



**Between the Memories and the Present: on the
Armenian Genocide**

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List of Acronyms

AGMI	Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute
CRA	Computerized Resonance Analysis
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
SSRA	Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia
UN	United Nations
WWI	The First World War
WWII	The Second World War

Abstract

This research paper concerns the official discourse of the Republic of Armenia on the Armenian Genocide (*Mets Yeghern* – literally meaning “Great Crime” in Armenian). It explores the official narratives on the massacres of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey through transmission and representation of the genocide memories by almost four generations of Armenians. It analyzes the process of collectivization and unification of these memories through two sources: the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute and the Armenian government protocols, memorandums, commemoration documents related to the Armenian Genocide. The research paper attempts to analyze critically the power-knowledge relations that the state produces by mainstreaming memories and shaping a unified history about the Armenian nation.

Finally, this research is about a healing process a researcher undergoes writing about painful knowledge that is a product of specific memories. For this healing process helps remove the shackles of victimhood, leading to self-reconciliation and spiritual praxis.

Relevance to Development Studies

Unlike those research works on the Armenian Genocide which analyze the past events from the victim-perpetrator perspective, this research paper aims to understand the state's role in production, transmission and representation of the Armenian Genocide memories.

Both Armenia and Turkey are nowadays facing new social, political and geopolitical challenges which are crucially important for the stability and peace in the region. These new challenges and developments demand holistic and state-of-the-art studies that target at the future generations. With that being said, it is important to understand that certain events of the past, either studied or neglected, might transform reality or affect the lives of individuals directly or indirectly involved in them.

The punishment and prevention of genocide as the most heinous crime against humanity is an essential precondition for human development. However, the whole paradigm of genocide prevention and historical awareness, which promotes a binary and universalistic narrative about "victims" and "perpetrators", tends to focus solely on the punishment and prevention of atrocities, without a self-critical analysis of history as a conglomerate of the present, future and the past. In this case, memories are regarded as reflections of the past, detached from the present and the future. Genocide memories become de-contextualized symbols which, like in the case of the Armenian Genocide, may represent a nation. A self-critical and self-reflexive analysis of the national past and collective memories enables to scrutinize the process when the dominant discourses naturalize specific categories of collective identities.

This research paper goes beyond the static historical analysis of the Armenian Genocide, rather focusing on a self-reflexive and analytic approach to history - a process which should aim at justice-seeking, without victimizing any group. If the remembrance becomes a didactic process, the awareness and conscious-raising will become mechanical and unequivocal, “selecting” particular stories of particular groups and making them “universal”, “publicly accepted” and, eventually, “impersonal”...

Keywords

[Armenian Genocide, Republic of Armenia, memory, commemoration, state discourse, hegemony]

Chapter 1. Introduction

During WWI, the Committee of Union of Progress or the leading Young Turk party of the Ottoman Empire carried out mass exterminations and deportations of Armenian populations, thus committing the first genocide in the 20th century (Hovhannisian 1998:14). The Turkish government "openly disregarded the fundamental obligation to defend its own citizens" and concentrated its efforts to only one element of the population (ibid.). Estimates of the Armenian dead vary from 600,000 to 2 million (Hovhannisian 1998:15). The state-planned systematic cleansings and displacements of Armenians covered all the vilayets (administrative divisions) of Anatolia or Asia Minor and other regions of the Ottoman Empire. The massacres reached their peak in April 1915 when thousands of Armenians were deported to Syria and eight years after the turmoil, Armenians disappeared from their homeland (Adalian 2009:117).

According to Robertson (2009:85), "there is no doubt that the Ottoman Empire ordered the deportation of up to two million Armenians from Anatolia and other provinces: they were marched towards Syria and hundreds of thousands of them died en route from disease, starvation and attack."

Another author, Smith (1995:2), states that from 1915 to 1917, the Young Turk regime in the Ottoman Empire carried out a systematic, premeditated, centrally-planned genocide against the Armenian people. Despite the vast amount of evidence that points to the historical reality of the Armenian genocide—eyewitness accounts, official archives, photographic evidence, the reports of diplomats, and the testimony of survivors—denial of the Armenian genocide by successive regimes in Turkey has gone on from 1915 to the present (Smith 1995:2).

After the decay of the Ottoman Empire, the modern Turkish state of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk claimed it carried no responsibility towards the acts of the Young Turks during WWI, denying to label the mass deportations of Armenians as "genocide". In 1920, the Treaty of Sevres¹ was adopted, urging Turkey to recognize the independence of the newly-established Armenian Republic and assist the recovery of the war-torn areas in Anatolia. However, the Treaty remained on paper. According to Hovhannisyán (1980:36), "in September 1920, Mustafa Kemal ordered the Turkish armies to breach the frontier and crush the existing Armenian republic in the Caucasus." Having no choice but to cede the territories of Western Armenia, the Eastern part of the newly independent Republic of Armenia joined the Soviet Union and the Armenian Question was silenced. Under the Soviet regime, the government of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia mentioned little about the mass deportations and massacres of their countrymen in the Ottoman Empire. The failure of the Treaty of Sevres launched an era of oblivion and silence which was broken only in the 1960s.

In 1948, the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Genocide was adopted, which legally frames the term "genocide".² This was

¹ The Treaty of Sevres was signed on 10 August 1920, as a treaty of peace between the principal Allied Powers and Turkey, but was never ratified (Montgomery 1972:775).

² The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, *adopted by*

then that lawyers, scholars and thinkers such as Raphael Lemkin, Albert Camus, Hannah Arendt, Leo Kuper and many others started to single out the characteristics of genocide. Referring to the Armenian massacres and the Jewish Holocaust, Raphael Lemkin coins the term “genocide” “as a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at a destruction of essential foundations of the life of the national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.” (Melson 1992:2).

The adoption of the Genocide Convention did not hold the modern state of Turkey accountable for the mass deportations and systematic killings of Armenians in Anatolia. Moreover, the world-spread Armenian Diaspora outside the borders of the Soviet Union was commemorating the Armenian Genocide every year, but for the Soviet Armenia, the topic was a taboo.

In April 1965, prompted by the worldwide commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, efforts were made to influence journalists, teachers, and public officials by telling "the other side of the story" (Smith 1995: 3). Another author, Darieva (2008:96), states that in the Soviet past before 1965, the Armenian loss was never publicly articulated in the language of victims, perpetrators, and recognition. Only after expatriates from the world-spread Armenian Diaspora decided to return to their historical land did the protest against the soviet taboo on the Armenian Question break out in April 1965, with thousands of protesters marching in the capital city of Yerevan, carrying slogans that claimed back their lost lands, urged the Soviet government to commemorate the Armenian Genocide and include the Armenian Question into the school curricula.

In April 1965, half a century after the catastrophic event, a closed session of the Armenian Communist Party, dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian tragedy, was organized in the Opera House building in Yerevan (Darieva 2008:96). Since then, April 24th has been marked as the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day.

Although 98 years have passed since the mass deportations and extermination of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian Genocide discourse has been reviving, getting new shapes and public interpretations by the current government of the Independent Republic of Armenia. As Huyssen (2000:26) states, it is important to recognize that while memory discourses appear to be global in one register, in their core they remain tied to the histories of specific nations and states. In case of modern Armenia, memories of WWI have been framed, conceptualized and then internationalized by the state apparatus which has been a key actor to spread official Yerevan’s narrative on the Armenian Genocide. These memories of Mets Yeghern become most visual on the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day on April 24th.

On that day, ten thousands of people from Armenia and Armenian communities across the world organize a pilgrimage to the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Tsitsernakaberd (Fortress of Swallows) in Yerevan. The commemoration begins with liturgy, followed by the speech of the president of the Republic of Armenia, appealing the governments of other countries and Armenians all over the world to recognize and commemorate the Armenian Genocide, condemning Turkey’s official denial.

1.1. The Research Problem: The History, Memories and the State

This brief overview on the historical, political and legal domains on the Armenian Genocide is necessary to describe the context in which specific memories on the Armenian Genocide were hegemonized by the state apparatus. This background information is crucial in understanding the *situatedness* of the state-articulated memories and their relation to the knowledge that the state produces regarding the Armenian Genocide. The chronological review of the Armenian Issue aims to show how the state hegemonized specific memories in specific historical contexts. Finally, this brief overview is important for my study, as it attempts to explain *how* and *under what circumstances* the state produces specific knowledge on the Armenian Genocide. Foucault's "warning", according to Trouillot (2012:28), can be useful in understanding when and where the knowledge was produced: "I don't believe that the question of 'who exercises power?' can be resolved unless that other question '*how does it happen?*' is resolved at the same time."

Levis' theory about an individual's anthropological memory (Levis 1991:233) serves as a basis for the definition of collective memories of past trauma, being linked with the notions of "the selective amnesia" and "remembrance". It defines collective memories as a conglomerate of individual memories which form specific power relations capable of reflecting the historical truth or deny it (Oron 2005:1). This research paper rather focuses on memories that the state selects, articulates, transfers and then hegemonizes. This "selection" is situated in a specific historical, political, legal, social and cultural context.

The question here is how do collective memories of genocidal atrocities formulate truth claims in the state-produced hegemonic discourses on the Armenian Genocide? Since this kind of research deals with the nexus between the "forgotten" and the "remembered", the task is to analyze why only certain type of memories form a unified history of a nation. Why are those memories articulated repetitively, whereas others might remain unstudied and unimportant?

When it concerns memories of genocide, one may face a dilemma whether these memories can distort the so-called history and lead to the "othering"? According to Staub et al (2003:722), "in extreme cases [they] may give rise to a siege mentality, a core societal belief that the other groups have negative intentions toward a group, which stands alone in a hostile world."

