpert, in the Dersim region.

According to NAASR's Library Curator Ani Babaian, the calligraphy, illustrations, ornaments, and bird patterns reflect the 17th century origins of the manuscript. The text is written with black and red ink. The decorative motifs and bird letters are in red, black, silver-gray, and pink. The text is written in clear bolorigir, on pages with two columns of thirty lines each.



Entitled "Iknapashtpanutiwn Chok Marzuani" (Self-Defense of Chok-Marzvan, aka Dörttyol), this poster likely dates to 1909-1910. In addition to the portraits of heroic men and women of Armenia's past, the central image is a representation of an episode from the 1909 Cilician massacres when Armenians defended themselves. It is signed "A.V.H."

## *Posters from the Early 20th Century*

The donation of a collection of 20 posters probably dating to the late 19th to early 20th century, originally at the Lowell, MA, Armenian Relief Society branch, was made possible by Stephen Dulgarian of Chelmsford, MA, and the Lowell Aharonian ARF Gomideh.

Many of these posters, although in some cases only in fair condition, are new additions to the NAASR collection. The posters offer a reflection of the national conceptions and the aesthetic tastes of the Armenian community at that time. A number of the posters have similar artistic motifs such as the Armenian national coat of arms and inspirational historical and mythical figures such as *Mayr Hayastan*. The posters will be available for study and possible display in the new NAASR building. NAASR's Mardigian Library has nearly 250 posters which are accessible in the library's online catalog.



Early 20th century poster showing Armenian legendary heroes, kings, and military leaders, as well an image of "Ani" watching over the walls of the city of Ani. The poster was created by Hovhannes H. Danabashian.

The manuscript has two headpieces. In the last page before the headpieces, the scribe Vartan's name is mentioned. In the last page before the first headpiece there is information about the manuscript, which was commissioned by a Sarkis from Akn, but because of his death, he could not see the finished book. The names of Sarkis's family members are also mentioned.



# Landmark Armenian History Volumes from the 1780s Donated to NAASR

On March 12, 2019, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) received a rare first-edition set in excellent condition of the landmark work *Patmut'iw'n Hayots' (History of the Armenians)* by Fr. Mikayel Chamchian (1738-1823), published in Venice in 1784-86, from a very generous donor Edward Simsarian of Worcester, MA, whose family had protected these volumes for well over a century.

Father Chamchian was born in Constantinople in 1738, and became an Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist priest, educator, and writer, publishing this three-volume *History* in Venice in the 1780s.

“Not since Movses Khorenatsi was there such a comprehensive and systematic treatment of Armenian history in its entirety,” noted Dr. Razmik Panossian in his book *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, calling it “the definitive Armenian history text in this formative period of mass national identity” and remarking that “Chamchian’s book remained the most authoritative source on the subject until the end of the nineteenth century.”

## Saved from Destruction in Diarbekir in 1890s

How these volumes survived for over 230 years including the time of turbulence, destruction, and massacres in the late Ottoman Empire and made it to the United States

is testament to the reverence and prescience of the Simsarian family for preserving Armenian history for generations to come. “We are truly honored to receive Chamchian’s *History* and for NAASR to be the last stop on this book’s very long journey,” said NAASR’s Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian. “The story of the continued existence of these books is in many ways emblematic of Armenian survival and rebirth after the destruction of their ancestral homeland.”

The books came into Edward Simsarian’s hands from his father, the late Dicran Simsarian, who was born in Dikranagerd/Diarbekir in 1890. As a young boy at the age of six, Dicran saw his father hiding these precious volumes in tin boxes in their home in Dikranagerd to save them from impending

destruction. As Dicran Simsarian wrote, in an account in his own words provided to NAASR:

“About the year 1896 when I was living with my parents in Dikranagerd (Diarbekir, Turkey) ... because of a rumor that the Turks were searching all the homes for guns and literary material, [my father] physically burned a large amount of books in our court yard. He saved these three volumes and an atlas which he had in specially made tin boxes.

“The second floor of our home was layered with dirt and covered with a beautiful oriental rug. The room must have been 20’ x 30’. I remember one day he dug the dirt on the second floor, buried the three tin boxes of books in the floor and covered same with the oriental rug. A few years later after he died when we were preparing to immigrate to America I reminded my mother that father had buried three books in the floor. We dug up the boxes and entrusted them to Mardig Agigian and his wife Lucia



Edward Simsarian with the 3-volume *Patmut'iw'n Hayots'* by Chamchian

who was my aunt’s daughter. We knew they were coming to the United States and we asked them to bring the books with them.

“It must have been 1908 when a constitutional form of government was established in Turkey and the inhabitants were permitted to depart. I am not sure of the date, but during that period the Agigians came to the United States and true to their promise brought the books and delivered them to us ... These books have been in our home ever since.”

## Handed Down from Father to Son

Dicran Simsarian went on to become a lawyer in New York City and was for decades very involved in Armenian affairs, particularly the AGBU and ADL/Ramgavar party. He died in New Jersey in 1978.

His son Edward Simsarian graduated from Princeton in 1945 and also became a lawyer and partner in the firm of Tashjian & Simsarian LLP in Worcester. Several years ago, he entrusted some of his father’s files and papers to the NAASR library and gave the atlas to Harvard University.

A strikingly vigorous nonagenarian, he welcomed Mamigonian at his office in Worcester on March 12 and handed over these precious volumes.

## Honoring a Remarkable Past

Many books in NAASR’s Mardigian Library tell amazing stories, not just in the contents in the books’ pages, but also the journeys of the books themselves—from publishers and printers in Constantinople, Tiflis, Jerusalem, Venice, and many other centers of Armenian culture in Historic Armenia and the diaspora, over the course of hundreds of years, through booksellers in “the old world” and in America, to bookshelves in homes and in libraries, and finally to NAASR.

Although the vast majority of rare books in NAASR’s Mardigian Library are in safe archival storage while its new headquarters is under construction, NAASR continues to add to its holdings through donations from the community and acquisitions, all of which are processed, catalogued, and when necessary, repaired by NAASR’s Library Curator Ani Babaian.



Title page of the 2nd volume

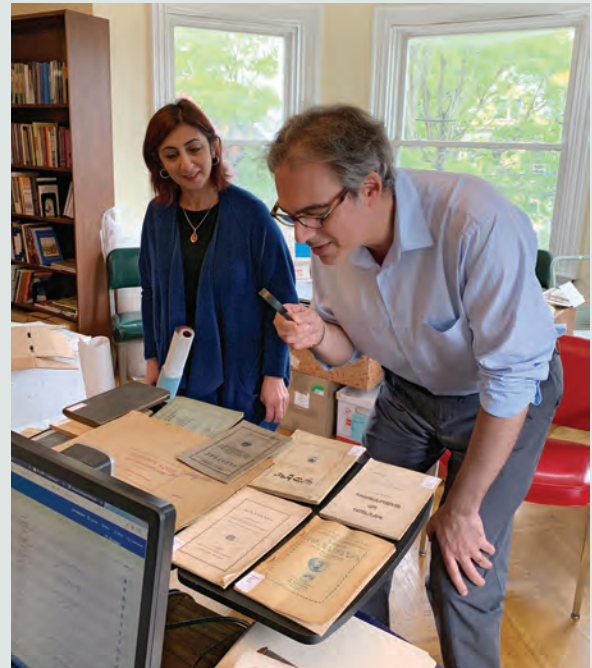
# DONATIONS TO NAASR'S MARDIGIAN LIBRARY

The following donors have contributed items to NAASR's Edward and Helen Mardigian Library in the period since the publication of the 2018-19 *Newsletter* and ending July 31, 2019. Donations to the Mardigian Library from our members and friends have been instrumental in making the library what it is today, and continue to be the most important source for the growth of our holdings.

If you have materials in any language on Armenian and related subjects that you wish to consider donating to NAASR, please contact Director of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian at [marc@naasr.org](mailto:marc@naasr.org) or 617-489-1610. Due to space limitations we cannot accept all items; we can only take items that we need to expand our collection.

George & Joyce Aghjayan, Westminster, MA  
 Vahe Apelian, Boylston, MA  
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 Armenian Cultural Foundation, Arlington, MA  
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 Armine Avetisyan, Watertown, MA  
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 Mardig Balayan, Heliopolis, Egypt  
 Walter Bandazian, Saint Petersburg, FL  
 Chris Bejoian (for the late Kasper Bejoian and Robert Bejoian),  
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 Victoria Butler-Sloss, Los Angeles, CA  
 Raymond Davidian (for the late Fr. Dajad Davidian),  
 Watertown, MA  
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 Daniel Iknaian, Waltham, MA  
 Audrey Kalajian, Watertown, MA  
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 Zara Yalenezian, Marlborough, MA  
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NAASR Library Curator Ani Babaian and Academic Director Marc Mamigonian inspect some new arrivals



## NAASR Partners with AGBU-Cairo for Special Program

*Editor's note: NAASR was thrilled to extend its programming for the first time to Africa by partnering with the AGBU-Cairo to co-sponsor a special-lecture by Avedis Hadjian. We are pleased to present this short report by Hadjian and some photographs from his visit.*

I wish to express my gratitude to NAASR and the AGBU for supporting my visit to Egypt on April 22-26, 2019, to present a lecture in Cairo in connection with my book *Secret Nation: The Hidden Armenians of Turkey*. It was for me an unforgettable trip.

The warm and generous welcome by Dr. Viken Djizmedjian and AGBU Cairo, as well as Mr. Mardig Balayan, Mr. Berge Terzian, and, in Alexandria, Mr. Berge Djebedjian, is a rarity these days, to the point that I felt humbled & undeserving during my entire stay. The Egypt Armenian community—especially Cairo—is still very active, with a bustling cultural life that perhaps goes somewhat unnoticed in the Diaspora, which is surprising, considering that three Armenian newspapers are published, there are Armenian day schools, boy scouts and clubs, as well as an active social scene, in a community that is mostly Armenian-speaking.

The evening of April 24 in Cairo began with the commemoration of the Genocide at the St. Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Cathedral, followed by the book talk at the Belekdanian Hall, beautifully renovated. Attendance was in excess of the expected 100 people, with some of the public



Avedis Hadjian at the pyramids with Dr. Arto Belekdanian.

standing up in the back of the hall.

The following day, again by the generous arrangement of Dr. Djizmedjian, I visited the Alexandria Prelacy and the St. Paul and St. Peter Church of that historic Armenian community, where Armenian benefactor and founder of AGBU Boghos Nubar is buried. There are 250-300 Armenians left in Alexandria today, according to Ter Grigor Muratyan and local AGBU Chapter Chairman Berge Djebedjian, who discussed the community life in the course of a lively meeting also attended by Tony Francis, who guided me through the city's landmarks and attractions.



Hadjian with Dr. Salah Mahgoub Edris of Department of Oriental Languages, Cairo University

One of the highlights of the trip was the visit to the pyramids of Giza and the Egyptian Museum, again organized by Dr. Djizmedjian, with Egyptologist Arto Belekdanian (Ph.D, Oxon.) acting as my guide. It was an extraordinary privilege, a brilliant, one-day crash course in Egyptology, and in excellent Western Armenian, to top it all.

I don't think this summary and the photos do justice to the trip. I cannot thank all of you enough.

# IS NAASR IN YOUR WILL?

PLEASE CALL US TO DISCUSS ESTATE PLANNING AT 617-489-1610



# Grants Issued by NAASR and the Knights of Vartan



July 2018 – July 2019

During the past year, NAASR received its largest ever number of grant requests from scholars around the world, and on its own and in collaboration with the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies with which it has partnered since 2007, increased its scholar grants, issuing grants between July 2018 and July 2019 to the scholars listed below.

