

**Lerna Ekmekçioğlu.** *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. Illustrations. 240 pp. \$85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-9610-1.

**Talin Suciyan.** *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-Genocide Society, Politics and History.* Library of Ottoman Studies Series. London: I. B. Tauris, 2016. xvi + 280 pp. \$110.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-78453-171-3.

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The title observation, taken from Lerna Ekmekçioğlu's *Recovering Armenia* (p. 29), points to the puzzle at the heart of both works: how did Armenian genocide survivors live in a country of perpetrators who existed in a constant state of denial, not only of the genocide but also indeed of the Armenians' cultural and social existence in pre-genocide Anatolia? This is the broader context in which the authors examine the political subjectivity of Armenians in the aftermath of the First World War and the interwar era (Ekmekçioğlu) and up until the early 1950s with a focus on the post-Second World War era (Talin Suciyan). The aim of this review essay is not only to outline the arguments of these books but also to discuss the direction of scholarship on the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey at this critical moment, marked by the hundred-year anniversary of the genocide. Both books are timely contributions to the field and tell the untold history of Armenians in post-genocide Turkey, a phrase shared by both subtitles. They also share the additional virtue of having been written by engaged scholars who themselves belong to those Armenians who were born and raised in a perpetrator society.

One should start by acknowledging Ekmekçioğlu's and Suciyan's greatest (double) contribution to the historiography: writing the history of Armenians in Turkey and the history of Turkey through Armenian sources. Furthermore, Ekmekçioğlu adds to the existing scholarship a gender dimension, focusing on the Armenian feminist Hayganush Mark's journal *Hay Gin* (Armenian woman), which represents "an alternative to the mainstream discourses of how to be an Armenian in Turkey" (p. 16), whereas Suciyan's scholarship is enhanced by the impressive scope of her research. In terms of theoretical framework, I am enthralled with the potential in Ekmekçioğlu's gender dimension, particularly her focus on the recovering of Armenia through the bodies of women and children in the aftermath of the war and the role of Armenian women in later stages of that process in the 1920s and early 1930s. Suciyan's approach to the social and political environment within which Armenians lived after the genocide and the ways in which they internalized the mechanisms of suppression is in itself a major contribution to the field. She aptly calls it—relying on sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, among others—the "social habitus of post-genocide Turkey" (p. 3), a framework she applies throughout the book, and

one could say that it is an exemplar of ways to incorporate a sociological framework for understanding a historical question. A less pronounced but by no means less significant theoretical contribution of Suciyan is her discussion of the applicability of the term “diaspora” to Armenians in Istanbul, who were displaced in their homeland while the history of that homeland was purposefully suppressed, if not erased, in public. Her call for changing the definition of diaspora to include the experiences of Armenians in Turkey is noteworthy.

Ekmekçioğlu’s *Recovering Armenia* consists of five chapters with an introduction and a brief conclusion. Her introduction dwells on the under-examined topic of the history of Armenian feminism in the late Ottoman Empire and in Republican Turkey (she is also the coeditor with Melissa Bilal of one of the very few books on the topic, *Bir Adalet Feryadı: Osmanlı’dan Türkiye’ye Beş Ermeni Feminist* [2nd ed., 2010]). This sets the framework in which she examines the entanglement of Armenian feminism with the transformation of Armenians from subjects to citizens and their minoritization in post-genocide society. The first chapter, “The Rebirth of a Nation,” is an examination of the construction of the Armenian nation through women after the genocide. Here Ekmekçioğlu highlights some of the themes that she has examined elsewhere,[1] such as the incorporation of Armenian women, who survived in relatively higher numbers because of their gender, and of children who were abducted into the homes of Muslims. Such developments changed ideas among the Armenian elite about chastity and patrilinearity, leading to the inclusion of Armenian victims of sexual violence, abducted women, and the children of mixed marriages within the national community. In the pre-genocide era such practices were unacceptable. Ekmekçioğlu also makes a critical point by linking the “national” policy of *vorpahavak*, or collection of orphans, to the hope of making territorial gains which would require the populating of lands.

Through this proposition she highlights the close connections between territorial aims, reproduction, and gender—a policy pursued by various war-ridden societies.