After the post-WWI historical and political developments that predestined the fate of the entire Armenian nation and transformed the territory of the modern state of Armenia, the Armenian claims became strongly linked with the ideas of statehood and national identity. "The tragedy they [the survivors] lived resulted in the formation of a new, powerful layer of collective and historical memory, one with a deep emotional quality and long-lasting effect." (Marutyan 2010:24).

According to Marutyan (2010:24), after the establishment of the Soviet rule in Armenia on December 2, 1920, talks about the Genocide gradually died down, discussion on Armenian-Turkish antagonism was not encouraged and anything national began to be seen as negative and unacceptable. In other words, the Armenian state chose the "deliberate amnesia" to be in line with the

Communist revolutionary idea of socialism-building without nationalism.

During the years of Joseph Stalin, "the Soviet Union claimed to represent politically, culturally and morally superior modernity – a new civilization" (Hedin 2004:166). There seemed to be no place for past grievances that could hamper the development of the Soviet people. Moreover, the socialism-building demanded "getting rid" of certain social and ethnic groups that could "threaten" the process. Citing empirically proved academic literature and archives, Martin (1998:817) argues that the Soviet nation-building did lead to ethnic cleansings and ethnic terror against segmented and stigmatized nationalities, while leaving nation-building policies in place for the majority of non-stigmatized nationalities.

The period of the Great Terror of 1937-1938 was marked with arrests, mass executions, exiles and murders of various groups, labeled as "the enemies" of the Soviet people. Martin (1998:818) compares the map of cleansings with an "L-shaped swath of territory extending southward from Leningrad through the Balkans, and then eastward across southern Ukraine and Turkey into the Caucasus region."

The Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia that kept only one-tenth of its historical territory was indeed in the "L-shaped swath" and it remains a question as to how the newly established state, which was supposed to follow the Moscow-centered Bolshevik modernization in order to build up new economy, culture and history, could possibly talk about genocide under a regime which was "removing" certain ethnic or social groups.

Amid the socialism-building, the political leadership of Soviet Armenia was addressing new challenges, including the repatriation of world-spread survivors of the Genocide. "The caravans of repatriates of Western Armenians, deprived of their homes and Motherland, followed each other to Eastern Armenia, from 1920 to 1930, from Turkey, France and Greece and, subsequently, in 1946-1948, a mass Repatriation was organized from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, France, Greece, the Balkan states and from distant America..." (Svazlyan 2011:66).

The repatriates could settle in the territory of Soviet Armenia and become citizens of the Soviet Union, but they were deprived of the right to articulate their history in public. In times of the Great Terror, the Moscow-centered policy of the Soviet Republic of Armenia regarding the Armenian Issue resembled a "*chosen amnesia*". "[The] chosen amnesia about past divisions, is less a mental failure than a conscious strategy to cope with living in proximity to 'killers' or 'traitors' "(Buckley-Zistel 2006:132). My arguments is that the early Soviet Armenian state chose to "forget" the memories of the massacres, living in geographic, political, economic and cultural proximity with Turkey³.

In spite of the Communist Party's "chosen amnesia" and negligence to raise the Armenian Issue, the repatriates were transmitting their memories through verbal articulation and symbolic representation of the Great Crime. My further analysis will show how the state controlled, reproduced and used those memories which formed a new national ideology and collective history of a genocide-torn nation.

Because the Communist Party of Armenia repressed the articulation

³ According to Marutyan (2010:24), the Soviet government provided assistance in gold and armaments to the Kemalist movement in Turkey in August-September 1920, which later resulted in a long-lasting collaboration between the Soviet Union and Turkey.

of the WWI memories on an institutional or formal level, the taboo later resulted in resistance from eyewitnesses and survivors who wanted to "tell the truth" about the past. This resistance produced specific knowledge about the dispersed Armenian nation that built an independent nation-state almost seventy-five years after witnessing and experiencing the Genocide.

In the case of Armenia, the understanding of the state-produced discourse would be incomplete without the analysis of the imperatives of the international law and the problems regarding their interpretation and application to the Armenian Genocide. At first glance, it seems that the international law has little to do with the construction of memories. However, when it comes to genocide described as the most heinous crime against humanity, the international legal responsibility becomes a bridge that links the efforts to reconcile the so-called perpetrators and victims. On the other hand, the legal framework becomes crucial in understanding how the performance or non-performance of certain international obligations shapes state-produced narratives regarding the issue.

Amid the myriad of historical documents, eyewitness accounts, photos and video materials indicating the Young Turks' intent to cleanse the entire Armenian population from Anatolia, the fact of the Armenian Genocide remains a disputable issue in the international law. In more simplistic words, not only Turkey, but a number of countries, including the United States, do not legally recognize the mass exterminations and deportations of Armenians in the Ottoman Turkey as genocide. The word "legal" is crucial here, since after the adoption of the Genocide Convention, issues related to genocide were transferred to the legal field.

Vardanyan (2009:66) states that the Republic of Armenia more than 15 years offers the right to transmit unilaterally, on the basis of Article 9 of the Genocide Convention, the issue of the Responsibility of the Republic of Turkey for the consideration to ICJ. Despite the fact that the Republic of Armenia is not a victim state because it did not exist back in 1915, as a State party of the Genocide Convention and as an Applicant, the Republic of Armenia has the function to demand the Republic of Turkey to restitute the rights of the victims of the crime and compensate for the damages caused by the mass deportations and exterminations in Anatolia which belongs to the modern state of Turkey.

The problem, however, is that over the past century, none of the three republics of Armenia approached the issue of the Armenian Genocide from the perspectives of restitution and compensation.⁴ At specific historical moments, the state was selecting and collectivizing certain memories that were only presenting "truth claims" regarding a martyred, dehumanized and victimized nation. These categories were becoming the essence of the state-produced dominant discourse on the Armenian Issue, leaving no space for categories such as reconciliation, rehabilitation and restitution.

According to Mikaelyan (2009:247), the official narrative of the Armenian state regarding the dark past presents a repeated scenario of barbarous Turks betraying, looting and then killing Armenians. "In a word, it is our "black fate" to blame or "the whole our nation was defrauded" (ibid.). There is Armenian literature which criticizes this approach for the lack of

⁴ On May 28, 1918, the first republic of Armenia declared its independence and later, in 1920, ceded its power to the Bolshevik Party. In November 1920, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia was established. On September 21, 1991, Armenia declared independence from the Soviet Union.

investigation into certain historical facts that were crucial for the entire Armenian nation. Without seeking justification for the actions and intentions of the Young Turks, this kind of critical research claims that the state discourse on the historical events should take into account the multiplicity of power-knowledge relations when analyzing the link between the construction of the hegemonic or dominant discourse and the universalization of memories.

The desired or imagined representation of united Armenia and the post-genocide memories of the lost Homeland formed a powerful discourse on the need to build an independent Armenian nation-state. In my Analytical Chapter, I will describe how the state was selecting and institutionalizing those memories in specific contexts and periods.

1.2. The Research Question

The research paper is going to explore how the memories on the Armenian Genocide are presented in Armenia's official discourse.

Sub-Questions

- What aspects of the Armenian Genocide are memorized by the official narratives of the Republic of Armenia?
- What kind of power-knowledge relations does the state produce in transmitting these memories?

1.3. Limitations

There were a number of problems that I had to solve during my fieldwork. First of all, prior to my departure, I had contacted the Research Department of the Armenian Genocide Institute, informing them about details of my field work and area of research. The Archive Department assistant did not tell me that the Institute was being renovated and that the library and the Archive would be temporarily closed.

When I got there, I was told that I could not work in the Library room because it was closed for reconstruction and that the only option was to access to the archival database and ask the assistant to photocopy the selected materials. Eventually, I did succeed to print and scan some textual and visual data to double-back my argument that the state uses specific memories on the Armenian Genocide to construct the history of the Armenian nation.

As to the Armenian Genocide-related protocols kept in the National Archive of the Republic of Armenia, I was prohibited to photocopy the top secret materials. Despite all these difficulties and unexpected situations, I did succeed collecting some relevant data for my research amid the limitations and unreported inconveniences.

1.4. Reflexivity

Describing articulation of Holocaust memories among the second and third generations of survivors, Kidron (2009:6) calls public articulation of knowing the Holocaust-related emotional wound as the key to healing (Kidron 2009:6). As a granddaughter of an Armenian Genocide survivor and as an individual with her family history and personal memories, I am writing this piece of research by fully admitting three facts: I am an Armenian, the memories of my grandfather who escaped from Anatolia when he was five years old are part of my family history and myself. Finally, like my parents, I am transmitting these memories on a daily basis.

With this research paper, I associate my family memories of the genocide with the so-called "presence" of the past - the presence of life, death, survival, suffering, relief, trauma and healing. If articulation of painful memory is the "prescribed medicine" for healing, then I rather choose the healing articulation, rather than the deliberate alienation of these memories. In the latter case, I would feel as a patient suffering from temporary amnesia. When I re-gained my memory, I would have to embrace the "past" again to be able to reconstruct my "history" from the remaining pieces.

In writing this piece of research, I am not pretending that I can be two different personalities at the same time - a researcher and a granddaughter of a genocide survivor. My intention is to describe the spatial and bodily transmission of the Armenian Genocide memories on the macro- level, while acknowledging my own transmission of them on a micro-level. If I have to accept Kidron's hypothesis that the survivors of genocide "silence" their memories due to trauma and that their children start articulating those memories about "the truth" to re-gain the destroyed identity of their families, then I could find similarities between the articulation and collectivization of the Armenian Genocide memories by the second and third generations of survivors as a form to get hold of their past which later becomes a "starting point" in a history of a state - a state that, like a patient recovering from amnesia, has to recollect the broken pieces of the past.