All relevant grant proposals are reviewed four times per year (March 15, June 15, September 15, and December 15) by NAASR's Director

of Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian and the NAASR Academic Advisory Committee, currently consisting of Prof. Kevork Bardakjian, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Prof. Valentina Calzolari, University of Geneva; Prof. Michael J. Connolly, Boston College; Prof. Bedross Der Matossian, University of Nebraska; and Prof. Christina Maranci, Tufts University. In January 2019 Prof. Dennis Papazian (University of Michigan, Dearborn) and Prof. James R. Russell (Harvard University) stepped down from the committee after many years of dedicated service.

**Dr. Taner Akçam**, Kaloosdian-Mugar Professor of Armenian Genocide Studies, Clark University, Worcester, MA, grant to conduct archival research in Ottoman, German, British, and American archives for new research project on Cemal Pasha and his role during Armenian Genocide. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Anna Aleksanyan**, Ph.D. student, Clark University, travel grant to visit the Nubarian Library in Paris and the archives of the Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna to access rare Armenian provincial periodicals for her doctoral research on gendered aspects of the Armenian Genocide. Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Tigran Aleksanyan**, archaeologist, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia, support for project to document monuments preserved in the Republic of Armenia and Artsakh associated with the memory of Vardanants' martyrs. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Anahit Avagyan**, Senior Researcher, Department of Researching and Editing of Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts—Matenadaran, Yerevan, travel grant to present paper "Armenian Translation of the Pseudo-Athanasian Dialogue 'Quaestiones ad Antiochum duces' (CPG 2257): Some Preliminary Remarks on its Possible Critical Edition," at the 18th International Conference on Patristic Studies in August 19-24, 2019, at Oxford. Grant issued by NAASR.

**Anoush Baghdassarian**, MA student in Human Rights Studies, Columbia University, New York City, travel grant to go to Armenia to conduct research for thesis on the attitudes of Syrian-Armenian refugees in Armenia toward efforts of redress and transitional justice in post-conflict Syria. Grant issued by NAASR.

**Nora Bairamian**, graduate student at Columbia University in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University, travel grant to conduct research at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, Armenian Research Center, for Master's Thesis,

"Reassessing the Legacy of Mkrtych Khrimian." Grant issued by NAASR.

**Dmytro Dymydyuk**, Ph.D. candidate in History, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine), travel grant request to take part in the conference "Military Campaigns, Weaponry, and Military Equipment (Antiquity and Middle Ages)," May 16-18, 2019, in Varna, Bulgaria, to present paper "One-Edged and Curved Blade in Bagratid Armenia (late 9th-mid 11th c.): Problem of Interpretation of Sources." Grant issued by NAASR.

**Dmytro Dymydyuk**, Ph.D. candidate in History, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv (Ukraine), travel grant to take part in "Youth Conference IV" at the Matenadaran, November 28-30, 2018, to present paper "'Judas Kiss': Armenian Medieval Miniatures as a Source to Study the Weapons of the Bagratid Era (late IX–middle of XI centuries)." Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Prof. Salah Mahgoub Edris**, Faculty of Arts, Dept. of Oriental Languages, Cairo University, travel grant to visit University of Michigan, Dearborn, Armenian Research Center, and UCLA, to conduct research for research/translation project on the Armenian-language version of the Story of the Seven Sages and Sinbad, known in Armenian as *Patmutiwn kaysern Pontsianos ew knojn ew ordwoy norin Diokghetianos ew eotn imastasirats*. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Danny Fittante**, 2018 Ph.D. recipient, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, UCLA, grant to support fieldwork for book project analyzing Armenian political mobilization in several distinct contemporary communities, including Buenos Aires, Sydney, Vancouver, Paris, and Los Angeles. Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Khachik Grigoryan**, Managing Director, Ankyunacur Publishing (Yerevan), grant to support compilation of the Armenian full text of "Commentary on the Epistle to Hebrews" by Cyril of Alexandria, its translation into English, and publication of parallel Armenian and English text in one volume. Grant issued by NAASR.

**Khoren Grigoryan**, Ph.D. student, Institute

of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia, travel grant to participate in 16th Annual Graduate Student Colloquium in Armenian Studies at UCLA, February 2, 2019, presenting paper "Transforming Identity after 1915: Case of Musa Dagh." Grant issued by NAASR.

**Oyku Gurpinar**, Ph.D. student, L'école des hautes études en sciences sociales–Paris, travel grant to conduct fieldwork in Armenia and Lebanon for thesis, "Narrations of the Armenian Genocide in Schools on 2015: Comparative Study on the History Textbooks in Turkey, Armenia, and Diaspora (France, Lebanon)." Grant issued by NAASR.

**Julia Hintlian**, Ph.D. student in Religion, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, travel grant to present paper at the XVIII International Conference on Patristic Studies at the University of Oxford, August 19-24, 2019, presenting paper "Metz Mayr Miriam: The Embellished Armenian Lineage of Marutha of Maipherkat." Grant issued by NAASR.

**Jonathan Hollis**, Ph.D. candidate in Musicology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, grant to support doctoral dissertation fieldwork in Yerevan, for thesis entitled "Mugham in Armenian Music: Echoes of Conflict in Exile." Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Gayane Hovhannisyan**, Ph.D. student in History, Yerevan State University, travel grant to conduct research in Russian state archives in Moscow for dissertation on "Demographic processes and changes in Nagorno-Karabagh, 1918-1989." Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Vahe Hovsepian**, Ph.D. student in Department of History, Yerevan State University, travel grant to conduct research in the St. Petersburg Russian State Historic Archive for dissertation on "Eastern Armenia in Caucasian Viceroyalty (1844-1882)." Grant issued by NAASR.

**Carla Kekejian**, Ph.D. student in Communication Sciences and Disorders, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, travel grant to support participation in "Entangled Encounters" Arme-





nian Studies Conference at Harvard University, March 28-29, 2019, to present paper “Harsneren: “Language of the Armenian Bride.” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Hratch Kestenian**, Ph.D. candidate in History at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, travel grant to consult the Ottoman archives housed at the Başbakanlık and archives of Surp Prghich (Holy Savior) hospital in Istanbul for doctoral research for thesis entitled “The Making of a Social Disease: Tuberculosis and the Medicalization of Ottoman Society (1827-1922).” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Varak Ketsemanian**, Ph.D. student, Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, and Emre Can Daglioglu, Ph.D. student, History Department, Stanford University, publication grant to support translation and other research costs for publication in Armenian and Turkish of the Memoirs of Boghos Shadik[ian] (1874-1951), previously unpublished account by a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and a native of Trabzon active in the Caucasus and Eastern Ottoman Empire and in Lebanon. Grant issued by NAASR.

**Onnik Kiremitlian**, Ph.D. student, Oriental Institute of the Catholic University of Louvain, travel grant request to participate in the 18th International Conference on Patristic Studies, held in Oxford, August 19-23, 2019, to present paper relating to Armenian-Syriac cultural relations, “Newly Discovered Gems from Syriac Literature: Armenian Translations of Syriac Works by Marutha of Tagrit.” Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Umit Kurt**, Polonsky Postdoctoral Fellow, The Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, publication grant to support editorial work on English translation of his book *Antep 1915: Soykirim ve Failler* for publication by Palgrave. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. David Low**, Visiting Scholar, AGBU Nubar Library, Paris, publication grant to support book “Picturing the Ottoman Armenian World: Photography in Erzerum, Kharpert, Van and Beyond,” to be published by I.B. Tauris. Grant jointly issued by NAASR and Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Mari Mamyan**, Junior Researcher at the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts—Matenadaran, travel grant to participate in Fifth Annual Meeting on Christian Origins in Bologna, Italy (September 2018), presenting paper “The ‘Armenian Gospel of the Infancy’: The Ambiguous Fate of the Apocryphon in the Later Middle Ages.” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Marco Marsili**, Ph.D. student in Studies of Security and Defense from the ISCTE—Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTEUIUL), travel grant to conduct fieldwork in Armenia and Karabagh in fall 2019 for thesis on Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Hratch Martirosyan**, Leiden University Centre for Linguistics, grant to support workshop in Shushi, August 5-7, 2018, “Artsakh-Gharabagh: Language and Culture.” Grant jointly issued by

NAASR and Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Khatchig Mouradian**, lecturer at the Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Department (MESAAS), Columbia University, travel grant request to participate in the 2019 Special Session of “Lessons and Legacies” conference in Munich in the fall to present a paper titled “Unarmed and Dangerous: Resistance in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship.” Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Sona Nersisyan and Lusine Tanajyan**, researchers and PhD students, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, participation in 17th International Polish Sociological Congress, September 2019 in Wrocław, Poland, travel grant to present joint paper “Diasporic Identity and Cross Cultural Issues.” Grants issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Milena Oganesyan**, Research Associate Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., travel grant to conduct research in Los Angeles towards publication project on American theater and film director Rouben Mamoulian’s Armenian heritage as it relates to his art. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Janice Okoomian**, Assistant Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies, Rhode Island College, grant to support translation and trans-iteration of interviews to take place in Summer 2019 in Armenia with staff and clients of women’s resource centers in Yerevan and in one or two of the provincial areas (Gyumri, Spitak, Vanador), for planned academic publication. Grant issued by NAASR.

**Dr. Hayk Paronyan**, Associate Professor, Regional Autonomous University of the Andes (UNIANDES), Ecuador, travel grant to participate in Central Eurasian Studies Society 2019 20th Annual Conference, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., Oct. 10-13, 2019, to present a paper entitled “Political crisis in Armenia in 2018: Reasons and Consequences.” Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Hayk Paronyan**, Associate Professor, Regional Autonomous University of the Andes (UNIANDES), Ecuador, travel grant to participate in Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) 2018 Annual Conference in University of Pittsburgh, PA, presenting a paper entitled “Armenian foreign policy between Eurasian and European integration models.” Grant issued by Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Pauline Mari Pechakjian**, MA student, Department of History, University of California, Irvine, travel grant to support research in Armenia for thesis “Rethinking ‘Repatriation’: A Social History of the Mass Migration of Diaspora Armenians to Soviet Armenia, 1946-49.” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Amine Alkan Reis**, Ph.D. student, Fakultät VI Planen, Bauen, Umwelt of Technische Universität, Berlin, support for travel and field-

work for thesis, “A Model Proposal for a Holistic Approach to the Conservation of Evacuated Rural Settlements in the North Eastern Anatolia’s Armenian Heritage: Case Study of Aprank (St. David) Monastery and Üçpınar (Aprank) Village.” Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**James Robins**, author and journalist, grant to support travel and source material acquisition for publication project “When We Dead Awaken: Australia, New Zealand, and the Armenian Genocide.” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Anoush Sargsyan**, Ph.D. candidate and Junior Researcher, Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts—Matenadaran, Yerevan, travel grant to attend conference “The Surrounding Forest: Trees in the Medieval Imaginary,” organized by the Department of English and Humanities School of Arts, Birkbeck, University of London, June 22, 2019, to present paper “Genealogical Tree of Christ in the Context of the Armenian Version of Peter’s Compendium in *Historiae Genealogia Christi*.” Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Lusine Sargsyan**, Junior Researcher, Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts—Matenadaran, and Visiting lecturer at Chair of Armenian Art History and Theory, YSU, travel grant to participate in 12th International Congress of South-East European Studies, 2-9 September, 2019, in Bucharest, Romania, presenting a paper on the codicological, paleographic, iconographic and stylistic analysis of the Armenian Gospel, copied in 1354 in Surkhat’ (Crimea) in the session entitled “From Ani to Romania: History, Tradition, and Iconography.” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Dr. Alvard Semirjyan**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Armenian Philology—Chair of Theory of Literature and Literary Criticism, Yerevan State University, travel grant to participate in Surrealisms 2019 (2nd Conference of the International Society for the Study of Surrealism [ISSS]), University of Exeter, August 29-31, 2019, to present paper “Surrealism in Contemporary Armenian Art and Literature.” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Dr. Ani Shahnazaryan**, Senior Researcher, Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts—Matenadaran, travel grant to participate in Digital Armenian Conference organized by the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, the Association pour le Traitement Automatique des Langues (ATALA, Paris), the Calfa Association (Paris), the French Society for Armenian Studies, with the support of the Laboratory of Excellence EFL (Paris) on 3-5 October 2019, to present paper on the project “A digital critical edition of Aghvesagirk.” Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Henry Shapiro**, Van Leer Institute, Fellow at the Polonsky Academy for Advanced Study, Jerusalem, and Visiting Researcher at the Faculty for Humanities, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, travel grant to visit Istanbul to access see GRANTS, page 19

# NAASR and Knights of Vartan Grants Make an Impact



## Taner Akcam

“The continued support of the Knights of Vartan and NAASR is of great importance to my work. I am most appreciative of the confidence you have shown in me and in my research. This will allow me to work towards a new understanding of the important role of Cemal Pasha during the Armenian Genocide, an important topic that has been too-little analyzed till now.”