In the second chapter, the reader is introduced in detail to Hayganush Mark, her journal *Hay Gin*, and other Armenian feminists in post-war Istanbul. We learn about the emergence of the Armenian Women’s Association (AWA) in that period, along with *Hay Gin*, both of which campaigned for a women’s emancipation movement that “would not detract from but complement [the nation’s] revival” (p. 53). In this context, the emancipated woman was seen as “the new woman”—not completely broken away from the traditional or “old woman” but able to adapt to the needs of the time and dedicated to serving the nation. These needs ranged from convincing the Allied forces in occupied Istanbul of the “civilized” status of Armenians by demonstrating the expanded women’s rights in their community, to actively attempting to take roles in community administration. The struggle and confrontation with male-dominated politics show the limits of feminism in the period, when compromise was expected for the sake of national unity.

In the third chapter, Ekmekçioğlu provides readers the history of the 1922 exodus of Armenian intellectuals, including feminists, from Istanbul, the consequences of which are examined in the following chapters. “A Tamed Minority,” the fourth chapter of *Recovering Armenia*, scrutinizes the Armenian community and communal politics in the context of Kemalist Turkey. Ekmekçioğlu shows the ways in which the Kemalist state and society encroached on the rights granted to Armenians in the Treaty of Lausanne. The state limited the sense of communal belonging and its preservation to family, church, and community schools. The author calls this constant enforcement of Turkishness coupled with the denial of citizenship rights a “secular dhimmitude” (p. 106). With this term she emphasizes the continuity of certain

state practices related to non-Muslims from the empire to the secular republic, and underscores that these relations were contractual, rather than based on equal rights of citizens. As a manifestation of the internalization of this status, something new but definitely not alien, Ekmekçioğlu points to the competition among some communal leaders to show their loyalties to the Kemalist state. Yet the author also highlights certain aspects of the new regime, most notably its modernism, which attracted many Armenians. The reforms allowed Armenians to condition themselves as a part of a modern (one may read European) society which destroyed some of the visible markers of distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, such as the veiling of women.

The last chapter of the book is an examination of Armenian feminism in Turkey in the 1920s and early 1930s. The main axis of the chapter is the question of domesticity, the limits of which were constantly pushed by Mark, who not only called for the active participation of Armenian women in communal institutions but also demanded greater domesticity among men. In her call for women's participation in Armenian communal institutions, Mark fought against "dolls," a certain kind of women, whom she described as immature and incapable of exercising social and political rights. At the same time, however, she distinguished the new Armenian women she wanted to create from the character type of *La Garçonne*, namely, the woman who rejected all forms of modesty and who, for many of her contemporaries, "represented a full negation of the Armenian tradition" (p. 140). Ekmekçioğlu shows the anxieties that arose within a decade after the genocide around Armenian girls' social behaviors (especially given the fact that they were living in a hostile environment), which led to condemnation of their sexual misconduct. She highlights the way in which Armenian women's bodies were closely associated with the public image of the post-genocide Armenian community in Turkey. The book ends with the rather curious termination of *Hay*

*Gin*, which was closed down by Turkish authorities in 1933, most probably due to its pro-Allies stance in the aftermath of the First World War.

*Recovering Armenia*, in the absence of archives of the Istanbul Patriarchate open to researchers, relies heavily on the Armenian press, mainly *Hay Gin*, but also uses memoirs and photographs. Ekmekçioğlu's inclusion and engagement with images as source material shows the author's openness to incorporating the sources and methods that are not conventionally used by historians and is another significant contribution of the book to the field, one that should be emulated by others. Yet, as an additional step, one may also think of the public circulation of these images as an element deserving of analysis. For instance, the image titled "Armenian Children Defending Their Fatherland" from *Deacon's Almanac*, published in the summer of 1920 (not 1921), might have gained a completely new meaning right after its publication, as Kemalist troops overran Armenian forces in the fall of that year, and the Sovietization of Armenia soon followed.[2] The hope for the future at the time of its publication must have turned to despair and anxiety within a few months. One wonders whether a similar story holds true for other images, especially those that include problematic figures like Archbishop Aslanian, two times *locum tenens* of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate in the first twenty-five years of the republic—a polarizing figure in the community and the main protagonist in the last chapter of Suciyan's book.