My grandfather's recollections of childhood and his escape from the Anatolian province of Bitlis to Soviet Armenia years after WWI are the "starting point" in the history of my family. My grandfather began articulating them only a few years before his death. The silence was finally broken and I am not sure how and how long the next generations of my family will be able to transmit those memories.

1.5. Methodology

One of the methods to analyze how the theories of past grievances find their modern interpretation in policies is to scrutinize the state discourses reflected by the press and memory-producing institutions such as museums which mainstream collective history. These discourses are the reflection of policies, theories and approaches that conceptualize my research question, building a nexus between the present and the past.

First of all, this paper is neither following nor criticizing Armenia's official discourse on the Armenian Genocide. It is describing how memories transmitted by the two loci - the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute and official protocols of the Soviet and post-Soviet Armenia - bind with the state-produced official discourse on the Armenian Issue. For this purpose, I reviewed and analyzed literature related to the official narrative on the research topic, dividing my analysis into three historical periods:

- The articulation of the Armenian Genocide memories and the official narrative of the Soviet Republic of Armenia between the 1920s and 1960s - a period when the Armenian Issue was silenced and tabooed in Soviet Armenia;
- The period of the so-called national rebirth and the official commemoration of the Armenian Genocide between the 1960s and 1990s;
- The period of internationalization of the Armenian Genocide by the Independent Republic of Armenia and the current state policy toward the recognition (1990s till 2013).

My analysis scrutinizes Meijer's hypothesis that "reality is supposed to be real, representation is supposed to be only 'real' in a secondary way, namely in its possible effects on the primary level." (Meijer 1993:368). First of all, I analyze two interconnected types of memory which form hegemony -textual or verbal memories binding with state protocols, official commemoration documents and official accounts on the Armenian massacres, and visual memories transmitted through bodily representations and images that are mainstreamed by the state through memory-transmitting institutions such as AGMI. I put a particular focus on the scrutiny of the link between the state-produced discourse and the images of the Armenian Genocide survivors and victims presented at the permanent exhibition of AGMI.

To present the data collection process in detail, I will describe my field trip to Armenia in July 2013. During the whole month, I was studying research-relevant materials in the National Archive, AGMI and the library of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia. I spent around three weeks in the aforementioned institutions, met some lawyers, historians and anthropologists specializing in the Armenian Genocide studies, but I did not interview them, because they were mainly providing me technical assistance in trying to access relevant materials and archival documents. With their support and guidance, I was able to overcome those unexpected problems that I described in Chapter 1.4. of this paper.

All in all, I was able to collect necessary data to answer my research question and sub-questions. The research locations I picked up for my analysis were strategic in terms of the transmission and articulation of the Armenian

Genocide memories, and the press clippings related to the issue help me frame the state discourse. First of all, the archival materials and state protocols that I collected from AGMI, the Constitutional Court library and the National Archive and the Constitutional Court cover the periods from 1915 to 2013 and they are presented in the three historical periods of my research paper. The protocols, memorandums and decrees on the Armenian Genocide commemoration and remembrance relate to the ministries and state security agencies of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia. They are particularly important in understanding the link between the memories of the Armenian Genocide survivors and changes in the state policy regarding the commemoration and remembrance of Mets Yeghern.

To find the link between the state-produced hegemonic discourse and the Genocide memories of the first, second, third and fourth generations, I analyzed certain important protocols and decrees regarding the commemoration and recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Some of these documents were preserved by the National Archive of the Republic of Armenia, but I got a permission to translate and use some of them for my research.

I also analyzed academic literature regarding the state policy on the commemoration and acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide in the three aforementioned periods. These documents were kept in the Library of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute and were open for public access. With this literature, I framed the contextual part of my research question. I focused on the difference between the hegemonic and non-hegemonic memories and the interplay of power-knowledge relations when analyzing the claims of the Armenian government on the recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

To achieve this goal, I adapted Schmid's (2006) proposed model of framing a conflict. In alaying data, I followed three steps, mainly:

1. I tried to frame the main protagonists of the hegemonic discourse on the Armenian Genocide;
2. I described the context in which the research topic has emerged,
3. I presented some of the textual and visual memories which the Republic of Armenia uses to produce knowledge about the truth on the Armenian Genocide.

Gitlin (1980:7) describes frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse." Another author, Papacharissi, describes framing as "the ability of any entity—media, individuals, or organizations—to delineate other people's reality, highlighting one interpretation while de-emphasizing a less favored one." (Papacharissi 2008:54). In trying to analyze certain hegemonies in textual data, I used the Computerized Content Analysis (CRA)⁵ to unveil "the most influential words in a message [and] denote the author's intentional acts regarding word choice and message meaning." (Papacharissi 2008:60).

Given their "visually compelling and drama-oriented" character (Papacharissi 2008:65), I concentrated on the so-called episodic frames when analyzing the symbolic and bodily representations of the Armenian Genocide

⁵ <http://mste.illinois.edu/pavel/java/text/>

through the archival photos of AGMI's permanent exhibition. Episodic frames, according to Papacharissi (2008:66), focus on describing single events or occurrences and tend to involve the use of negative stereotypes. The language and the images were soaked with drama and tragedy, revealing the strong tone of Armenia condemning Turkey for the denial of the Armenian Genocide. The use of metaphors such as "Ravished Armenia", "orphaned nation" etc. intensify the highly emotional and traumatic aspect of the genocide.

When scrutinizing the textual materials, I focused on the use of thematic frames, taking into account their context-specific and "analytical" nature (Papacharissi 2008:65). Thematic frames provide "more in-depth coverage that emphasize context and continuity." (ibid.).

Finally, AGMI itself, both as a building and institution that symbolically represents hegemonic discourses on the Armenian Genocide, helped me analyze the power-knowledge relations that create the unified history of the Armenian nation. In my next chapters, I will describe in details the role of AGMI in binding the memories with the state discourse.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

This Chapter analyzes Foucault's Power Theory to see how the power of discourse created hegemonic knowledge regarding the Armenian Genocide. It focuses on the nexus between memories and representation to show how the power of the official discourse naturalized certain categories regarding the Armenian nation and the modern history of Armenia.

Chapter 2.1 begins with the analysis of Foucault's Power Theory, conceptualizing on the multiplicity of power relations and the contingent nature of history. This final part of Chapter 2.1 scrutinizes the power of the state-produced dominant discourse to reproduce specific memories at specific historical moments.

Building upon Foucault's Power Theory, Chapter 2.2 analyzes how the state, as a dominant narrator of the Armenian Genocide memories, represents them to others. It analyzes the connection between the categories of representation and their strategic location in the discourse.

Both Chapter 2.1 and Chapter 2.2 end with brief concluding remarks regarding the relevance of the discussed theories to the main question raised in this research paper. The conclusions attempt to show the connection between the dominant discourse and "selective" representation of memories.

2.1. Power and Discourse

Following the dark events of the first half of the 20th century, new theories on the prediction, prevention and punishment of mass violences, genocides, interstate conflicts and wars emerged. The conceptualization of genocide as the most heinous crime against humanity is strongly attached to power theories. If violence by a dominant group or government may lead to "steps along a continuum of destruction" to genocide (Staub et al 2003:724),

then subjection is the key to analyze the multiplicity of power relations which not only justify violence, but also form and transform societal beliefs that define the so-called victims and perpetrators.

Before touching upon the victims and perpetrators, it would perhaps be wise to analyze different approaches to such concepts as the subject and the object of power. For example, Butler (1997) puts an equation mark between the "*subject*" and "*subjection*". "Subjection" signifies the process of being subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject (Butler 1997:2). In other words, this hypothesis is based upon the assumption that power is what makes the subjects exist and execute their power.

Power, according to Butler (1997:2), "imposes itself on us, and, weakened by its force, we come to internalize and accept its terms." This approach regards power as something external, imminent rather than immanent. Unlike the theories that regard power as a form of subjugation and the violence as a result of domination, Foucault (1990:92) considers subjugation only as the terminal form of power.

"It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instances as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through careless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies." (Foucault 1990: 92-93).

Conceptualizing mass killings and genocides, certain theorists like Staub (2003) and Dutton (2007) put a demarcation line between those who have power and those who are powerless. These approaches neglect the subtle and constantly changing nature of power. In more simplistic words, these theories assume that the groups who have power might subordinate, massacre and exterminate the less advantaged or powerful groups. These advantaged groups are assumed to justify their actions by using various power mechanisms that the target or victim groups lack. However, these theories imply a static and binary character of power relations, with the perpetrators or the strong groups then acquiring or seizing power to destroy other groups.

Power, according to Foucault (1990:94), comes from below, which neglects "the binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and the ruled at the root of power relations." Conceptualizing the reasons for violence, Staub et al (2003:717) find that conflicts may evolve through ideas that define the goals and interests of the two groups as contradictory (seeing one's group as exploited, discriminated against, or deserving self-determination or independence). This approach, unlike the Foucaultian one, does not consider multiple power relations that might result in conflicts, violence, war and genocides.

Using the Foucaultian method, "we must ensure that we do not allow this history to stop, do not allow it to settle on a patch of imagined sensibleness" (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:4). This method allows genocide researchers to step away from the dualistic analysis of power relations which uses History as a tool to explain the causalities of the past, and rather treats it

as *contingent*. "When we describe a historical event as contingent, what we mean is the emergence of that event was not necessary, but was one possible event of the whole series of complex relations between other events." (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:5).