## Tigran Alexanyan

“I am glad to inform you that the study of Vardanants sanctuaries, supported by the Knights of Vartan Fund, is going well. Before beginning fieldwork we have reviewed the published, bibliographic, and archival materials, and clarified and compiled a list of monuments and the structure of the study. We have studied separately the notion of Vardanants martyrs, the notion of Vardanants sanctuaries, the problems of study of Vardanants sanctuaries, and the current state

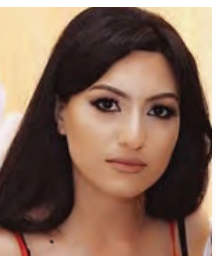
of study of Vardanants sanctuaries. I also want to inform you that we will soon start our expeditions.”



## Anna Aleksanyan

“I am very grateful to the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research for the support. I needed to monitor the periodicals and literature published back in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in the Armenian provinces of the Empire. To make it possible, I needed to complete my work at the Nubarian Library in Paris and at the archives of

the Mekhitarist Congregation in Vienna. These two archives are preserving rare periodicals, published in different Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the period mentioned above. I spent two weeks (July 16-30) exploring the collections.”



## Gayane Hovhannisyan

“During the research I detected a number of important documents and statistical materials, especially in the funds of the Department of Demography and the Department of the All-Union Population Census. Both general materials and demographic data were found for various regions of Karabakh. The revealed data will greatly contribute not only to the study of the demographic processes of Nagorno-Karabakh,

but also to the demographic situation in the Transcaucasian region. These materials will allow studying and analyzing the natural and mechanical increase and decrease of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, natural growth rates, migratory shifts, and the educational level of the population compared to regional indicators. The documents are of crucial importance for a comprehensive study of the topic and cannot be found in any other resources. I thank the Knights of Vartan Fund for this support.”

## Dr. Hayk Paronyan

“Expressing my sincere appreciation and thanks to the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research for this financial help to support my trip to participate in the Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) 2018 Annual Conference at the University of Pittsburgh, I would like to mention that it was



my first opportunity to attend the CESS conference, which, currently offers up to 70 panels and attracts around 300 participants from all over the world. My participation in the CESS conference was substantial for my future career in terms of increasing my intellectual capacity and of international networking. My presentation has provided a better understanding of two main directions of Armenian foreign policy, as well as the geopolitical situation of the South Caucasus. The conclusions have been shared with the CESS academic community providing discussion on different aspects of European and Eurasian integration models. This kind of discussion is essential for testing the research before sending the paper to be published in peer-reviewed academic journals.”



## Dmtryo Dymydyuk

“Thanks to the Knights of Vartan grant, I took part in the international “IV Youth Conference” held 28–30 November 2018 at the Matenadaran (Yerevan, Armenia). I had several meetings with Armenian historians who gave me some advice and recommendations about the topic of my dissertation: Karen Matevosyan (Matenadaran), Armen Yeghiazaryan (YSU) who are interested in Bagratid history and Karine Voskanyan (Deputy Director of School №5 in Ashtarak) who has

written a PhD dissertation about “Army of Bagratid Armenia Kingdom” which directly related to the topic of my research. Also, I had meetings with PhD students from the National Academy of Science (Shavarsh Azatyan and others) discussing with them separate moments of Armenian history.”



## Dr. Janice Okoomian

“I am very grateful to NAASR for funding this project. Scholarship about Armenia from a Gender & Women’s Studies perspective is important not only to the way Armenians (both in Hayastan and in the diaspora) understand Armenian culture, but also to the way others around the world understand Armenian culture. I am happy to be making a contribution to that scholarship with this project.”



## Dr. Abraham Terian

“I want to thank you for the renewed support by NAASR and the Knights of Vartan to complete my work on Koriwn’s *Life of Mashtots*. With this added support I will be able to finish what I had started long ago. My plan is to spend June-July in Armenia and to hand in my work to publishers associated with the Matenadaran.”



## Daria Vorobyeva

“I am back from Lebanon - the trip was even more productive than I expected. I was able to update my PhD results and these gave a very important, more advanced picture than my previous research. This will significantly strengthen the research summary and will potentially have a stronger impact in the fields of migration and diaspora studies after I publish a book.”



## NAASR Board Member and Academic Director Part of UConn Armenian Heritage Program

Connecticut was home to a program of music, demonstrations, a panel of renowned scholars and Armenian food on Saturday, March 30, 2019, as the University of Connecticut presented a comprehensive program and festival titled “Discovering Armenian Heritage and Culture.”

Held at the historic Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, the program drew some 150 people from Connecticut and the northeast eager to learn more about all things Armenian.

The event was sponsored by the University of Connecticut’s Office of Global Affairs and School of Social Work and was made possible by the generous support of the Alice K. Norian Endowment at the University. In 2004, Alice K. Norian bequeathed more than \$500,000 to restart Armenian Studies at the University of Connecticut. The bequest included funds to be dedicated to an annual lecture on Armenia, which would be open to the public as well as the University community.

The program began with a welcome by Dr. Nina Rovinelli Heller, dean of the UConn School of Social Work, who co-chairs the committee along with Daniel Weiner, vice president for Global Affairs.

Heller reviewed some of the history of bringing Armenian students to UConn and welcomed visiting faculty and students in social work from Yerevan State University. She also reviewed other joint programs including archeology social work and agriculture between the two universities.

During the first segment of the morning program, Yeretzkin Maggie Stepanian gave a demonstration on making Armenian string cheese, with samples for all and Prof. Mari Firkatian of the University of Hartford discussed her new book, *Home Again: Armenian Recipes from the Ottoman Empire*.

Brilliant musical performances were rendered by Tatev Amiryany, DMA, composer and pianist and soprano Anna Hayrapetyan, with pertinent commentary between the various performances.

The musical selections were followed by a powerful panel presentation on “Discovering Your Armenian Roots: How to Research Genealogy & Ancestry.” The panelists included George Aghjayan, director of Armenian Historical Archives and member of the Board of Directors, National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); Marc A. Mamigonian, Director of Academic Affairs at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR); Tsolean Sarian, executive director of Project SAVE Armenian Photography Archives;

Armen T. Marsoobian, professor and chair of the Philosophy Department at Southern Connecticut State University; and Catherine Masud, documentarian and lecturer in Digital Media and Design at the University of Connecticut. The panel was moderated by Kathryn Libal, director of Human Rights Institute and Associate Professor of Social Work and Human Rights, University of Connecticut. Following the panel presentation, a number of comments and questions were posed by the audience.

Marsoobian was available to autograph copies of his book, *Reimagining a Lost Armenian Home: The Dildilian Photography Collection*, as was Firkatian for her book. Marsoobian and Firkatian are both members of the Norian Community Advisory Committee which is made up of members of the Connecticut Armenian American Community.

Following the presentation, a sumptuous and generous Armenian meal, inspired by some of the recipes in Firkatian’s book, was served at no cost to all attendees.

The program lasted through the morning and into the afternoon.

Weiner was delighted to see the turnout for the event. “Community participation is critical in making our events a success, and this event was a great success. The engagement by both the presenters and the attendees throughout the day was wonderful. Our relationship with the Armenian-American diaspora is very important to the University. Shedding light on Armenian History but also keeping memory alive is very important, and this is why we will be offering the “Armenian Virtual Memory Project” course in the fall, in consultation with the speakers from the March 30 event.”

Attorney Harry Mazadoorian, also a member of the Norian Community Advisory committee, praised the effort which had gone in to making the presentations of the day such a great success and particularly noted the work of Zahra Ali, director of Global Partnerships and Outreach at the UConn Office of Global Affairs as well as Maureen Zavodjancik, events assistant. He observed that the attendees had demonstrated great enthusiasm and satisfaction with the day’s activities.

The Norian Armenian Programs Committee is charged with supporting and enhancing the University of Connecticut’s Armenian programming and, in particular, its connections with Yerevan State University.

The faculty programs committee has representatives from the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, geography, agriculture and resource economics, pathobiology, and social work. More information on the Norian programs at Global Affairs Department can be found at <http://armenia.uconn.edu>.

(Originally published in 4/18/19 issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* as “Discovering Armenian Heritage and Culture”)

## Grants Issued by NAASR and the Knights of Vartan

GRANTS, from page 17

materials on Eremia Chelebi for transformation of thesis “The Great Armenian Flight: The Celali Revolts and the Rise of Western Armenian Society” into a book. Grant issued by NAASR.

**Dr. Khachatur Stepanyan**, Chair of History of Armenia of the Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan, travel grant to conduct research in the ARF archives in Watertown, Mass., in fall 2019, towards study “The Activity of the ARF in Soviet Armenia, 1921-1933.” Grant issued by NAASR.

**Sipana Tchakerian**, Ph.D. candidate in archaeology at the University of Paris 1–Panthéon Sorbonne, in the Labex RESMED and at the University Aix-Marseille, travel grant to carry

out field research in Armenia and Georgia, July-August 2019, for thesis “Les monuments crucifères à stèle quadrilatère d’Arménie et d’Ibérie orientale de l’Antiquité tardive au haut Moyen-Age.” Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Abraham Terian**, retired Professor of Armenian Patristics and Academic Dean at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, New Rochelle, NY, grant to support preparation of *The Life of Mashtots* by His Disciple Koriwn, with an introduction, translation, and commentary. Grant issued by the Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies.

**Dr. Daria Vorobyeva**, travel grant to expand Ph.D. thesis “Forced Ethnic Migrants’ Integra-

tion: Syrian Armenians in Armenia and Lebanon (2011-2016),” completed at University of St. Andrews, Scotland (2018), leading to a book and article publications. Grant issued by NAASR.

**Ani Yenokyan**, Ph.D. student, Armenian State Academy of Fine Arts, and Junior Researcher at the Department of Art History and Writing Center of Research, Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts–Matenadaran, Yerevan, travel grant to participate in 16th Annual Graduate Student Colloquium in Armenian Studies at UCLA, February 2, 2018, presenting paper “The Illustrations of Armenian Printed Books in the Context of Early Modern Armenian Culture (16th-18th Centuries).” Grant issued by NAASR.