Ekmekçioğlu's pioneering book opens up a number of important fields that await examination by later generations of scholars. Among them, I will point out one of the most critical: intercommunal relations, especially the struggles of feminists against conservative power holders in the community. Ekmekçioğlu, in her discussion of this issue, touches on the role of power hierarchies between Armenian men and Turkish authorities, and particularly the destruction of Ar-

menian communal institutions in the face of Kemalist state encroachment. She claims that the slow expansion of women's participation in the communal institutions should be understood as a conjunction of these asymmetrical power relations. Taking gender as a social field in which power is articulated, one needs to know more about the particular coalescence of these power relations at the state and communal levels. For instance, why was a woman not taken onto the committee of the Surp P'rkich Hospital until 1931, given that the state did not encroach on that institution, or at least did not do so as strongly as it did on the Patriarchal Education Council? This could be related to the broader question of the attitudes of Armenian intellectuals and power holders (all men) toward feminism in the 1920s. Ekmekçioğlu shows the reader a glimpse of this tension through Yervant Odian's satirical caricature of Mark, another image that Ekmekçioğlu cleverly uses to demonstrate that there were multiple attitudes in play. Through *Hay Gin*, Ekmekçioğlu examines Mark's engagement with criticism directed at Armenian feminists and therefore notes the existence of such negative attitudes. However, more research is needed on this point to understand the power relations in the Armenian community and Turkish society, with gender as a part of them. As Ekmekçioğlu exhaustively demonstrates, the Armenian press of the period remains an invaluable source for understanding the extent of this dimension and the remarkable power of Armenian feminism in a critical era of Armenian history.

Suciyan's study is an in-depth survey of the history of the Armenian community in the post-genocide environment of republican Turkey before 1950, the point marking the establishment of the multiparty regime and the country's firm commitment to its Western allies in the post-World War II order. In the first (and longest) chapter of the book, Suciyan examines the ways in which "the post-genocidal habitus of denial" was formed by discriminating against and criminalizing Ar-

menians from the very beginning of the republic (p. 21). She dwells on a variety of issues extending from the 1920s to the late 1930s, which are barely discussed in histories of Turkey but were fundamental to its foundation. The "mechanisms and practices in which denial maintained its pivotal role" include expulsion of Armenians from the provinces to Istanbul as a result of continuous harassment and insecurity (p. 90); forced assimilation through imposing a ban on opening schools, although it was a right provided by the Treaty of Lausanne; destruction of Armenian cultural heritage; and the policing of Armenians before and after the annexation of Alexandretta (Hatay) to Turkey.

The second chapter shows the reader the legal context of republican Turkey in which the communal and institutional rights of Armenians, based on the Armenian Constitution (*Sahmanadrut'iwn* or *Nizamname*) of 1863, were gradually erased by the Kemalist policies of the 1920s and 1930s—a topic touched on by Ekmekçioğlu as well, and which attests to the impact of these reforms on the Armenian community. Suciyan examines one such encroachment on a central institution of the community, the foundations (*vakıf*). The state took over the role of appointing superintendents to the administrative positions of community foundations (or sometimes not appointing them, leaving the institution in limbo) and established a system that lasted from 1938 to 1949. Suciyan makes a critical point about this policy, namely, that it abrogates their democratic character by "creating a *de facto* reality with no other option than the enforcement of spontaneous regulations as needed" (p. 101). This policy remains valid to this day in terms of the state's approach to various Armenian institutions, including the current election crisis in the patriarchate.

In the second chapter and particularly in the third ("State Surveillance and anti-Armenian Campaigns"), Suciyan dwells on another central question: who represents the Armenian commu-

nity in the absence of communal structures? Herein lies another strength of the book, as the author presents the reader with highly complex power struggles within the Armenian community specifically concerning this question. She highlights the role of newspapers and their editors as the only means of constituting a sphere within which ideas about the community could be articulated and relations with the outside world (i.e., the state) negotiated. Suciyan also examines the state policies of scrutinizing the relations between Armenians in Turkey and outside, particularly through control over the circulation of publications and coverage of news. The third chapter also examines the extremely difficult political period for Armenians in Turkey in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. At this time, on the one hand, the Armenian National Council of America (ANCA) raised territorial claims at the San Francisco Conference of 1945, and on the other hand, Joseph Stalin raised claims for territory and call for repatriation of Armenians to the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. What was important in both the state's surveillance of relations between different Armenian communities and the various claims on historical Armenian territories was that all of these developments compelled Armenians in Turkey to prove themselves loyal to the state—a manifestation of the discrimination against them.