As to the construction of memories, the process is linked with the concept of history and its transfer to generations through the repetition or transformation of certain discursive elements which appear to be dominant, hegemonic and repetitive. "The concept of hegemony is inextricably tied to Gramsci's notion of the 'historical bloc', which offers a theoretical analysis of the relationship between base and superstructure and a particular and specific analysis of a given historical and national moment" - a relationship which is constantly constructed and is never static (Morton 2007:97).

Referring to the hegemonic discourse on the Armenian Genocide, the notion of superstructure does not refer to the Marxist understanding of social-class forces. It rather applies to the relations between the state and memory-transmitting institutions that articulate history-making discourses which then create "hegemonic systems within the state" (Morton 2007:100). However, to assume that the state apparatus is the only producer of these hegemonic ideologies would mean perceiving the state as force and denying the intersubjective consciousness and interests of various agents and forces in articulating their national history.

As to the state, it can claim ownership over specific cultural and historic codes embedded in memories which later become a "national point of departure" for the consolidation and reinforcement of hegemonic discourses. My research analyses three specific loci or domains that produce memory-related history of the Armenian Genocide. These loci - AGMI and official protocols on the Armenian Issue - articulate the memories related to that specific historical moment for the Armenian nation which the Armenian state uses to produce and reproduce national history.

Therefore, the state should be regarded both as a narrator of dominant discourse, without being directly or openly localized in the latter. It was because of different power relations that made the Armenian Genocide an area of study and investigation after so many years of oblivion. It is in discourse that power to analyze the Armenian Genocide and knowledge about it are joined together. It was the ability of discourse to establish relations of what Foucault (1990:100) calls "double conditioning" between the state and other memory-producing institutions in terms of articulating and "hegemonizing" certain memories related to the Armenian Genocide.

2.2. Representation and Memories

The given analysis of theories regarding representation concerns the formation of state-produced hegemonic discourse - an *immanent process* that makes the issue become an object of knowledge within discourse. Foucault's approach views discourse as "a way of thinking or the state of knowledge [that appears] across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct, at a number of institutional sites within society." (Hall 2001:73). The further analysis will show how at specific historical moments, the state used the textual and visual representations of the Armenian Genocide in order to construct and

historicize knowledge about history. In other words, the power of discourse materialized the scattered, sporadically uttered and forgotten memories of the past, whereas the state institutionalized those discursive elements through representation.

Theorizing on memories and representation, Said finds that "collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning." (Said 2000:185). The question here is how do collective memories of genocidal atrocities formulate truth claims in hegemonic discourses? Since this kind of research deals with the nexus between the "forgotten" and the "remembered", the task is to analyze why only certain type of memories form a unified history of a nation. Why are those memories articulated repetitively, whereas others remain forgotten, unstudied and unimportant? When it concerns memories of genocide, one may face a dilemma as to whether these memories can distort the so-called history and lead to the "othering"?

Following Meijer's hypothesis, "the 'real' world is constantly being transmitted and created through textual and visual discourse." (Meijer 1993:368). The dominant discourse produced subjects - "figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourse produces." (Hall 2001:80). To show what kind of "subjects" the official discourse on the Armenian Genocide produced, the research paper analyzes the textual and visual representation of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex, including AGMI (both as symbolic representations and memory-transmitting buildings).

In order for subjects to become part of a particular discourse, they must be located in "a position from which the discourse makes most sense." (Hall 2001:80). In this case, the word '*position*' refers to a particular *location* or *place* which made the subjects of the Armenian Genocide discourse powerful and meaningful. The very location of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex produces specific knowledge about the history of the Armenian nation. The Complex was built on a hill called Tsitsernakaberd which is the agglutinative compound of the words 'swallow' and 'fortress'.

Having the power to select images, the "narrator" can "naturalize certain categories" (Meijer 1993:369). In other words, the photographs, alongside with other forms of visual representation, create naturalized categories which are a result of the "narrator's" selective interpretation of certain events. The representation, according to Meijer (1993:369), stamps the act as "real". Regarding the categories, the selective choice of certain images, combined with a specific way of interpretation, can construct identities and a self-image of a nation and its history.

The dominant narratives about the Armenian massacres select several characters which construct the vision of the nation's destiny. The process is defined as focalization or "the connection between the subject of vision, and that which is seen." (Meijer 1993:375). My argument is that, in the process of focalization, the selected characters lose their personality.

Finally, the strategically 'positioned' or 'located' representations of memories, "touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority." (Said 2000:176). The fact that the images make part of AGMI's Permanent Exhibition show that the discourse is situated in a strategic location which makes it dominant. Here again, it is important to consider history as contingent, as it the study of history is a "nationalist effort premised on the

need to construct a desirable loyalty to and insider's understanding of one's country, tradition, and faith." (ibid.).

Chapter 3. Analytical Framework

This Chapter presents the analysis of the state-produced narrative on the Armenian Genocide by using data from the National Archive and AGMI to double-back on the nexus between the state-produced discourse and memories. I attempt to show how particular narratives become universal.

Using Foucault's contingent approach to history, the first half of the Chapter attempts to scrutinize the specific power and knowledge relations that produce dominant narratives on the Armenian Genocide which then find their reflection in the state-produced discourse. The main question that Foucault raises in the analysis of the "discourses of truth" is analogous to my research question: "How was the action of these power relations modified by their very exercise, entailing and strengthening of some terms and weakening of others, with effects of resistance and counter-investments, so that there has never existed one type of stable subjugation, given once and for all?" (Foucault 1990:97).

The second half of the Chapter focuses on the symbolic and visual representations of the state-produced discourse. The analysis shows how the two memory-producing institutions - the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex and the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute - become representations of the state-produced dominant narratives on the Armenian Issue.

3.1. Chronological Selections from the State Discourse on the Armenian Genocide

3.1.1. The "Chosen Amnesia" and the Period of Silence

"To remember is to be petty, redolent of small hearts, small minds. Compassion sounds for the nice old neighbors, especially the cardiac, renal, diabetic, and prostatic. Reconciliation reigns, denialism comes to age, by perpetrators or sympathizers who wish to re-legitimize the ancient hatred."

(O'Brien and Arnold, 1997:349)

The Armenian Genocide discourses of the first half of the 20th century were influenced by two major historical events - the formation of the Soviet Union and WWII. The 1919-1920 trials of some of the Young Turk military and political leaders that initiated the mass deportations and exterminations of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey did not bring legal, economic and moral retaliation to Anatolian Armenians, with their rights to life, property, land and

citizenship being neglected by Turkey.

As to the First Republic of Armenia that emerged in 1918, there were attempts by Western and Eastern Armenian political and cultural elite to settle the issue of the thousands of dispersed refugees who survived the death marches of 1915-1918 and escaped to Eastern Armenia. After the defeat of the first Republic of Armenia and its inclusion into the Soviet Union, the Armenian Issue, including the restoration of Armenia through the integration of Eastern Armenia (the territory of Eastern Armenia) and Western Armenia (the territories of the four Armenian vilayets in Anatolia), was stopped being discussed in the international circles.

Mikaelyan (2009:258) describes this episode as the period of the loss of national memory and artificially imposed collision of the two parts of the Armenians during the Soviet years. The analysis of the symbolic representations of the Armenian Genocide memories in the next sub-chapter will present how the Soviet Armenian leadership selected and re-produced only those memories that were glorifying the unity the Soviet Armenian people, while silencing the issue of the Genocide.

The Stalinist repressions and the populism of Stalin's successors deprived the Genocide survivors of the ability to articulate their memories openly. The silence of the Soviet Armenian leadership was the period of "amnesia". The scattered voices of the survivors and their generations yielded to what Littell (1995:183) calls "mystification" of genocide when the facts need to be distilled from experiential, emotional, artistic and abstract images of the past.

In a post-genocide country, the "chosen amnesia", according to Buckley-Zistel (2006:134), may be followed or preceded by the "chosen trauma" which occurs when a group, "after the experience of a traumatic event, feels helpless and victimized by another group." In the case of the Armenian Genocide, "the chosen amnesia" lasted almost forty years and then transformed into "chosen trauma", marked by resistances and protests against the Communist leadership of Armenia.

The state discourse on the massacres was "limited to a few lines in city guidebooks, the exclusive departments of the National Academy of Sciences, or the State archives to which the access was strictly restricted." (Darieva 2008:95). On the one hand, the state controlled articulation of memory, imposing harsh censorship on any publication or event that was somehow connected with the Armenian Issue. On the other hand, the Soviet Armenian leadership's official discourses on the Genocide resembled a "chosen amnesia", as the state apparatus was reproducing only certain memories and was deliberately silencing the non-dominant discourses on the Genocide loss.

The analysis of the two decades following WWII (1939-1945) through academic literature and official documents (state protocols, memorandums, laws, political statements and references) showed that the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia did not raise the issue of the Armenian massacres on any level. The memories were orientated to artistic or symbolic representation of "the national tragedy" (Marutyan 2010:25). The whole idea of the Homeland was linked to the notion of Motherland.

3.1.2. The State Building and Memories

"And in truth nothing did happen, until with the inbreak of modernity the sky turned from gold to blue...".
Littell (1995:182)

Conceptualizing on the connection between the formation of a nation state and construction of collective memories, certain scholars like Levy and Sznajder (2002:91) refer to the so-called evolution of memory. It is claimed to be necessary first to construct the evolution of memory in order to understand its meaning as revealed in reception (Confino 1997:1397). In the Holocaust example, the social memory is limited to the generation that lived through the war. Historical memory, on the other hand, is memory "that has been mediated, by films and books and schools and holiday" (Levy and Sznajder, 2002:91). From the perspective of the evolution of the Armenian Genocide memories in Soviet Armenia, the social memory transformed to historical one around fifty years after the tragic events.