# NAASR/Gulbenkian Lecture Series on Contemporary Issues Continues to Break New Ground and Draw Diverse Audiences



FUNDAÇÃO  
CALOUSTE  
GULBENKIAN

NAASR continued its partnership with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 2018-19 to present a diverse series of lectures on contemporary Armenian issues to audiences across the U.S. Since its inception in the fall of 2016 the NAASR/Calouste Gulbenkian Lecture Series on Contemporary Issues has showcased cutting-edge topics and contributed to shaping informed discussions around vital issues concerning the Republic of Armenia, diasporan Armenians, and recent Armenian history. A list of all programs presented in 2018-19 follows, along with selected press coverage of several important events. These programs would not be possible without our many outstanding collaborators and co-sponsors, all of whom are listed online.

## Thursday, September 6, 2018

Tatul Hakobyan, “Deconstructing Armenia’s Velvet Revolution,” at St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ.

## Thursday, September 27, 2018

Panel: “Armenia’s Velvet Revolution After 6 Months: Beyond the Headlines,” at Harvard University, Fong Auditorium (Boylston Hall) Panelists: Anush Hambaryan (Harvard Kennedy School, Master in Public Policy Candidate),



Harout Manougian, Anush Hambaryan, and Dr. Anna Ohanyan at Harvard, September 27, 2018

Harout Manougian (Harvard Kennedy School, Master in Public Administration Candidate), and Dr. Anna Ohanyan (Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science. Moderated by Dr. Lisa Gulesserian (Harvard, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations).

## Monday, October 15, 2018

Ayda Erbal, “Sorry, Not Sorry: Revisiting Turkish Intellectuals’ ‘Apology’ to Armenians,” at Columbia University, Knox Hall, New York, NY.

## Thursday, October 25, 2018

Panel: “Armenia’s Velvet Revolution After Six Months: Beyond the Headlines,” at Columbia



Panelists Eric Nazarian, Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Emil Sanamyan, and moderator Raffi Khatchadourian at Columbia, Oct. 25, 2018

University, Mathematics Building, New York, NY. Panelists: Dr. Anna Ohanyan (Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Stonehill College), journalist Emil Sanamyan, filmmaker Eric Nazarian, and Dr. Khatchig Mouradian (Columbia). Moderated by The New Yorker’s Raffi Khatchadourian.

## Sunday, October 28, 2018

Panel: “Armenia’s Velvet Revolution After Six Months: Beyond the Headlines,” at the Elliott School for International Affairs, George Washington University, Washington, D.C. Panelists: Dr. Ruzanna Grigoryan (Armenian Room Fellowship Program, Department of Philosophy, University



Judith Saryan, Sarah Ignatius, Dr. Ruzanna Grigoryan, and Rachel Onanian Nadjarian at George Washington University on Oct. 28, 2018

of Pittsburgh), Armen Kharazian (Law Offices of Armen Kharazian, PLLC), and Emil Sanamyan (Fellow at the Institute of Armenian Studies, University of Southern California). Moderated by Rachel Onanian Nadjarian (Strategic Communications and Management Consultant).

## Tuesday, November 6, 2018

“Science, Technology, and Education in Armenia”: An Evening with Dr. Ani Aprahamian, Director, Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory, Yerevan, and Frei-



Dr. Ani Aprahamian at MIT on November 6, 2018

mann Professor Experimental Nuclear Physics, University of Notre Dame, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## Saturday, November 10, 2018

“Uncovering The Hidden Map of Historic Armenia” with Steven Sim and Ani Hovannisian, at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum–Sheen Chapel, Mission Hills, CA.



Armen Aroyan, Dr. Sharon Chekijian, Peter Musurlian, Ani Hovannisian, Marc Mamigonian, Roupén Berberian, and Steven Sim at the Ararat-Eskijian Museum, November 10, 2018

## Thursday, December 6, 2018

Panel discussion, “Activism and Transition to Leadership in Armenia: Challenges and Opportunities,” at the AGBU New England Center, Watertown, MA. Moderated by Dr. Anna Ohanyan featuring panelists Alla Yeremyan, Yuri Avagyan, Levon Chukaklyan, Astghik Isakhanyan, and Garik Miskaryan.

## Thursday, December 13, 2018

“The 1988 Armenian Earthquake and the Transformation of Diasporan/Homeland Relations,” at Nahigian Hall, First Armenian Church, Belmont, MA. Moderated by Stephen Kurkjian, and including John A. Simourian, Michele Simourian, Dr. Hayk Demoyan (on video), Dr. Carolann Najarian, and Elaine Kasparian.

## Friday, February 8, 2019

Dr. Henry Theriault and Dr. Ara Papián: “Resolution with Justice: Reparations for the Armenian Genocide Considered,” at St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ.



**Thursday, March 28, 2019**

Dr. Ara Sanjian, “Unwelcome Topics in Armenian Diaspora Historiography,” at Columbia University, Dodge Hall, New York, NY.

**Tuesday, April 2, 2019**

Raffi Bedrosyan, “Trauma and Resilience: Armenians in Turkey—Hidden, Not Hidden and No Longer Hidden,” at St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ.



Raffi Bedrosyan speaking at St. Leon on April 2, 2019

**Tuesday, April 30, 2019**

Panel: “A Trend or an Exception? Democratization in Armenia and Authoritarianism Worldwide,” with panelists Dr. Anna Ohanyan (Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Stonehill College), Dr. Dimitri Sotiropoulos (Visiting Scholar, Center for European Studies, Harvard Univ.), Dr. Valerie Sperling (Dept. of Political Science, Clark Univ.), and moderated by Dr. Lisa Gulesserian



Left to right, Dr. Valerie Sperling, Dr. Dimitri Sotiropoulos, Dr. Anna Ohanyan, and Dr. Lisa Gulesserian on April 30, 2019, at Harvard

(Dept. of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, Harvard University), at Harvard University, Fong Auditorium (Boylston Hall).

**Saturday, May 4, and Sunday, May 5, 2019**

2nd Feminist Armenian Studies Workshop: “Gendering Resistance and Revolution,” at University of California, Irvine.

**Thursday, June 6, 2019**

Kemal Yalcin, “Armenians and Assyrians: Shared Catastrophe, 1914 to 2019,” at St. Leon Armenian at St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ.

## Armenian Studies Chairs and Directors Meet at the University of California-Irvine to Discuss the Future of the Field

On September 29, 2018, the majority of current Armenian Studies Chairs and Directors in the United States, along with representatives of the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS), National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation met for an “Armenian Studies Chairs and Directors Workshop: Current Challenges & Future Prospects” at the University of California–Irvine. The meeting, which was the first of its kind in the west coast, was organized by UCI’s Armenian Studies Program, the UCI Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies (Professor Hourri Berberian), the UCLA Richard Hovannisian Endowed Chair in Modern Armenian History (Professor Sebouh Aslanian), and the Society for Armenian Studies (Professor Bedross Der Matossian, SAS President).

The goal of the workshop was to begin serious discussions of the challenges facing Armenian Studies in the present and the future. In addition, the participants concentrated on the prospects lying ahead for the field. This meeting took on even more importance given that the last such meeting took place ten years ago, in 2008, at the University of Michigan.

The day began with welcoming remarks by Professor Berberian who stressed the importance of meeting regularly and keeping lines of communication open among Chairs and Directors. These remarks were followed by brief “state of the program” reports by

the attendees. The focus of discussions centered on the following key items: (1) the past, present, and future of graduate student training, specifically currently available sources for funding, the importance of interdisciplinary research and training as well as language training; (2) contribution to the Armenian Studies field in the context of other fields and disciplines, in particular ways in which Armenian Studies may benefit from greater engagement with other fields, making interventions not only within Armenian Studies but in other fields as well; (3) job market challenges for graduate students, especially ways in which graduate students can be

trained and equipped with the skills and experience for employment more broadly for academic and non-academic job markets beyond Armenian Studies; (4) the importance of cooperation, collaboration, and collegiality among chairs and directors as well as the SAS, including increased participation in the SAS and creation of an email forum for chairs and directors to facilitate discussions about the future of Armenian Studies programs and for exchanges of ideas and material as well as an avenue through which to take collective action if/when necessary; (5) resources—both financial and library/archival; (6) fundraising possibilities and challenges; and (7) the future of chairs, specifically those at Harvard and Columbia.

That many Armenian Studies leaders traveled long distances to attend the workshop and that those who were unable to attend were nevertheless enthusiastic about the prospect, served as a reminder of just how important it is to collaborate and be in conversation with each other for the continued development of the field of Armenian Studies. Those in attendance agreed to continue to converse, consult, and collaborate for the greater good of the Armenian Studies field, current and future students, and the future of the programs.

The next two meetings of current chairs and directors is scheduled to take place in Boston, hosted by NAASR (2020), and USC, hosted by the Institute of Armenian Studies (2022). The fruitful and productive workshop was followed by a reception open to the public where—after welcome remarks by School of Humanities Dean, Dr. Tyrus Miller, and Professors Berberian and Der Matossian—community members, faculty, graduate students, and workshop attendees had the opportunity to meet and converse.



Left to right: (back row) Razmik Panossian, Kevork Bardakjian, Christina Maranci, Barlow Der Mugerdechian, Bedross Der Matossian, Sebouh Aslanian, Vahe Sahakyan, Ara Sanjian, Marc Mamigonian, (front row) Salpi Ghazarian, Kathryn Babayan, Taner Akçam, Hourri Berberian, and Vahram Shemmasian.

# CYSCA Panelists from Armenia Discuss Activism and Revolution

By Aram Arkun

The Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) presented “Activism and Transition to Leadership in Armenia,” a lively panel discussion of the events of the Velvet Revolution in Armenia earlier in 2018, at the Armenian General Benevolent Union New England Center in Wattertown on the evening of December 6. The five speakers visiting from different parts of Armenia were all young activists in their early twenties. The event was co-sponsored by the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

The audience was first welcomed by Marc Mamigonian on behalf of NAASR and CYSCA Open World Program Director Alisa Stepanian on behalf of CYSCA. Dr. Anna Ohanyan, Richard B. Finnegan Distinguished Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Stonehill College, served as moderator. Interpreter Ara Hakobyan facilitated communications for the panelists, with the exception of Astghik Isakhanyan, who spoke in English.

Ohanyan began by asking the panelists where they were during the 10 days the movement was building and how it felt to be a part of that movement.

Isakhanyan is from Goris, in the southern Armenian province of Syunik, and worked as project coordinator for the Rights Information Center, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), which works to help people know and protect their rights. In October 2016, the despotic governor of Syunik was dismissed, she said, so the atmosphere was somewhat freer than before. Isakhanyan said, “In the first days, in my region, and in the southern parts of Armenia, people didn’t believe that it would succeed, especially older people.” However, some young people went to Yerevan to join the movement when Nikol Pashinyan returned there on his march.

Isakhanyan said these young people were considered very courageous because in Goris, many people work for the government, at that time controlled by the Republican Party, and the latter spread the word that those who joined the movement, or their parents and family, would lose their jobs. Only when it became obvious that the movement would succeed if everybody joined in did around 80 people go out in public. Even writing on social media in favor of the movement could be dangerous. Isakhanyan’s NGO was one of the first to spread the news on its webpages and social media. They declared that they would not work for one week but instead organize a rally to demand the Republicans and Serzh Sargsyan to resign.

Amazingly, it was school children aged 7 who started the first rally. Isakhanyan said, “They ran out of the school and we saw that the police came with them and they were walking... They really were 7 years old... I was in my office and I heard some noises. We looked out and saw that children with their bags, really small ones, are running and screaming ‘Merzhir Serzhin’ (Reject Serzh) and some announcements like this.

Then people were encouraged. It was a really, really very emotional moment, because all the older ones were really afraid but they were really for that. The children did not understand the fear, what is fear, or what to fear. They saw on the internet that in other cities that people went out, so they also went out.”