The last chapter of *The Armenians in Modern Turkey* examines the patriarchal election crisis around the *locum tenens* Archbishop Aslanian between 1944 and 1950, a post he held for the second time after 1922-27. Suciyan treats this crisis around the personality and policies of the archbishop as both a multilayered intra-communal and a pan-Armenian power struggle over communal leadership. The author neatly shows how the community's struggle resulted from the state of the communal administration, which had been undermined by the Kemalist regime over the preceding two decades. In that period the governor of Istanbul had intervened to suppress communal

regulations; the community had become increasingly divided over the process of election, as had the newspapers; and Ejdmiaztzin, the main seat of the Armenian Apostolic Church, had become more than ever a political actor—all of which goes to show the decrepit nature of the Armenian communal administration in Turkey after 1915.

Suciyan, like Ekmekçioğlu, relies primarily on the Armenian press in the republican era, but complements it with an immense variety of sources both in Armenian and Turkish, such as state documents available at the Prime Ministry Republican Archives and a number of Turkish newspapers. It shows the author's successful answer to the question she poses at the beginning of the book: "What is the meaning of speaking when no one is there to listen?" (p. 2). Referring to such a wide range of sources in the main body of text, however, might sometimes be exhausting for a reader who is not familiar with those sources. For instance, the use of titles translated into Turkish rather than the original (for example, referring to R. Kévorkian's *Les Arméniens dans l'Empire ottoman à la veille du génocide* as *Ermeniler* (French edition 1992; Turkish edition 2012) may be distracting for readers who do not speak Turkish, an issue that might be taken into consideration for later editions of the book. Likewise, occasionally the reader wants longer quotes from oft-mentioned and critical newspapers columns like Zaven Biberyan's "Enough Is Enough" (*"Al kē bawē,"* published in *Nor Lur* in 1946). A full translation in an appendix could have been useful especially for attaining the goal of showing the importance of such works for the history of Turkey.

I think the main limitation of the book (and probably the only significant one) is its organization. Especially the first two lengthy chapters cover a long period and a wide assortment of topics. These might have been organized into shorter and more coherent chapters, which could then have served as a buildup for the two final chapters of the book, which constitute its core. Having

said this, with its current structure and emphasis, Suciyan's *The Armenians in Modern Turkey* also understates its original contribution to the field. It is much more than a book "emphasizing the period 1944-50" (p. 12): the first two chapters provide a detailed picture of the period immediately following World War I up to the 1930s. Some may find the title of *Armenians in Modern Turkey*, with its pronounced emphasis on the post-World War II era, to be contradictory. I believe changes in organization could easily dispel this mistaken impression.

There are three other issues related to studies on Armenians in the late Ottoman Empire and republican era whose discussion here will, I believe, contribute to the review of Ekmekçioğlu's and Suciyan's pioneering works. First, as the field of Armenian studies develops, the next step might be deeper interaction with "similar" experiences. Without trivializing the catastrophe of the genocide and its continuation by social and structured state-sponsored denial in Turkey, the new generation of scholars should think of ways to address both the uniqueness of the post-genocide Armenian community in Turkey and certain characteristics it shares with other cases. A broader contextualization of the role of feminism in various projects of nation construction in the aftermath of the First World War (in Ekmekçioğlu's study) and of structural discrimination against minorities after instances of mass violence (in Suciyan's work) could help the field to establish firm bridges with other histories. Both works mention other cases and utilize theories based on other historical experiences, yet through deeper theoretical and comparative engagement with them, the study of the Armenian community after the genocide can further contribute to the field of study of mass violence.