The first decades after the Jewish Holocaust were marked by the formation of a national ideology and future-driven memories of the past grievances which were institutionalized and found their reflection in the legal, social, political and educational paradigms. There were enough social, political and economic conditions to globalize and institutionalize the symbolic representations of the Holocaust memories. In the case of Soviet Armenia, the only incentive that could keep the memories of the Armenian massacres alive was the repatriation of Armenians from Anatolia and all over the world to Eastern Armenia. The economic, political and social conditions did not give space for the articulation and transmission of those memories in the newly established Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia.

Reflecting on the post-Genocide memories of Armenians in the Soviet Union, Mikaelyan (2009:250) states that the notion of "country" has always implied Western Armenia or the most part of historical Armenia. In other words, the collectivization of memories was happening in an actual locus, i.e. Soviet or Eastern Armenia, but the idea of the nationhood was imaginary, with the primary focus being an imaginary territory beyond retrieval.

In the 1940s, after the first wave of the Armenian Genocide survivors repatriated to Soviet Armenia, new cities and villages emerged in the country. The repatriates named their new dwelling places after the Anatolian cities and towns, such as Sebastia, Kilikia, Zeytun etc. (Darieva 2008:95). The Soviet government gave a permission to keep some of the names of the places where the massacres took place. However, the Armenian Genocide was still a tabooed issue. If we consider the sporadic articulation of the post-Genocide memories as the Gramscian "national point of departure", then the memories of the lost Armenian lands later on triggered the consolidation and reinforcement of the state-produced hegemonic discourses on the Armenian massacres.

The discourse on the lost homeland, which was becoming more powerful every year, at first glance, was contrasting the central ideology of the Communist Party. However, my argument is that later the state did bind those two strong and parallelly spread narratives into one dominant discourse on the need to build an independent Republic of Armenia for the genocide-torn and

revived Armenian nation. The state "sanctioned" the articulation of the Armenian Genocide memories, provided that they were "in line" with the official ideology and policy.

During the so-called "Khrushchev thaw", known as the Soviet modernization period⁶, the state used those symbolic representations of the lost Armenian land, connecting the painful memory of the survivors with the idea of the statehood. However, "a distillation of the primary arguments is necessary here, and this requires the analyst to see past the details to patterns of argumentation." (Schmidt 2006:306). A further scrutiny of certain elements of the state discourse shows that the idea of the Homeland was targeting at the abstract, figurative and unidentified notion of historic motherland which could unite the Eastern and Western Armenians. Neither the geographic nor the ideological boundaries of the desired Homeland were clear.

In the 1960s, the Communist authorities were institutionalizing "the acts of heroism" and praising the Soviet people for defeating fascism. The central ideology of the Soviet Armenian government was to follow the ideology of the Communist heroism by representing a nation with a "gloomy past" and "heroic present". Before the 1960s, the state did nothing to recognize the fact of the Armenian Genocide.

The so-called institutionalization of the Genocide memories started in 1965 when the silence was officially broken by public protests and rallies in Yerevan, urging the Soviet government to officially recognize and commemorate the Armenian Genocide. In spring 1965, the Communist Party of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia officially announced organizing a range of events prior to the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Armenian massacres in Anatolia. The central idea was the "revival and the heroism of the Armenian nation in the years of Communism" (Harutyunyan 2005:21). One of the slogans of the official commemoration was as follows: "The Soviet Union is the only Motherland of Armenians living in foreign countries." (ibid.). Terms such as "genocide", "martyrs", "crime", "memory" etc. were used sporadically and were always linked to the Communist ideology of state-building. Below is the official protocol of the events that the Communist Party designed for the first-ever commemoration of the Armenian massacres in Soviet Armenia.

List of Events on the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide⁷

- 1. Send propaganda groups, composed of the Communist Party members, to all the cities and regions of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia to organize lectures and seminars with an aim to promote the Communist ideology.*
- 2. Invite students and youth to meetings with the political leadership in Yerevan.*
- 3. By April 20th, Hayastan Publishing House and Giteliq Company should publish Armenian and Russian-language booklets covering the following topics:
- The triumph of Lenin's national policy in the USSR,*

⁶ Nikita Khrushchev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, launched domestic reforms to improve the living standards of Soviet people. In the spring of 1965, he attacked Stalin from the podium of the Twentieth Party Congress for the late dictator's repressions and failures. (Bittner, 2008).

⁷ "On the Preparation of Events Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Armenian Massacres", Protocol No. 13 to the Session of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia, 08.03.1965 (Harutyunyan 2005:49)
Translated from Armenian into English by Z. Shushanyan.

- The Armenian people in the family of the Soviet nations,
 - The international relations of the Soviet people and the South Caucasus,
 - New human education.
4. Prior to the 50th Anniversary, publish articles and broadcast radio programs about renowned Armenian martyrs of the Turkish atrocities, with a special emphasis on articles condemning the genocide.
 5. On April 24th, organize a seminar called "The Revived Armenian Nation".
 6. Complete the design and construction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial by the end of 1965. The memorial should represent the heroism of the Armenian nation and its revival in the Communist era.

The understanding of the social context is important in shaping the positions of protagonists (Schmidt 2006:305). The commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, marked by the change in the official policy discourse, can be considered as a watershed for the history of modern Armenia, as it was the period of the institutionalization of the Genocide memories. The public resistance to articulate "the truth about the Armenian Issue" and the state's policy in selecting a particular language and ideology to narrate the past are the manifestations of multiple power relations whose "institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies." (Foucault 1990:93).

3.1.3. The Act of Remembrance and the Soviet National Identity

In 1967, the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex was erected in Yerevan, thus becoming the symbolic reflection of the state's dominant discourse on the Armenian Genocide (fig. 1 (a)). "Since 1967, the hidden and disordered practices of mourning were appropriated by the officials and taken into control and commemoration practices settled into the cyclical life of the city landscape, localized around the Genocide Memorial." (Darieva 2006:91).

The first ceremony of the Armenian Genocide Commemoration was in line with "the Soviet art of mourning and remembrance of the dead through officials placing memorial garlands around the tomb, and in the minute of silence." (Darieva 2006:91). The official ceremony took place on November 29, 1967, on the 47th anniversary of Soviet Armenia.⁸



⁸ http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/Description_and_history.php

Fig. 1 (a) Construction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex in Yerevan, 1967

The collectivized representation of memory was framing hegemonic discourses on the history of the Armenian Genocide, blurring and non-dominant discourses, such as the ones on the moral and economic retaliation of the rights of the Genocide survivors and their families. The glorified representation of the heroic present of Soviet Armenians, combined with the solemn mourning of "the loss", was creating categories of victims and saviors. On the Armenian Genocide Commemoration Day, the formal procession moving up the Tsitsernakaberd hill to the Memorial was becoming an obligatory part of the government protocol. The remembrance and the Memorial Complex were to symbolize the generalized memory of victims of violence and the struggle against fascism which, according to Darieva (2006:93), "easily combined Hitler's Germany with Turkey into a common image of enemy, since Germany built political alliance with Turkey in WWII."

The frames of the official discourse gave a political context to certain historical events. The power of the hegemonic discourse to "strengthen some terms and weaken others" (Foucault 1990:97) was distracting public attention from other political and social events happening both within Soviet Armenia and beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. The Eastern Bloc, or the Soviet Union, was at the critical phase of the Cold War with the Western Allies and any attempt from the Armenian Diaspora representatives of the West to lobby for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide was either concealed from public or labeled by the Soviet leadership as a "Western intervention".

On March 6, 1974, almost a month before the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, the Soviet Armenian delegation attended the 39th Session of the UN Human Rights Subcommittee to discuss the Memorandum on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The presence of the Soviet Armenian delegation was important, as the Sub-Committee was to vote for the inclusion of Paragraph 30, "considering the mass destruction of Armenians in Turkey in 1915 as the first genocide of the 20th century." (Kirakosyan 1978:1). The Soviet delegation, alongside with England, abstained from the vote, thus opposing the efforts of Armenian organizations in Diaspora to include Paragraph 30 into the document.

Top Secret

*To Comrade M.A. Yuzbashyan, Chairman of the State Security Agency of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia*⁹

A notice regarding the discussion of Paragraph 30 of the Memorandum on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide at the UN Human Rights Subcommittee's session, January 19, 1978 (Number of pages - 4)

Minister J. S. Kirakosyan

"On the 6th of March, 1974, at its 39th session, the UN Human Rights Subcommittee

⁹ Kirakosyan, J. A. (1978) "A Notice Regarding the Discussion of Paragraph 30 of the Memorandum on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide at the UN Human Rights Subcommittee's Session", January 19, 1978, National Archive of the Republic of Armenia: 1-4.

Translated from Russian into English by Z. Shushanyan.

discussed the Memorandum on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, prepared by the representative of Rwanda. The memorandum consisted of a historical review on genocide, which aroused sharp debates. The most debatable issue was the inclusion into the memorandum of Paragraph 30 considering the mass destruction of Armenians in Turkey in 1915 as the first genocide of the 20th century." (Kirakosyan 1978:1).

"The Soviet Union and England abstained from the vote and the USSR suggested re-submitting the memorandum to the Subcommittee for further consideration. Paragraph 30 was withdrawn from the memorandum." (Kirakosyan 1978:2)

"Many documents, letters and facts testify that the Armenian Diaspora and some influential Armenian organizations abroad have launched a massive struggle for the re-inclusion of Paragraph 30 into the memorandum." (Kirakosyan 1978:2).