This established a culture of rallying, so that when a principal was nominated for a school whom the people did not like, the people held a rally and said they do not like the decision that was made. This was real change, Isakhanyan said, for her region.

Garik Miskaryan, foreign affairs manager for the Restart Student Initiative, declared that by October 2017, university students were already fighting for changes on issues important to their lives, such as postponing obligatory military service for some exceptional students. The main people in this movement established the Restart Initiative on February 5, 2018. Their activity, focused on Yerevan State University (YSU), touched everything from issues like toilet paper to higher level budget questions.

Prior to the April events of the Velvet Revolution, Miskaryan said that there were two groups struggling for this revolution: Nikol Pashinyan’s political faction and the Reject Serzh civil initiative, which turned into the main force moving the revolution forward. Miskaryan and Davit Petrosyan from the Restart Initiative participated in those meetings and were the first to greet Pashinyan on his return from Gyumri to Yerevan (on April 13). Before arriving in Freedom Square, Pashinyan and the whole group went to YSU, where, Miskaryan said, it became clear that the students were the main driving force of the revolution.



From left, Alla Yeremyan, Levon Chukaklyan, Yuri Avagyan, Ara Hakobyan, Garik Miskaryan, and Astghik Isakhanyan (photo: David Medzorian)

Miskaryan declared, “The revolution took place, in my opinion, on that day when the students, around 5,000 in number the first time, closed the intersection of Koryun and Abovyan Streets and kept it closed for an entire day. There were clashes there. On Baghramyan Street in the evening, they shot on the students and three of our members got injured. The next day when I saw those injured comrades back on the streets, the next morning, I realized that something is possible and that changes are taking place. During those ten days we were basically on the streets.”

Yuri Avagyan, communications manager for the Restart Initiative and a third-year sociology graduate student, declared that the most impressive day for the students was that of the closing down of the Koryun/Abovyan intersection. The students joined the main mass of protestors, but, he said, were greater in number than those before them.

Avagyan explained that planning was very important for the movement’s success. There were various initiatives taking place, including that of Nikol Pashinyan, and some individuals participated in all of them.





Levon Chukaklyan, left, and Yuri Avagyan (photo: Aram Arkun)

Meetings took place at the Ketiknots' Café near the Opera and the intersection of Prospect and Baghramyan Avenue. Around 30 people were actively talking, including representatives of Reject Serzh, Nikol Pashinyan and members of his team, and the Restart Initiative group. Suren Sahakyan, who only later formed his own political party, proposed an obligatory strike. The protestors would block the streets in a decentralized manner.

On the night of April 15, Avagyan said, after Pashinyan's speech, they decided to allocate duties. Whoever had a car would block one of the various main city streets, especially the bridges. The student faction undertook the heaviest responsibilities. They had to close down the streets in the morning, and the bold ones among them lay down to block the entrances of the subway cars. Avagyan said, "I never imagined the situation would lead to Serzh Sargsyan's resignation because there were truly very few of us showing up there and everybody was deriding us greatly. In a word, in the morning the following picture materialized: we with the students collected at the SAS supermarket and, in turn, using dumpsters and benches closed the street and went on. We were 10-15 people in all. Cars couldn't travel there. It is true that we made the city very dirty but in the end something happened. As many as expected of the students came out while the picture of the city was that Yerevan was completely paralyzed."

They repeated the same actions again and again. The next day, April 17, they came to the same place, at the supermarket, and the police were waiting for them. Probably, Avagyan guessed, there was a secret police agent in their ranks who had revealed their plans. Arrests began. Avagyan showed a brief video clip showing the students resisting arrest. Avagyan and the others were kept at the Masis police precinct for nine hours.

Miskaryan interjected that Avagyan neglected to mention that the day prior to being arrested, Avagyan was shot upon three times, and once he was hit in "a very inappropriate spot."

Levon Chukaklyan, cofounder of the Restart Student Initiative and third year political science post-graduate at YSU, spoke about his personal story since the other panelists had given information about the revolution. He said that in October 2017, when the students were working to postpone the drafting into the army of exceptional students, they did a hunger strike for the first time. His family was threatened and punished as a result. His brother was fired from his job and the secret police telephoned to threaten his mother. All his family and friends asked him to stop his protest activities and when Pashinyan began his march from Gyumri to Yerevan, his mother and others begged him not to join. He said, "However, as always I did just the opposite again." He and his friends joined Pashinyan's group. When his mother, worried, called after hearing of the shootings on April 16, Chukaklyan said, she only told him to be careful. He understood that by this point she and his family and friends were convinced there was no point to try to hold him back. Perhaps more significantly, he stressed, "I understood that among them too the belief arose that already was with me — that slowly we were able to spread in our surroundings that perhaps this time things would change."

He related that during the revolution, one of the main principles was

to maintain civil disobedience without violence, which hopefully would lead the police to understand that the protestors were not enemies but friends. When one of his hotheaded friends, named Mihran, was struck by the police with a club, Chukaklyan noticed to his surprise that even he merely raised his hands, understanding that it was necessary to attempt to keep the peace.

Chukaklyan is originally from Armavir, a town and region in the west of Armenia. He said that when we saw the Yerevan roads were closed down, he understood they had to do the same in his hometown, so, 13 young women and 4 young men ran around the streets of Armavir, with the police following them. At first the local residents said new Yerevan fashions were being introduced, but in a few days, even the older grandmothers and grandfathers came outside to sit on the streets in their chairs to block traffic, and the police could not do anything.

He concluded, "It is at that time that you become aware of how important each citizen's responsibility is to do what is necessary for civil society, so that they can educate people to be able to do their civic obligations. The direction in which the country moves forward and toward what future depends on each step." Change comes from each small step taken by individuals.

Alla Yeremyan is also from Syunik Province in southern Armenia, but from a different city called Sisian, where she is manager of the Basen Hotel and also teaches students with disabilities and doing leadership training for NGOs. She was in Sisian during the revolution, and said, "To tell the truth, in the beginning I had some fears about the success of the revolution." She recalled the fate of the 2015 Electric Yerevan struggle, but as time went on became more optimistic. Mobilizing in Sisian was difficult, she said, for several reasons: first the majority of Sisian's youth were already in Yerevan participating in the demonstrations there. In Sisian, though there were no direct actions there was an atmosphere of fear, as they feared that they or their parents could lose their jobs in retaliation. Consequently, only five or six youths did not fear going out and demonstrating, but everybody followed the events on television and social media and slowly the spirit of the revolution reached Sisian too.

As in Goris, it seemed the children took the initiative. Yeremyan related: "One morning, we all went to work and an unusual thing happened.



Dr. Anna Ohanyan (photo: Aram Arkun)

All the students from the fourth to the eleventh grades declared a strike. They made placards stating 'Reject Serzh' and 'I am the owner of my country.'" Yeremyan worked at Vaghatin's middle school, 11 kilometers from Sisian. The students walked with their banners to Sisian, and the teachers followed them, but in their cars.

When they arrived at Sisian they saw that everyone had gone on strike. Rumors about closing the Sisian medical center had inspired

them even more to struggle, so everyone from the medical centers and schools had taken to the streets. They closed a bridge and some youth with their cars closed the main highway connecting Yerevan to Meghri. The following day, April 23, Serzh Sargsyan resigned as prime minister.

After this first round of answers, Ohanyan asked what the activists did in order to bring people out to join the demonstrations and address their fears. Secondly, what role does activism and civil society have in making this transition stick and making the changes permanent.

Avagyan replied that it was a little easier for Restart to encourage people because its members were already involved in different processes and Davit Petrosyan was very well known among the students. Thus, when they saw people who in the past worked for just goals, he said, "they felt they could trust these people." He said that in Armenia, it is important as

a leader to show that you do not fear and have strong will.

Last year, for example, when For the Sake of the Development of Knowledge Initiative, the predecessor group to the Restart Initiative, was invited by the then prime minister Karen Karapetyan to negotiate, the group forced Karapetyan to agree to have everything recorded without cuts so it could be shown on television. The students were so confident that they could interrupt the prime minister. Minister of Defense Vigen Sargsyan got upset and left. The group also published its telephone numbers to show its sincerity and independence to the public.

Miskaryan followed up by declaring that the decentralized nature of the movement was very important. The principle of closing down the streets was announced and beyond that, individuals took over, he said. The students who had an opportunity to be outside of Armenia and see other societies were more open in mentality and were the first to close the streets down.

Then, he said, “When 18-year-old girls take to the street, that doubled the number of people in the street. When at home they tell the girl once, twice, don’t go, but the girl still went to the street, the father and mother themselves were forced to go to the street.” When the young women then would lie down before buses, this got televised and many more people were inspired.

The arrests of the main leaders like Nikol Pashinyan, Ararat Mirzoyan, and Sasun Mikayelyan on April 22 did not change anything. People still went out to close the streets, because civil society, explained Miskaryan, was now the driving force of this movement.

Miskaryan concluded by noting that the Restart Initiative has not changed its approach or activities. Both before and after the revolution it remained active in the field of civil society, unlike many others.

Chukaklyan gave another example of how they got people involved. He said, “if we had a lack of freedom inside the university, and that atmosphere dominated there, then we could right next to it establish a different atmosphere of freedom.” They held events at the park or garden next to the university. Students looked while passing and became interested in their demands. Similarly, during the revolution, people saw others waging struggles or activities on the street or through the internet, and this interested them.

He said that many people of the civil movements have now entered politics but the Restart Initiative works to integrate new students in order to replace them. He said, “We have kept our ideas and activities in spheres that have great need for solutions.” Meanwhile, as far as the revolution in general goes, he said that it must be institutionalized.

Ohanyan asked Yeremyan and Isakhanyan how challenges in the provinces are different from those in Yerevan. Yeremyan said that it is hard to mobilize people in far away regions. The NGO at which she volunteers tries to develop Sisian not only economically but through programs to involve the youth and women. They held leadership classes for the youth during the summer to explain what they can change in society to make it more suitable to their own needs. They also have various economic programs promoting craftwork and tourism. In November a tourism information center was opened in Sisian.

Isakhanyan said that she has been involved in civil society organizations for five years. A long process is necessary after the revolution. She said, “I will consider the revolution as implemented when the mindset of the people will be really changed.” When bribery no longer will be relied on, and elections will be transparent.

Ohanyan also asked about the role of the diaspora in supporting civil

society initiatives. Isakhanyan said, “If you care, we really get encouraged that there are people outside of Armenia who consider Armenia their home and care what is happening there.” Collaboration with Armenian civil society organizations and visiting are important. She said, “We feel a lot of respect here [in Boston]. People recognize where Armenia is and it is thanks to you. You make us really proud that we are Armenian. Thank you.”

Avagyan said that there were many cases when diasporan contributions have not yielded the expected results. Aid, he said, should not be short term, and the question is proper policy or strategy, and how to implement the strategy. Restart attempts to work in this manner, he said. He gave one example.

In the past, student bodies were formed as appendages of the Republican Party and took students to Tsaghkator’s resort areas and spent 9 ½ million tram. Restart instead announced grants for 100,000 tram, and got three people doing research projects and mastering specific issues. These new members became so skillful that this was considered a great success.

He stressed, “In our country, the only resources are human resources.”

Chukaklyan said that there is a widespread skepticism in Armenia concerning grants being given through various countries or foundations. He said, “I think the diaspora can take the place of these countries or international organizations, so that with our own [i.e. Armenian] means we can help the human level of quality and progress.”