The second issue is also related to the question of the uniqueness of post-genocide Armenian experience but from a different perspective: the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

Both authors rightfully show continuities from empire to republic, through such conceptual frameworks as "secular-dhimmihood" and "internal colonization," to give an example from each work. Yet, in addition to their contribution to the field, in my opinion, both books demonstrate the urgent need to conduct further research on the history of Ottoman Armenians. For instance, deeper knowledge of such topics as the reconstruction of the Armenian community after the Hamidian massacres, which witnessed gendered violence, mass conversion, and orphans (orphans are examined in detail by Nazan Maksudyan in different works including her *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 2014); "the woman question" discussed by Armenian intellectuals, including the feminists and the political elite during the constitutional era before World War I; the functioning of the Armenian communal administration outside party lines and its relation with the revolutionary (and to a degree secular modernist) Muslim elite; the persistent structural discrimination against Armenians, such as living with the perpetrators of the Hamidian massacres; and intra- and pan-Armenian struggles within community politics, a major theme of nineteenth-century Armenian history, will all provide students of both Armenian history and the history of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey a wider and stronger base in their approach to later periods. One example will illustrate this point: Ekmekçioğlu, after briefly mentioning the existence of different organizations established by Armenian women in the Ottoman Empire, claims that "it was only in the postwar era, however, that women formed an association that did not have a specific goal attached to its name. The Armenian Women's Association [AWA] ..." (p. 54). Yet there were other organizations with no goals in their names, such as Hay Tknants' Miut'iwn (Armenian Ladies' Union), which was established in Istanbul in 1909. Examination of the organic and intellectual relations between this union and the AWA could give us a better idea about the continuities

and ruptures within Armenian feminism in the pre- and the post-genocide eras.[3]

Last but not least, before concluding this review, I must praise the intersectionality on display in these books—race/ethnicity in both works and also gender in Ekmekçioğlu’s book—with one reservation concerning their lack of attention to class. Perusing both books, one sees the shadow of class differences (understood in terms of economic, sociocultural positions and place of origin) as a dividing factor in the Armenian community after 1918. Glimpses of this issue in *Recovering Armenia* are visible between the lines in cases like the Istanbul Armenians’ reluctance to marry rape victims of the genocide who are from the provinces and prefer to marry among themselves or references to a maid who donated her money to a communal charity and was considered an exemplary woman although she was “originally from a modest strata” (p. 58). Likewise, Suciyan’s brief but very critical inclusion of the socialist-communist Armenians born in the 1920s and their gathering around the newspaper *Nor Or* (1945-46) shows the importance of class, entangled with ethnicity, in the Armenian community in post-genocide Turkey. In a similar vein and as an addition to the point raised in the previous paragraph, one wonders about the participation of Armenian workers in the labor movement in Istanbul in 1919-22, which represents a historical movement in thinking of the alternative ways of constructing the nation, and counterweighs the voices of the elite who are dominant in the press.

Ekmekçioğlu’s *Recovering Armenia* and Suciyan’s *The Armenians in Modern Turkey* are among the pioneering studies in the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. They make original contributions to the scholarship, ranging from their use of sources to their content and methodology. They will be a very significant part of the curriculum of graduate students specializing not only in the modern Middle East but also in the histories of gender and ethno-religious

groups, and post-mass-violence societies. Both works cannot be praised enough for opening new pathways for original research, asking new questions, and writing a new history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

#### Notes

[1]. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “A Climate for Abduction, A Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55 (2013): 522–553. For criticism of certain points in the article, see Vahe Tachjian, “Mixed Marriage, Prostitution, Survival: Reintegrating Armenian Women into Post-Ottoman Cities,” in *Woman and the City, Women in the City*, ed. Nazan Maksudyan (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 104n20, 105n30.

[2]. Both the cover and title page give the publication date as 1920 and the publisher as Manavyan. The dates of letters and columns in the almanac are from the summer of 1920. For the almanac, see [http://greenstone.flib.sci.am/gsd/collect/hajgirqn/book/sarkavag1921\\_index.html](http://greenstone.flib.sci.am/gsd/collect/hajgirqn/book/sarkavag1921_index.html) (accessed April 29, 2017).

[3]. The Armenian press of the time covered the activities of the Armenian Ladies’ Union. See also Yep’reṃ V. Poghoṣean, *Patmut’iwn Hay Mshakut’ayin Ėnkerut’iwnneru*, vol. 1 (Vienna: Mkhit’arean Tparan, 1957), 156-158.

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