The stance of the Soviet Armenian leadership on the Armenian Issue and the Soviet Union's abstention from the vote was not discussed publicly, even though this was the first time after the trials of the Young Turk military leaders that the issue of the Armenian Genocide was being raised on the international level. It would be helpful to articulate carefully, accurately, and as succinctly as possible the positions of the protagonists. (Schmidt 2006:305). It is also necessary to answer two questions here. First, what would the inclusion of Paragraph 30 mean for Soviet Armenia? Second, how were the Soviet authorities articulating the discourse on the Armenian Issue in the given historical period?

To begin with, by the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, the UN would recognize the responsibility of the perpetrator State, Turkey, on the basis of the Genocide Convention. On the other hand, it would verify the latter's jurisdiction over the issue (Vardanyan 2009:60). The Paragraph was drafted by Armenian organizations and Diaspora representatives in the West in times of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the so-called Western bloc. Any idea or issue articulated in the West was considered "foreign" and dangerous for the Soviet people, and Paragraph 30 was not an exception.

Instead, the hegemonic discourse on "the unnatural and unrecognized death of the killed people was converted into a performed ritual of remembering the "hard past" and the martyr-like symbolism of a "good death" within the unity of the Soviet people." (Darieva 2006:92-93). The state was producing discourse about "protecting" the Soviet Armenian citizens from the West and Turkey as a Western ally.

Below are parts of the Armenian Communist Party Chief Suren Harutyunyan's letter to Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev.

Protocol No 49

S. Harutyunyan's Letter to Comrade M. S. Gorbachev on the Official Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide on April 24th ¹⁰

"The issue has been on the agenda for many years and it has become much more topical recently, in view of the complicated and strained political situation in the republic. Meeting parliamentarians, organizing protests, rallies and other events, the proletariat urges the authorities that they officially authorize the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide victims on April 24th. "

¹⁰ Harutyunyan, A. (2005:249) "The 50th Anniversary of Armenian Genocide and Soviet Armenia: Documents and Materials", The National Archive of Armenia, Yerevan: 4-259. Translated from Armenian into English by Z. Shushanyan

"The proletariat approves of those events, as they symbolize how the Communist State respects the gloomy past of the Armenian nation that revived only thanks to the October Revolution."

To analyze what frames the state-produced discourse was creating, I selected certain paragraphs from the notes of Shavarsh Simonyan¹¹, Minister of Education of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia. I chose the CRA method to find the most influential words in the text that denote the author's intentional acts regarding word choice and message meaning (Papacharissi 2008:60).

***Simonyan S.P. (1986) "Notes on the Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Turkey (1876-1922) and the Trial of Young Turks"*¹²**

"Taking into consideration the special stance of the Soviet Union on the Armenian genocide and the deep sympathy of the Armenian Diaspora towards the Soviet Armenia and the Soviet Union, the American diplomacy and propaganda are trying to spoil these relations in order to deprive the USSR from the support of Armenian friends abroad. The US Administration and NATO leadership are supporting Turkey on the issue of the Armenian genocide, driven by military-political interests of "Atlantic solidarity", with this trying to hide the negative effect of their unprincipled position on the issue in the eyes of the international community and their countries by distorting the real stance of the USSR on the issue." (Simonyan 1986:17)

"Judging from the Armenian press highlights and numerous appeals of Armenians from the Diaspora to soviet institutions, it is necessary to undertake efforts to improve the situation." (Simonyan 1986:18).

"It would be advisable to issue a piece of scientific research on the Armenian genocide, unveiling V.I. Lenin's and the Soviet State's attitude towards the issue, unmasking the evil role of the British and German imperialism, as well as the hypocrisy and unprincipledness of the US diplomacy and other Western superpowers which, being guided by their self-interested anti-soviet interests, hindered the implementation of Lenin's plan on the elimination of the destructive results of the genocide." (Simonyan 1986 :18-19).

To begin with, the most frequently used words in the aforementioned paragraphs are as follows: Armenian (6), Soviet (5) genocide (4), diaspora (2), diplomacy (2), Lenin (2). The use of the negative epithets such as "destructive", "negative", "self-interested" and "unprincipled" referred to the Western allies, whereas the role of the Soviet Union in promoting the Armenian Issue was characterized by the following nouns and adjectives: "scientific", "support", "sympathy", "necessary", "improve" etc.

The combined use of episodic and thematic frames is apparent in the selected parts of the text. The episodic frames reveal the author's negative tone towards the West and Turkey in particular: the use of the nouns "hypocrisy", "imperialism", "propaganda", "unprincipledness", "evil" aims to dehumanize the opponents.

As to the thematic frames, they become apparent by the author's attempt to "characterize" the protagonists of the discourse through the dry

¹¹ Shavarsh Simonyan was the Minister of Education of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia between 1955 and 1973. His piece of research, "Notes on the Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Turkey (1876-1922) and the Trial of Young Turks", was reflecting the official position of the Soviet Armenian leadership on the Armenian Issue.

¹² Simonyan S.P. (1986) "Notes on the Genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Turkey (1876-1922) and the Trial of Young Turks", The National Archive of the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan: 1-20.

Translated from Russian into English by Z. Shushanyan.

and factual tone (Papacharissi 2008:67). However, the official tone is mixed with drama and pathos. The "mission" of the Soviet authorities was to "unmask" the dangerous role of the Western allies in order to "support" the genocide-torn Armenian nation.

Before analyzing further development of the dominant narrative on the Armenian Genocide, it is important to note that the entire Soviet Union was stepping into a crisis era with the rise of national identity. In the late 1980s, the authorities of Soviet Armenia were grappling with the new national movement that was claiming independence from the Soviet regime. The recognition of the Armenian Genocide was one of the central issues of the movement. Marutyunyan (2010:28) argues that in times of the Soviet crisis, the regular articulation of memory was becoming one of the most significant elements of people's identity.

In Leninakan and many other cities of Soviet Armenia members of intelligentsia and school students were holding "silent marches" to protest the government's "politics of representation of the past." (Darieva 2008:99). The dominant representation of national memory was no longer able to cover the multiple resistances due to specific structural conditions, cultural factors and beliefs that were using the Armenian Genocide memories as an important tool to build a new national ideology and reconstruct the self-image of the nation.

In response to numerous protests and "unsanctioned" mourning marches in different cities of Soviet Armenia, the government finally legalized the recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide. On November 22, 1988, the Supreme Council of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia signed into law the only legislative act that the Armenian government has adopted so far regarding the Armenian Genocide.

The SSRA Supreme Council's Law Condemning the Armenian Genocide in Ottoman Turkey in 1915 13

The Supreme Council of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia DECIDES:

- *To declare April 24th as the Day of the official Commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, condemning the Armenian massacres in Ottoman Turkey in 1915 as one of the most heinous crimes against humanity;*
- *To send a formal proposal to the Presidium of the SSRA Supreme Council, urging them to recognize and condemn the Armenian Genocide;*
- *To authorize the Presidium of the SSRA Supreme Council and the Labor Union to discuss together and settle the issue of announcing April 24th as a public holiday.*

President of the Presidium of the SSRA Supreme Council

H. Voskanyan

Secretary of the Presidium of the SSRA Supreme Council

N. Stepanyan

Yerevan, 22.11.1988

The law gave the state the power to condemn the denial of the Armenian Genocide and pose truth claims regarding the past. As to the

13 Harutyunyan, A. (2005) "The 50th Anniversary of Armenian Genocide and Soviet Armenia: Documents and Materials", The National Archive of Armenia, Yerevan: 4-259. Translated from Armenian into English by Z. Shushanyan

memories articulated and hegemonized by the state in times of the national crisis, they paved ground for the internationalization of the Armenian Issue and became an inseparable part of the Armenian identity.

3.1.4. The Post-Soviet Period: The Construction of New National Identity and Transformation of the Armenian Genocide Discourse

*"How is memory held open to heal, rather than hidden in closed books sealed with seven seals?"
Littell (1995:179)*

After the referendum on the independence on September 21, 1991, Armenia got detached from the Soviet Union, taking a new path of social, political and economic transformations. The memories of past grievances of the Armenian nation were becoming manifestations of national identity and "a component of Armenia's foreign policy." (Marutyan 2010:28). The world-wide recognition and condemnation of the Armenian Genocide was becoming a priority issue for the first government of the independent Republic of Armenia.

It is important to mention, however, that before the declaration of the independence, the ruling Communist Party of Armenia was making attempts to launch scientific collaboration with Turkish scholars and historians to investigate the historical events of WWI. In 1989, the SSRA Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened the Soviet archives containing information on the Armenian Issue, enabling Turkish and Soviet scholars to scrutinize the memories of the survivors and eyewitnesses (Sargsyan 1989:1). Two years later, the process was halted by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the government shift.

The period between 1991 and 1995 was characterized by social, political and economic upheaval, including the war with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, which arouse new national sentiments.¹⁴ The commemoration and the world-wide recognition of the Armenian Genocide became a struggle against the common enemy and the manifestation of the "acute pain and irreparable loss of the Armenian people"¹⁵. The Republic of Armenia was symbolizing the reborn homeland of the Genocide-torn Armenian people and the loss was becoming part of the national identity. The past, present and future fused into the ritual of the Genocide remembrance, with the old symbols and narratives getting new frames and new forms of interpretation.