During the question and answer session with the audience, when asked to elaborate on any changes that have taken place at the university level, Avagyan declared that this was “the most painful point...nothing changed in education. The leadership and management of universities remain

the same corrupt people as before, from the rectors to the governing council.” He said that his group was awaiting the completion of the revolution and afterwards will begin presenting its harder requests. First will be the removal of the old corrupt leadership, and second will be the change of the professors. He explained that “with us, the university is a very conservative body, unlike in developed countries.”

As to whether their broader political demands will be fulfilled, Avagyan replied that it was always possible that if civil society could not be sustained, the Kocharyan system would come back to power. He said that it is still actively working in the field, and Kocharyan has numerous media resources, so activism must continue too.

Miskaryan exclaimed that the iron is hot, so it is time to mold it. This is an important period for building and creating. Success will depend on the efforts of everyone.

To an audience question of how to move conservative Armenian society toward freedom on issues like women’s rights, Isakhanyan responded that already changes have taken place since women stood outside next to their husbands, sons, and friends in the revolution, and there are many women’s names now on the list of candidates for deputies in the parliamentary election. There is now a woman appointed as mayor of Echmiadzin city, which could not have been imagined ten years ago. A recent law requires that murder or family violence directed against women will be considered criminal cases.

Yeremyan said that we will reach the desired result only when women themselves are knowledgeable about their rights and demand them.



From left, Alla Yeremyan, Levon Chukaklyan, Yuri Avagyan, Ara Hakobyan (translator), Garik Miskaryan, Astghik Isakhanyan, and Dr. Anna Ohanyan (photo: David Medzorjian)

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# Drawing Conclusions Three Decades after Devastation

By Alin K. Gregorian

On Thursday, December 13, almost exactly 30 years after the devastation of the earthquake in northern Armenia, some of the people who first responded to that disaster gathered at the First Armenian Church to share an overview of what motivated them as well as the logistics of sending aid to their brothers and sisters so far away.

The program was cosponsored by the First Armenian Church and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) / Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Issues.

One focus of the evening, the brainchild of retired *Boston Globe* Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist Stephen Kurkjian, was not only the disaster and the response, but the changes that resulted from the collision of the need of the people in Armenia and the immediate response from people around the world, Armenian and non, and how they not only changed relations between Armenia and the diaspora forever, but possibly put the final nail in the coffin of the Soviet Union.

He wrote a lengthy piece about the many firsts that happened as a result of the earthquake aid heading from the US. (See <https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/09/13/the-untold-story-the-earthquake-that-shook-armenia-the-relief-effort-that-changed-the-world/>)

The program featured a trio of women who had taken part in organizing the first wave of aid. They were Dr. Carolann Najarian, who had founded Armenian Health Alliance, Elaine Kasparian who cofounded the Armenian Children's Milk Fund under the aegis of the Armenian Missionary Association of America, and Michele Simourian, who also headed up the relief projects for the Armenian Missionary Association of America. (Her husband's involvement at her urging was explored in the second part of the program.)

## Remembering Harrowing Times

An ABC "World News Tonight" report from December 8, 1988, opened the program, with the late anchor Peter Jennings narrating the scenes of utter devastation in northern Armenia.

Next, a video was shown of a brief interview between Kurkjian and Hayk Demoyan, the former head of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan.

Demoyan and his family lived in Gyumri and he recalled how his mother warned him and his brother, both of whom were in the same grade, to be careful on December 7 as she had had a bad dream. They walked the 15 minutes to school and took part in the woodworking class when the quake hit.

"There was a roaring from the earth, like a demon or a huge animal," he recalled, saying that the room's glass cabinets shattered and the metal tools clanged against each other, adding to the otherworldly cacophony. He, his brother and the rest of the class made it out with difficulty, he recalled, as the floor was shaking both vertically and horizontally, making progress difficult.

"There were three shakes," he said. Once they left the building, they looked back to see it had all collapsed.

Even more difficult, he said, was seeing someone on the eighth floor of a nearby apartment building shout for help. As he and other students were looking around to see if someone could help, they looked back at where the building was, but "suddenly the building was gone and you could see blue sky."

His family was lucky to have all three children and parents survive, but Demoyan added, "you saw death everywhere. It was the first time I saw death up close."

He got especially emotional when he recalled the death of his young cousins. Their bodies were identified by their shoes and their little fingers

were still stained by ink from the day's lessons.

Aside from the overwhelming sadness of their brethren, he said the citizens of the city and Armenia in general were mourning the loss of the crew of the Yugoslav plane that crashed on its way to deliver aid.

### Phone Banks and Disbelief

Kurkjian stressed that the program did not attempt to present all the figures involved with the effort, but "just to catch the conversation that went on by hundreds of people" responding to the tragedy.

Najarian, Kasparian, and Michele Simourian each recalled their reactions to hearing about the quake and their desires to help.

Najarian was already involved with Armenia as she had been supporting efforts in Karabakh for independence and helping people there who had been brutalized by the Azeri government in Baku and Sumgait.

In fact, the morning of December 7, she and her husband, George Najarian, had placed a full-page ad in the New York Times promoting Karabakh's independence from Azeri rule. Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev was in New York and the ad was supposed to get his attention. The morning of December 7, then-Speaker George Keeverian of the Massachusetts House also had planned to have a press conference to draw attention to the Azeri pogroms.

But, as Najarian recalled, "everything changed."

The press conference instead turned to one about the most intense earthquake to have hit any Soviet republic.

"The need was huge, beyond anything we could have comprehended," she said.

Boston was home to the first wave of help directed at Armenia. The telephone company brought banks of phones to the Najarians' home and then to rented offices, for fundraising.

Kasparian, of the Milk Fund, spoke about the help of local medical staff and also the sincere response of many who wanted to help children, many orphaned now, receive nutrition.

"I want to thank all of you. It took a whole community to bring out what we could accomplish," Kasparian said, adding praise for the Najarians' leadership.

Michele Simourian spoke about the efforts she coordinated for the Armenian Missionary Association of America. She recalled that the organization's leader, the late Rev. Movses Janbazian, put out a call to the faithful and asked them to help, after visiting the devastation and seeing for himself the extent of the need. Simourian coordinated with Elizabeth Agbabian on the West Coast, to help children and orphans.

The Armenian groups were supported by an advertising campaign led by Ed Eskandarian of the storied Arnold Communications (later Arnold Worldwide Partners), which "started to blitz for funds."

According to a story in the *Washington Post*, in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, \$26 million was raised in the US from organizations and individual, Armenian and non-Armenian. The Armenian community in the US raised a total of \$40 million.

Armenia happened to be in a closed empire behind the Iron Curtain. However, a confluence of powerful friends of the Armenian community in the state, including George Keeverian and Sen. Edward Kennedy, were



John and Michele Simourian

able to break down a lot of barriers. Strange bedfellows in the delivery of aid to Armenia included the notorious arms dealer Sarkis Soghalian, who lent his plane to Najarian for the delivery of 90,000 pounds of supplies.

### Football Friends in High Places

The panel left, and Kurkjian invited John Simourian to sit and tell his story about how he managed to deliver one of the first batches of medical aid to Armenia, with the help of friends Vernon R. Loucks, Jr., CEO of Baxter International medical supplies company and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, whom he joked was the only Democrat he had ever voted for, ever since they were teammates playing football (badly) on the Harvard team.

With great charm and self-effacement, Simourian recalled how his wife, Michele, urged him to contact his "good friend," Loucks, to see if he could donate medical supplies. He quipped that he had not seen Loucks since their college days, when Simourian played for Harvard and Loucks for the rival Yale team for four years. They had formed a close friendship and had remained in touch, though they had not succeeded at seeing each other in person.

"I hadn't seen him since 1957," he recalled. He had left messages over the years and received and sent letters, but they had never connected, even on the phone.

Once he called Loucks in December 1988, everything changed. "I called him that morning. To my surprise, he picks up the phone," Simourian recalled.

He was going to ask the Baxter executive to help send medical aid to Armenia and to his surprise, he learned that his old friend had just suggested doing that very thing during a meeting with the company's executives.

With breathtaking speed, Loucks delivered his report and lined up his donations, letting Simourian know that he would need to find three planes for the delivery of the dialysis machines and 60 visas for the American specialists who would administer the treatments. Loucks said that according to his reports, after an earthquake, dialysis machines are vital.

Visas and planes heading to a Soviet republic were no easy feat, yet another Simourian friend, Kennedy, played a vital role. "Ted and I played football at Harvard," he said. "We kind of hit it off."

"I have never voted for a Democrat in my life, with one exception: Ted," he quipped, drawing chuckles. "I called him and said we need three planes and 60 visas. He asked where do you want the planes?"

The planes carried \$2 million worth of equipment, many in use even today. The 60 Baxter staffers stayed for nine months.

Simourian and his friend Loucks kept in touch after that. When Simourian thanked Loucks for his help, the latter responded, "This was the most important thing I have ever done in my life."

Kennedy also helped make possible the landing of Soviet military transport planes at Andrews Air Force Base for loading supplies headed to Armenia.

"Ted said, 'I don't want to see this [news of the assistance he provided] anywhere.' I kept it a secret until he died," John Simourian said.

(*Armenian Mirror-Spectator*; December 20, 2018)



# Second Feminist Armenian Studies Workshop at U.C. Irvine

By Sona Zeitlian

Following the successful launching of the Annual Feminist Armenian Studies Workshop in 2018, a second two-day Workshop/Conference, titled “Gendering Resistance and Revolution,” took place at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), on May 4-5, 2019. It was organized by three prominent scholars, Melissa Bilal, Assistant Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at the American University of Armenia (AUA), Lerna Ekmekcioglu, Professor of History and Women and Gender Studies at MIT, the two initiators of the first Workshop, and joining them Hourı Berberian, Professor of History, and Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies at UCI. Hourı was also hosting the second Workshop.

The two-day groundbreaking event was free and open to the public, featuring fifteen well-known participants, specializing in women’s activism, resistance and revolution in the multilocal Armenian experience from the 19th century through the Velvet Revolution and beyond. It was sponsored by the Meghrouni Family Presidential Chair in Armenian Studies and co-sponsored by the Department of History, the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA-Los Angeles), and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR)/Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Lecture Series on Contemporary Armenian Topics.

After opening remarks by Hourı Berberian, the first panel titled “Redefining Resistance and Revolution from an Armenian Feminist Perspective” started promptly at 10:00 a.m., chaired by Arnold Alahverdian of UCI, who also introduced the three panelists.

The first was Hourı Berberian, author of two important books, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1905-1911* and the recently published, *Roving Revolutionaries: Armenians and Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian and Ottoman Worlds*, who spoke about “Hysterical...Vague Look, Pronounced and Hooked Nose, Thin Bloodless Lips: Revolution, Resistance and Recovering Rubina.”

Sophie Areshian-Ohanjanian, known by her revolutionary name Rubina, was the only woman involved in the attempt to overthrow the oppressive Ottoman regime by assassinating the Sultan in 1905. Hourı detailed the initial setbacks, giving way to bitter recriminations and serious leadership problems. Rubina became the thrust of criticism and was described by her male colleagues as a frail, unpredictable, and untrustworthy person given to hysterical outbursts and a nervous breakdown. However, she stood her ground and her detractors, chief among them Mardiros Margarian, named Sapho, were finally removed from leadership positions.

The second speaker Melissa Bilal’s recent publication is the popular “Lullabies and the Memory of Pain: Armenian Women’s Remembrance

of Pain in Turkey.” She has co-edited with Lerna Ekmekcioglu *A Cry for Justice: Five Armenian Feminist Writers from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic (1862-1933)*. Her presentation was titled “What Was Radical About Zabel Asadur.”