The government of the newly independent Republic of Armenia adhered to the same formal procedure of the Remembrance Day, adopted by

¹⁴ "With the break-up of the Soviet Union in late 1991, Azerbaijan and Armenia both became independent, and Moscow's responsibility to manage and contain the conflict over Nagorno Karabakh suddenly disappeared. Within a few months, the conflict flared up into a full-size war, even involving Armenian regular troops and whole detachments of the former Soviet military on the side of the Karabakh Armenians." (Cornell 1998:51).

¹⁵ http://www.hhpress.am/index.php?sub=hodv&hodv=20130425_1&flag=en

the Soviet Armenian leadership. The high-ranking officials were still making a pilgrimage to the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex, laying flowers around the Eternal Fire and the president was making a speech condemning the denial of the Genocide.

The only significant change that took place in the commemoration procedure was the inclusion of the Armenian liturgy into the official protocol, with the Catholicos of All Armenians and senior clergymen joining the official procession and reading a prayer for the victims' souls.

In the secular Soviet Armenia, the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide excluded any religious aspect. In the so-called independence era, the elements of the Christian martyrdom and their affiliation to the Armenian Apostolic Church became apparent in the dominant discourses. The communist tradition of laying flowers on memorials was now interpreted as a Christian ritual of commemorating the human loss. By the government's decision, new architectural elements with Christian symbolism were erected in the area of the Memorial Complex.

As mentioned above, the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide was becoming a priority issue on the agenda of the newly elected Armenian government. However, the mourning ceremonies and the artistic representations of the loss were not enough to institutionalize and internationalize the recognition. A knowledge-producing institution was needed to centralize and collectivize the sporadically articulated memories.

3.1.5. Commemoration vis-a-vis Reconciliation

In the period of the so-called "dormant" commemoration, the concept of reconciliation came into play in the state-produced dominant discourses. In simpler words, the Republic of Armenia, as a state representative of the Genocide victims, was to engage into dialogue with the perpetrator state, Turkey, in order to achieve reconciliation that would benefit both countries. Before proceeding to the analysis of the two protocols that framed possible reconciliation between Armenia and Turkey, it would perhaps be useful to dig a little bit deeper into the origins of this concept.

According to McGrath (1982:403), the concept of *reconciliation* is deeply rooted into the Christian doctrine of justice. "The essential prerequisite of any attempt to interpret, reinterpret or restate that doctrine is a due appreciation of the historical origins and subsequent development of the concept." (ibid.). The argument is that the state-produced discourse tied the truth claims to the concept of reconciliation, thus creating new knowledge about the victims and perpetrators, which hegemonizes the notions of recognition and commemoration. All these frames came into play during the period of the so-called Christianization of the Armenian Genocide memories.

The reconciliation discourse was creating binary categories of victims and perpetrators. The official Armenian discourse framed recognition as "the only road" to reconciliation - the road that the victims and perpetrators were to take in order to achieve historical justice. On the one hand, it implied that Armenians, as a victim nation, were to reconcile with their gloomy past and, at the same time, keep struggling for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

The religious affiliation to the Christian concept of reconciliation

becomes apparent when analyzing the symbolic representations of the Armenian loss. "We are reconciled to God through the mystery of his incarnation, passion and death, and by his glorious resurrection." (McGrath 1982:403). On the other hand, the Turkish state, as a perpetrator, was expected to reconcile with the past and *acknowledge* the truthfulness of Armenian claims.

The equivocal discourses on reconciliation were to lay a solid foundation for changes in Armenia's foreign policy. The "dormant" narrative found its interpretation in the law when in 2008 Armenia announced launching reconciliation talks with Turkey. Here it is important to analyze how the official discourse of the Republic of Armenia put an anchor between the Genocide memories and the concept of reconciliation.

As it was mentioned above, in October 2009, Armenia and Turkey signed the "Protocol on Development of Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Turkey" which, apart from aiming "to build mutual confidence between the two nations" (Marutyan 2010:28), was to allow Armenian, Turkish and other international experts to examine the historical records and archives "to define existing problems and formulate recommendations." (ibid.).

Prior to signing the Protocol, President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan, in his interview to local media on October 2, 2009, made the following statement regarding the Armenian-Turkish reconciliation.

"The current generation of the Armenian and Turkish peoples, each in its own way, has inherited a difficult history. To overcome the wide chasm of mistrust between our two peoples, our societies have difficult issues to resolve. Armenians have been subjected to genocide, lost part of their historic homeland, been dispersed around the world, and continue to struggle for the recognition and condemnation of that history by the international community and Turkey. Our people would see that recognition and condemnation as a long-awaited victory for justice.

Turks of the current generation, in turn, need to come to terms with their own history. After all, the Armenian Genocide and the Armenian question have been taboo subjects in Turkey for decades, and those who have raised them have been subject to prosecution and social stigma..."¹⁶

The official discourse was putting the emphasis on the recognition and condemnation, while reconciliation was more referring to Turkey's acknowledgment of the past. Amid bilateral negotiations over the ratification of the "Protocol on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations" and the "Protocol on the Development of Relations", the Armenian authorities were scrutinizing the legacy of the creation of the "sub-commission on the historical dimension", or the so-called Historical Clarification Commission. The latter, according to Marutyan (2010:29), was to "decide whether there in fact was genocide in Turkey in 1915, and its historical dimension."

Official Yerevan was casting doubt on the accordance of the protocols with the concept of recognition. The state-produced narratives were now creating a binary opposition between recognition and reconciliation, since the latter presupposed scrutinizing the truthfulness of the archives, memories, the nation's history and, finally, the whole discourse on the Armenian Genocide. The binary opposition became apparent on April 22, 2010, when President Sargsyan made a televised address, suspending ratification of the

¹⁶ <http://www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2009/10/02/news-738/>

Armenian-Turkish protocols.¹⁷

"For a whole year, Turkey's senior officials have not spared public statements in the language of preconditions. For a whole year, Turkey has done everything to protract time and fail the process. Hence, our conclusion and position are straightforward:

- 1. Turkey is not ready to continue the process that was started and to move forward without preconditions in line with the letter of the Protocols.*
- 2. The reasonable timeframes have, in our opinion, elapsed. The Turkish practice of passing the 24th of April at any cost is simply unacceptable.*
- 3. We consider unacceptable the pointless efforts of making the dialogue between Armenia and Turkey an end in itself; from this moment on, we consider the current phase of normalization exhausted."*

What is more important here is that the president made his speech two days prior to the commemoration of the 95th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

"Fellow Compatriots;

In two days, we will commemorate the 95th anniversary of the first genocide of the 20th century, the remembrance day of the Armenian Genocide. Our struggle for the international recognition of the Genocide continues. If some circles in Turkey attempt to use our candor to our detriment, to manipulate the process to avoid the reality of the 24th of April, they should know all too well that the 24th of April is the day that symbolizes the Armenian Genocide, but in no way shall it mark the time boundary of its international recognition."

From the perspective of the value-critical policy analysis (Schmidt 2006:304), it is again necessary to describe the social context in which the discourse has emerged. In the given case, it is important to take into consideration that President Sargsyan announced Armenia's suspension of the Armenian-Turkish protocols right before the 95th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, when the Republic of Armenia and Armenian communities across the world were commemorating the Genocide victims and remembering the tragic history of the Armenian nation.

Approaching to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the state-produced dominant narratives on the Armenian Issue keep focusing on the international recognition and condemnation of Mets Yeghern. The official discourse again seems to be on the "dormant" phase of memory articulation, when the narratives of "reconciliation", "retaliation" and "restitution" deem unrealistic, whereas commemoration builds hegemonic knowledge about the dark past.

3.2. The State and Memory: Representations of the Armenian Genocide

3.2.1. The State Symbolism: the Armenian Genocide Memorial and the Museum-Institute

¹⁷ <http://www.president.am/en/statements-and-messages/item/2010/04/22/news-60/>

In 1965, the imaginary representation of the genocide-ravished Homeland started getting 'real' shapes and contours through textual and visual discourses. The 'product' of those memories was the construction of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex in Yerevan in 1965 - a pilgrimage place which, together with AGMI, represents the state's dominant narrative on the history of the Armenian Genocide.

To begin with the Armenian Genocide Memorial-Complex (fig. 3 (a)), the Council of Ministers of Soviet Armenia approved its construction on the 16th of March, 1965¹⁸, followed by numerous mass protests in Yerevan against the Soviet Armenian leadership's reluctance to organize official commemoration of the Genocide. The building was to represent "the heroism of the Armenian nation and its revival in Communist years." (Harutyunyan 2005:40). The Communist nation-building and the image of the lost Homeland tied together in three concrete buildings - the Memorial Column - "The Reborn Armenia" symbolizing the union of Western and Eastern Armenia, the Memorial Wall and the Twelve Pylons representing the twelve Anatolian vilayets (administrative regions) where Armenians were massacred.

In Armenian folk songs and literature, swallows symbolically represent the safe return to home after a long journey or exile. The fortress is a place where the swallows, representing the Armenian people, keep the memories of their journey alive. The location of the Memorial Complex determined the power of the dominant discourse. The discourse and representation historicized the subjects of the Armenian Genocide narratives through the symbolism of the monument. However, the discourse formation would be incomplete without an institution through which the state could produce, reproduce and transmit the universalized memory on the Armenian Genocide. Here "symbols should be understood as objective, collective phenomena, pointing to patterns of normative actions that are different from utilitarian or technical ones, which are manipulated during the struggle for power, are expressive and, at the same time, instrumental." (Halas 2002:118).