Using the pen name Sybil, Asadur had raised women’s issues in her novel *Heart of a Girl* and articles in the Istanbul press. She had also organized women to serve in the provinces to combat illiteracy. As a feminist, she had advocated for women’s individual rights, independent thinking, the right to work and representation in the National Assembly. Through her poetry and prose writings and the preparation of Armenian language textbooks, she had also emphasized the role of culture in preserving the national identity.

The third panelist was Lerna Ekmekcioglu. Beside the above-mentioned book she co-edited with Melissa Bilal, her in-depth analysis *Recovering Armenia: the Limits of Belonging to Post Genocide Turkey* was widely acclaimed. Her presentation was titled “Post Genocide Mobilization of Armenian Women for their Rights.”

She began by stating that after the Genocide, Istanbul was the center of Armenian feminism with a group of prominent writers and activists such as Zabel Yessayan, Zaruhi Kalemkiarian, Anayis, Arshaguhi Teotig, Zaruhi Bahri and Hayganush Mark. In 1919 the Armenian Women’s League was established “to awaken in women awareness of their interests and rights, so that they could attain a position of social, economic, and political equality with men.”

The rise of Kemalism marked an exodus of notables and women intellectuals. But Mark stayed to continue the publication of her *Hay Gin* magazine and the advocacy for gender equality, promotion of social justice, and participation in the civic development of the nation.

The second panel titled “Resisting Invisibility” was chaired by Pauline Pechakjian of UCI, who introduced the three speakers.

The first was Sona Zeitlian, author of a pioneering study about revolutionary women, titled *The Role of Armenian Women During the Revolutionary Movement*, then *On the Trail of Armenian Women from Ancient to Modern Times*, both winners of the Melidinetzi Award of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. Other published works include the illustrated *Folktales of Musa Dagh*, four illustrated volumes of heroes and heroines of Armenian legendary history and *Armenians in Egypt: Contribution to Medieval and Modern Egypt*. Her presentation was titled “From Oblivion to Visibility: In Search of Women’s Role During the Armenian Revolutionary Movement and Beyond.”

As she could find no “precedent, no documentary material and no model” see CONFERENCE, page 28



CONFERENCE, from page 27

for her research, she retrieved the stories of revolutionary women by interviewing members of the revolutionary generation living in the diaspora. Among them was Simon Vratsian, Isguhi Tiriakian, Isguhi Tavitian, and others. In her search for primary sources, she cited a handwritten letter by the son of Rubina, a participant in the planning of the failed attempt to assassinate the Sultan and handwritten recollections of Agulineh Khanjian, a participant in Hajin's self defense. The continuing skepticism about her work gave her a sense of purpose to persevere.

Based on extensive research, she detailed the role of Eastern and Western women, as well as those in the provinces during the revolutionary movement, then the First Republic of Armenia and beyond.

The second panelist was Vartan Matiossian, a literary scholar and Executive Director of the Armenian National Education Committee. He is the author of scores of articles, reviews, essays, and translations from Spanish. His publications include a biography of Armen Ohanian in collaboration with Artsvi Bakhchinyan of Yerevan. His presentation was about "Armen Ohanian: Art and Revolution from the Caucasus to Mexico."

He began by describing her as a remarkably "multifaceted" figure in the first half of the 20th century. He detailed her accomplishments as an actress, a writer, and political activist in a career spanning from the Cau-

to "the difference one determined woman can make in working for peace and justice."

The third panel was titled "Resistant (Re) Presentations" and chaired by Sona Tajiryan of UCLA, who also introduced the three speakers.

The first was Elyse Semerdjian, Associate Professor of Middle Eastern History at Whitman College and author of *Off the Straight Path: Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* and articles on gender, non-Muslims and law in the Ottoman Empire. Recently she was awarded a fellowship focused on the topic of "skin." Her presentation was titled "White Bodies, Savage Marks: Medical and Racial Discourse of Armenian Women's Tattoos."

She described the tattoos as "symbols that indigenous groups (Arabs, Kurds, Gypsies) believed bolstered women's fertility and beauty, offered medical healing, and signaled tribal affiliation." Armenian women, who were forcibly converted or ended up in Muslim households, were marked with tattoos on their faces, neck, and hands. As a result, they felt stigmatized and "experienced the dual trauma of forced assimilation... and another trauma when they re-entered Armenian society looking visibly like outsiders."

As a sign of shame, the removal of the tattoos, sometimes called "corrupted flesh" became a prime objective "by any means necessary: cutting, scraping and burning... It became part of humanitarian medical mission efforts at home and abroad."

The second panelist, Nora Tataryan of the University of Toronto has done research about the representation of the Armenian Genocide in contemporary art. She has presented her work internationally and published articles in both academic and non-academic journals. Her paper about "Comfortable Ways of Encountering the Other on a Genocidal Land" was relayed by Skype.

Discussing the intricate relationship between art and responsibility, she explored "the problematic nature of the depiction of Armenian woman as a weak, racialized figure" in Erhan Arik's video "Remembering." She first referred to "the longstanding literary and historical tradition of representation of Armenian women in the aftermath of the Genocide." Then, conscious of the "impossibility of forging a comfortable encounter with the other in relation to the unrepresentability of the Genocide," she considered Arik's video "in the absence of the political will" to recognize the Genocide as "an (almost) obligatory move in order to be able to live on Genocidal land." A complex and thoughtful proposition!

The third panelist, Talinn Grigor of the University of California, Davis, is an art historian, whose publications include *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs and Contemporary Iranian Art: from the Street to the Studio*, and the forthcoming *The Persian Revival: Ancient Iran in Art, Historiography and Imperialism*. Her presentation was titled "Iran's Armenian Women and the Revolutionary Intentions of Avant-Garde Architecture."

Through a mostly visual presentation, she examined photographs exploring how Armenian women architects of Iran "navigated the multiple spheres of avant-garde architecture in the 1960s and 1970s with their Armenian identity."

The fourth panel was titled "When is Activism Revolutionary?" and chaired by Karen Jallatyan of UCI, who also introduced the speakers.

The first was Tamar Shirinian, co-director of Women's and Gender Studies at Millsaps College, who has written about the political economy, gender, and sexuality in the post-socialist Republic of Armenia. Her current research is about feminist movements in Armenia as an integral, though often marginalized, part of larger social movements since 2012.

She began by stating that Armenia's Velvet Revolution "marked many ways of rethinking gender and revolution." Although it was hard to bring about cultural change in the dominant patriarchy, she believed that "actions organized by grassroots feminists, like We Don't Have a Daddy" would gradually give way to "new forms of thinking liberation: liberation



Conference host Houri Berberian with Melissa Bilal and Lerna Ekmekcioglu

casus to Europe and finally to Mexico. At one time, she was celebrated as a Persian dancer, later becoming an established writer in French. Although she lived in the margins of Armenian culture, she maintained a strong attachment to her roots to the end of her life.

The third panelist was Meline Mesropyan, an International Culture graduate of Tohoku University, Japan. She has done extensive research on the life and work of Diana Apcar, the First Republic of Armenia's consul to Japan, the first female diplomat in the modern world. Her presentation was titled "Diana Apcar and Her Network: Efforts to Change the Armenian Situation in Turkey."

Diana excelled in diplomatic networking and laid the groundwork for "raising international awareness of the Armenian Question" by writing in international media outlets and publishing books to appeal to the world's conscience. Through her publications, she brought a sense of history to the diplomacy she conducted.

By making use of Japanese archival data, Mesropyan stressed Apcar's role in promoting moral and financial support and facilitating the legal paperwork for refugees during World War I and even after the fall of the First Republic of Armenia. For her humanitarian activities and networking for world peace, she was called Mother of Yokohama. Until her death in 1937, she remained active in public life, making her legacy a testament





Conference participants

not only for women, but for Armenians... from the knots of patriarchy.”

The second speaker was Rosie Vartyter Aroush of UCLA, whose PhD dissertation is about “A Life of Otherness: Identity Negotiations, Family Relations and Community Experiences among LGBTQ Armenians in Los Angeles.”

In a “constant state of resistance and reconciliation in their family relations, community experiences and actualization of their contested identities,” she described the LGBTQ community’s strategies in their struggle for equality and acceptance. The Gay and Lesbian Armenian Society (GALAS) was established in Los Angeles in 1998. Others chose to create “social movements by living by example, thereby creating a discussion on organized resistance versus individual activism.”

Summing up the LGBTQ Armenian community’s activism, she concluded that it “employs visibility and queer existence as resistance and normalization as revolution.”

At the conclusion of the first Workshop/Conference day, the participants were treated to a sumptuous dinner. In spite of the long day, there were lively exchanges round the table, old acquaintances were renewed and new ones solidified.

The second day of the Workshop/Conference started with the fifth panel titled “From Velvet to? What Was Revolutionary?” chaired by Houri Berberian, who also introduced the participants to speak briefly first, then take part in a roundtable discussion.

The first speaker was Irina Ghaplanyan, First Deputy Minister of Nature Protection of the Republic of Armenia. Beside her academic and media publications, her recently published book is titled *Post-Soviet Armenia: the New National Elite and the New National Narrative*. Her presentation was about “Armenia’s Velvet Revolution: From Women’s Silent Presence to Public Speaking and Political Activism.”

She first described the 2018 Velvet Revolution as a “social, generational, and gender-based” reform movement, where women supported “environmental causes.” They acted as a “driving force, yet were non-confrontational.” Advocating “respect and tolerance,” they were ready “to redefine power,” to speak about gender equality, protection of women’s rights, and increasing women’s public and political participation. Stressing the “cooperative nature of power,” she cautioned, “Power cannot be exclusively male, we need collectively to push for more power.”

The second panelist was Anna Harutyunyan of Berlin Free University’s Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology. She has been

professionally engaged in a number of Armenian and international civil society organizations, managing programs in the fields of public education, community development, and gender equality. Her presentation titled “Women Intellectuals and the Revolution: Where Are They Now?” was relayed by Skype.

It was important to question whether a woman intellectual was independent and capable of critical thinking or belonged to a group and followed group thinking. She valued the “societal engagement” of the first type as a means of shaping opinions, enabling women “to freely contribute to strengthening society and the state.”

The third panelist was Shakh Kaftarian, consultant at the American University of Armenia, who has recently chaired an international conference about empowering girls and women in Armenia. Her presentation was titled “Resistance Comes in Many Forms.”

Describing strategic approaches to activism, she cited direct action on administrative and academic levels to empower girls and women. As for helping rural women, the support of “women in

responsible positions”, as well as the intervention of “well-connected personalities” were needed. She acknowledged it to be a “slow moving process” and that both “diplomacy and a change of strategies are needed to achieve success.”

The fourth speaker was Anna Ohanyan of Stonehill College, a Fulbright scholar whose research has been supported by Harvard University, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the German Marshall Fund, and the U.S. State Department. Among her latest books is *Russia Abroad: Driving Regional Fracture in the Post-Communist Eurasia and Beyond*. She has also written extensively in academic journals and highly regarded news magazines. Her presentation was titled “Wearing the Velvet: Women, People Power, and the Parliament.”

In view of Armenia’s authoritarian system, the speaker highlighted the women’s grassroots, non-violent participation in the Velvet Revolution. Whereas previous governments had focused on consolidating power, women had mobilized in the country’s civil society, and their participation in the revolution had helped to keep the movement peaceful. As a result, people had come out in large numbers, “making the revolution broad-based and installing democracy.”

She expected a “strong civil society and gender equality to defeat authoritarianism.” Finally, she hoped that “women’s involvement in civilian efforts can resolve conflicts and bring about peace.”

The sixth panel was a public discussion organized by the Feminist Armenian Research Collective (Fem ARC) led by Melissa Bilal and Lerna Ekmekcioglu. They exchanged ideas with the participants and answered questions from the audience. There was a discussion about the post-revolutionary phase in Armenia and the need to establish Women’s Studies Centers in both the American and the Yerevan State Universities. As words such as feminism and gender were taboo in Armenia, critical thinking was needed to redefine women’s role as agents of change for peace and security. Finally, there was consensus to organize the next annual interdisciplinary workshop/conference in Armenia.

All who attended the second annual Workshop/Conference were unanimous in qualifying it as “productive, enlightening, and inspiring.” They all commended Melissa Bilal, Lerna Ekmekcioglu, and Houri Berberian for an exceptionally well organized event and were all eager to maintain and continue their collaboration.

(<http://asbarez.com/180761/second-feminist-armenian-studies-workshop-held-at-uci/>)

## IN MEMORIAM

# Robert W. Thomson (1934-2018)

NAASR joins with a worldwide community of scholars and friends in mourning the loss of Prof. Robert W. Thomson (1934-2018), a pioneering figure in Armenian Studies as the inaugural holder of the Mashtots Chair in Armenian Studies at Harvard University (1969-1992) and subsequently as Calouste Gulbenkian Chair of Armenian Studies at Oxford (1993-2001). Prof. Thomson also served as the Director of the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (1984-89), was a founder of the Society for Armenian Studies, and was a NAASR Lifetime Member and for many years chaired NAASR's Academic Advisory Committee. He is survived by his wife Judith and his sons Jasper and Crispin.

In the words of Kevork Bardakjian and Sergio LaPorta, editors of the volume *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Robert W. Thomson on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (Brill, 2014), "Professor Robert W. Thomson's prodigious scholarship requires no introduction. Rarely has a scholar had such profound impact on so many fields of study. His research on Armenian, Syriac, Georgian, and Byzantine history and letters are indispensable for students of these realms."

A partial list of Thomson's major book publications includes *The Teaching of Saint Gregory: An Early Armenian Catechism* (1970), *An Introduction to Classical Armenian* (1975), *A Textbook of Modern Western Armenian* (with Kevork Bardakjian, 1977), *Studies in Armenian Literature and Christianity* (1994), *A Bibliography of Classical Armenian Literature to 1500 AD* (1995), *Saint Basil of Caesarea and Armenian Cosmology* (2012).

Thomson is perhaps best known for his numerous translations of Armenian texts with extensive commentary, including *Agatangeghos: History of the Armenians* (1976), *Moses Khorenatsi: History of the Armenians* (1978), *History of Vardan and the Armenian War* (1982), *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy by David the Invincible Philosopher* (1983), *History of the House of Artsrunik* (1985), *The History of Lazar Parpeci* (1991), *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos* (with James Howard-Johnston, Tim Greenwood, 1999), and *The Lawcode (Datastanagirk) of Mxitar Gos* (2000). His most recent work, *Nersēs of Lambron: Commentary on the Dormition of Saint John: Armenian Text and Annotated Translation*, appeared in 2017. These works made key Armenian texts accessible to the English-speaking world, always accompanied by Thomson's learned commentary.

During his many years at Harvard, Thomson worked closely with



*"Rarely has a scholar had such profound impact on so many fields of study. His research on Armenian, Syriac, Georgian, and Byzantine history and letters are indispensable for students of these realms."*

NAASR as an advisor, lecturer, and co-organizer of and participant in a series of conferences including International Conference on the Armenian Language (1964), Conference on Modern Armenian History (1970), International Conference on Authority and Democracy in Armenian Society (1971), Conference on Armenian Studies and Armenian Texts and Teaching (1973), and National Conference on Identity and Assimilation (1984), among others.

As the first holder of the Mashtots Chair at Harvard, established through NAASR's efforts beginning in 1955 to endow the first chair in Armenian Studies in the U.S., Thomson holds a special place in the history of Armenian Studies in America and in the world, as well as in the history of NAASR.

In his inaugural public talk as Mashtots Chair in 1969, entitled "The Hub and the Spokes," Thomson reflected with characteristic modesty on this historic role:

*But what I must stress is the result of NAASR's work in establishing a chair at Harvard. Because it was this endowment which gave permanency and proper standing to Armenian Studies, and which for the first time made possible expansion and development of the field. For this opportunity, which three months ago I was called upon to fulfill, not only Harvard University, but also the whole scholarly world, owes a debt to you—to your organisation and its indefatigable leaders,*

*and to every single member of the community who contributed time, effort, and money to make this possible. The chair, ladies and gentlemen, is the hub without which there are not spokes or wheel.*

*What then are the spokes? ... The Armenians, over the years, developed with their own native genius a unique pattern of civilisation. Within that pattern there are many threads—or spokes. It is the challenge of Armenian Studies to identify the spokes, in order to be able to understand and do justice to the originality and complexity of Armenian life, past and present....*

*So, ladies and gentlemen, to you belongs the credit for making possible not merely one man's appointment, but the training of a whole series of scholars, who will bring Armenian Studies to many universities both in this country and abroad. As years go on these programmes of Armenian, ever more numerous and widening like ripples in a pool, will reach successive generations of Armenians. As they study and learn of their nation's past, they will regain a true and proper pride in their cultural heritage. And what is more, the non-Armenian world will be brought to respect and honour the manifold achievements of the Armenian people.*



# US Warship Commissioned in Honor of Armenian-American, Paul Ignatius

BY LEEZA ARAKELIAN

**Editor's note:** Even if Paul Ignatius were not the father of NAASR Executive Director Sarah Ignatius and the author of two NAASR publications, *Now I Know in Part* and *5 x 3: Fifteen Books by Three Great Armenian Writers*, we'd be proud of his tremendous accomplishments, his integrity, and his humility.

The United States Navy has commissioned its newest, state-of-the-art destroyer—the USS Paul Ignatius (DDG 117), named after the esteemed Armenian-American World War II veteran and the 59th Secretary of the Navy under President Lyndon Johnson, Paul Robert Ignatius.

Draped in red, white, and blue bunting under a summer sky at Port Everglades on July 27, 2019, the USS Paul Ignatius served as a stage before thousands of people for the time-honored Naval tradition of bringing a ship to life while celebrating Ignatius' service to his country.

"This is a major undertaking," said Ignatius, as he marveled at the sophisticated upgrades from yore. "Today's sailors, today's chiefs, today's naval personnel are skilled technicians. It isn't like the old days of the navy when you sat around, chipping paint. Each of these men and women who man this ship are highly skilled experts in extremely complex systems to assure our safety, to assure victory in case of combat."

The USS Paul Ignatius is the 67th ship of the Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. Navy officials explain that the warship can sail up to 30 knots at sea and is armed with advanced RADAR and SONAR systems that enable the ship to engage targets in the air, on the sea, and underwater. "This ship...was designed to prevent war," said Rear Admiral William Galinis. "But if it does come to a fight...this ship...was also designed and built to ensure that it is an unfair fight."

The USS Paul Ignatius was christened in Pascagoula, Mississippi, in April 2017 by the ship's sponsor, the late Nancy Ignatius, who passed away earlier this year. "I was so pleased that my wife Nancy was chosen as the sponsor of this ship. I'm pleased that she was able to swing the champagne bottle at the christening," said Ignatius. "I wish she could have been with us today, but she's here in spirit."

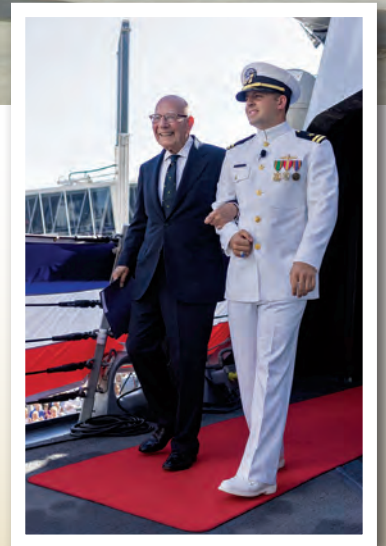
Together, Secretary Ignatius and his wife had four children: David, a *Washington Post* columnist; Adi, editor-in-chief at *Harvard Business Review*; Amy, a Superior Court judge in New Hampshire; and Sarah, Executive Director of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), who told the *Armenian Weekly*, "I am extremely proud of my father for this tremendous honor. He has lived a life of integrity

and service to this country with dedication and humility and still hasn't slowed down at age 98." The son of Armenian immigrants, Secretary Ignatius is the highest-ranking Armenian-American military official in US history.

The Ignatius' eldest granddaughter Dr. Elisa Ignatius served as the ship sponsor representative on Saturday; she referred to her late grandmother as a humble warrior. "The spirit and memories that live on in us—her family—now rest with you, the crew of the USS Paul Ignatius and to all the crews to come. Let her rare character of dedication, humility, wonder, and strength animate you and this magnificent ship."



A saluting battery from Navy Station Norfolk renders honors during the commissioning ceremony for the guided-missile destroyer USS Paul Ignatius. Port Everglades, Fla., July 27, 2019 (Photo: U.S. Navy Chief Intelligence Specialist Alexandria Fogel)



Then, in a rather exciting moment that signaled the commissioning crew of sailors standing at attention to break formation, Dr. Ignatius proudly exclaimed the first order, "Man our ship, and bring her to life!" Two by two, the officers jogged to their positions on the USS Paul Ignatius to thunderous applause.

The USS Paul Ignatius will be homeported in Mayport, Florida.

(*Armenian Weekly*, July 31, 2019)

Ignatius at the commissioning ceremony for his namesake naval destroyer, USS Paul Ignatius. Port Everglades, Fla. (Photo Commander, Naval Surface Force, US Pacific Fleet)

## ANEWERA

*Building on  
Our Legacy*

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2019**  
**GALA - ROYAL SONESTA HOTEL**  
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CAMBRIDGE, MA 02142

6:00 PM COCKTAIL RECEPTION  
7:00 PM SEATED DINNER  
PERFORMANCE BY  
OPERATIC SENSATION  
**ISABEL BAYRAKDARIAN**  
ACCOMPANIED BY  
**THE BORROMEO**  
**STRING QUARTET**

DISTINGUISHED HONOREE:  
**DR. VARTAN GREGORIAN**  
PRESIDENT, THE CARNEGIE  
CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

MASTER OF CEREMONIES:  
**DAVID IGNATIUS**  
COLUMNIST FOR  
*THE WASHINGTON POST* AND NOVELIST

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
ARMENIAN STUDIES AND RESEARCH**

### ATTEND OUR GALA TO CELEBRATE A NEW ERA AND SECURE THE FUTURE.

The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), one of the world's leading Armenian Studies centers, promotes knowledge of Armenian culture, history, and identity, and connects scholars with a broad public worldwide to build a global community.

At this pivotal moment, NAASR is celebrating 65 years of achievement while transforming our goals for the future to welcome the next generation and launch a beautiful, new, state-of-the-art research center and gathering place.

The Gala is the centerpiece of the Grand Opening weekend marking NAASR's new era. Please gather with us to celebrate and secure the future at our Gala on Saturday, November 2, 2019.



## Connect with NAASR

NAASR is now on Instagram – @NAASRnotes. You can still like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, watch us on YouTube, and network with us on LinkedIn. However you connect with NAASR online, we thank you for liking, commenting, and sharing!



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## NAASR's Website Gets a New Look

If you haven't already visited it, here is an early look at NAASR's updated website. This new design, like the new building, takes on a more modern look while still incorporating motifs from traditional Armenian decorative arts. The user experience is improved through clearer menus, reorganized content, and added search and sort functionality in the bookstore. We are very excited to launch this new and improved version of our current web experience!



Screenshot of the new [www.naasr.org](http://www.naasr.org), designed by Knar Hovakimyan



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