In 1995, on the 80th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute opened its doors. Situated opposite the Memorial Complex on the same Tsitsernakaberd hill, the two-story concrete building faces Mount Ararat - the symbolic representation of the lost Armenian Homeland which is nowadays in the territory of Turkey. The Museum's building resembles an underground tomb of the early Christian period (fig. 3 (b)). It comprises three exhibit halls, an outer gallery resembling an outdoor patio of a traditional Armenian church and a separate block that rooms the Research Institute with the Library and the Archive.

The Research Institute is the largest and the only government-backed think-tank in Armenia that brings together scholars and researchers in the field of genocide studies and supports their publications alongside with Armenia's National Academy of Sciences. The establishment of AGMI was an important step towards the internationalization of the Armenian Genocide recognition, as the Museum soon became the place where foreign delegations sign documents condemning the denial of the Armenian Genocide.

The nexus between the state discourses on the Armenian Genocide

¹⁸ Protocol No. 16, Decree No. 101 on "The Construction of a Memorial to the Victims of the Armenian Genocide in 1915", 16.03.1965 (Harutyunyan 2005:54)
Translated from the original (Armenian) into English by Z. Shushanyan.

and AGMI is that the latter is more than a museum-archive with testimonials, photographs and eyewitness accounts of the Armenian massacres. The pilgrimage to the Memorial and AGMI is part of the official State Protocol of foreign delegations' visit to the Republic of Armenia. It's a location where the Armenian government holds seminars, conferences and commemoration events both on national and international levels. Finally, AGMI is an organization that produces, reproduces and transmits hegemonic knowledge about the Armenian Genocide memories. It is both a knowledge-producing institution and a building where one reads, sees, imagines and even experiences mentally the horror of genocide.

Both the design and the mission of the Museum-Institute were to back up the state-produced dominant narrative on the Armenian loss. The opening of the Museum-Institute was an important factor for the transformation of the state-produced discourses. It was a period when the "dormant" commemoration was losing the "revolutionary, reformatory capacity it had in 1988-1990." (Marutyan 2010:28).

The exhibit hall itself is the selective representation of the history of the Armenian nation that the state produced and reproduced in different historical periods. Here again the analysis concerns the power of discourse and the way it produces knowledge about "reality".

The discourse on the lost land is visually represented in all the monuments located in Tsitsernakaberd. In 1997, the Museum-Institute exhibited the first glass jar of soil from an Anatolian vilayet as a relic from the lost homeland. In a couple of years, the practice of "bringing soil back from Western Armenia" became an inseparable part of the remembrance (fig. 3 (c)). Ten years later, Armenia's land claims got their political interpretation in the discussed Armenian-Turkish protocols¹⁹.



Fig. 3 (a) The Armenian Genocide Memorial-Complex in Yerevan

¹⁹ Turkey and Armenia signed the Protocol on Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and the Protocol on Development of Relations in Zurich on October 10, 2009.



Fig. 3 (b) The entrance to the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute in Yerevan



Fig. 3 (c) The third exhibit hall of the Armenian Genocide Museum with soil glasses from all the 12 Anatolian vilayets

3.2.2. From Communism to Golgotha: the Christianization of the Armenian Genocide Memories

Conceptualizing on how the secular memories of the Soviet times were Christianized, Darieva (2008:101) analyzes the example of the Mourning Wall opposite the Memorial Complex. Built in 1968, the huge basalt wall once symbolized "the heroism of Soviet Armenians" during WWII. In 1996, "geographical names and toponyms were carved on the wall, representing the memorial topography of places marked by Armenian loss, starting with Constantinople and stretching up to the Syrian desert steppes of Der-el-Zor." (ibid.). The mourning wall was officially renamed "*The Road to Golgotha*" - the road to the hill where Jesus Christ was crucified (fig. 3 (d)).

Besides, the visual representations of the human and material loss were becoming strongly linked to the Christian symbolism. What is notable here is that the very use of the word "commemoration" (ն զ է Լ զ ն չ ն ի ս) in Armenian is synonymous to the Christian rite of requiem. Starting from the 1990s, the official commemoration resembles a liturgy, creating Christianized representations of the great loss.



Fig. 3 (d) The Armenian Genocide Memorial Wall in Tsitsernakaberd, Yerevan

Let's analyze, for example, one of the exhibits of AGMI's Permanent Exhibition - the illustrations and photos of Arshaluys (Aurora) Mardiganian's documentary memoir "Ravished Armenia"²⁰. The choice of the documentary itself frames a specific category which the state is using repetitively in producing discourses on the Genocide-torn Armenian nation. What is most important here is the poster of the documentary entitled "Auction of Souls" and the photo of crucified Armenian girls (fig. 3 (e,f)).

The documentary presents the life story of an Armenian Genocide survivor and her escape from Ottoman Turkey. It shows sufferings of people who shared her destiny or whom she met on her way to the United States. However, due to the power of interpretation, "the personality is taken away" (Meijer 1993:372). The archival photo of the crucified Armenian girls, combined with the poster, becomes a non-identified category of a defenseless, tortured and crucified Christian nation. Compassion and empathy are extended from the tortured girls to entire Armenia. The power of interpretation depersonalizes them in order to construct the self-image of a dehumanized, tortured and ravished nation.

The symbolic representation of the act of crucifixion is indeed related to the Christian history of martyrdom. The death of Christ on the cross is the central image in Christian art and the visual focus of Christian contemplation.²¹ The symbolic representation of crucifixion is also connected with the history of Armenia as the first nation to adopt Christianity as state religion in 301 AD and the massacres of Christian Armenians in Ottoman Turkey with dominant Muslim ideology. However, the understanding of the frames is "in accordance with individuals' ideas previously associated with the frames adopted." (Papacharissi 2008:56).

The photograph is a real "piece" from the documentary, but its representation is very much linked with the Armenian history, the Christian

²⁰ http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_6.php

²¹ Ferguson, G. (1959) "Signs and Symbols in Christian Art" 164 (1), Oxford University Press

symbolism, the passions of Jesus Christ, the idea of martyrdom and, finally, resurrection that follows crucifixion. The aforementioned images frame discourses on that historical period. At the same time, the Christian symbolism of resurrection after crucifixion represents the rebirth of the Armenian nation and the formation of the Armenian state after the Genocide (fig. 3 (g,h)).



Fig. 3 (e) A line of naked, crucified Armenian girls

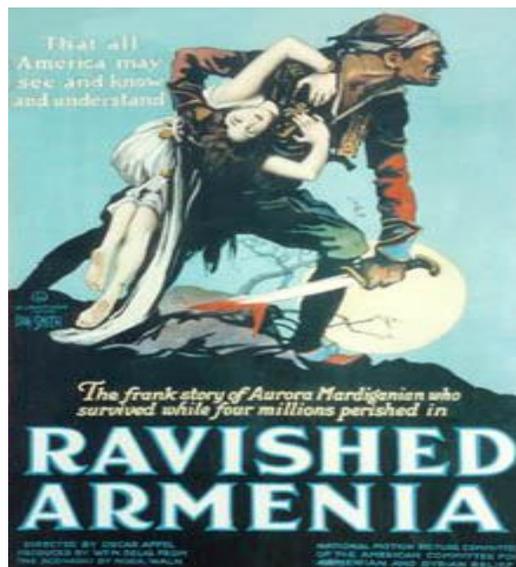


Fig. 3(f) The poster of the film "Auction of Souls"



Fig. 3 (g) Postcard issued on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the screening of *Ravished Armenia*

Chapter 4. Representations of History: Photographs of the Armenian Genocide

This Chapter reflects on the symbols and images that reverse the gloomy past of Armenians in Anatolia. It attempts to explain how the images and the dead bodies of the Armenian Genocide victims produce specific knowledge on the collective history. My analysis tends to show that these images and the hegemonic discourse are interconnected and interdependent. For this purpose, it analyzes AGMI's permanent exhibition as the most mainstream and popular visual representations of the Turkish atrocities against Armenians.

One of the non-textual discursive elements that I study in my research is the body representations of the Armenian Genocide victims and survivors. "Bodies are not discourse, they are non-discursive in their materiality. But bodies do not exist and operate in a non-discursive vacuum." (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:39). The categories these images bring forth intersects with the state-produced discourse on the human body in articulating the historical truth about the Armenian Genocide. According to Verdey (1999:38), "a body's symbolic effectiveness does not depend on its standing for one particular thing, however, for attaining the most important properties of bodies, especially dead ones, is their ambiguity", as well as their ability in some cases to represent a group or a nation due to their symbolic effectiveness.

4.1. The Unutterable and the Images

"Blood will flow down the rivers, there will be an earthquake, there will be a famine."
(Svazlyan 2011:112)

Considering the state as the main "narrator" of the dominant discourse on the Armenian Genocide, it is important to understand how it transmits the vision to others. This sub-chapter concerns the visual representation of the dominant state-produced discourse on the Armenian massacres in Ottoman Turkey. My locus of analysis is the Permanent Exhibition of the Armenian Genocide photos in the main exhibit hall of AGMI. The reason I chose the Permanent Exhibition is that it is the official and the largest exhibit (over 1,000 square meters) of eyewitness reports, photographs and archival documents about the mass extermination of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey.

The marble and basalt-carved walls of the AGMI permanent exhibition halls generate a panorama of black-and-white photographs illustrating the death marches of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey. The exhibits take the visitors down to the memory lane, creating a sense of pandemonic solemnity. The exhibit halls resemble an early Christian tomb, and the only source of light comes through the cross-shaped windows (fig. 4 (a)). The images are exhibited along with relics and textual materials collected from all the vilayets of Anatolia.



Fig. 4 (a) The Permanent Exhibition hall of AGMI

The exhibition starts with photographs depicting the peaceful life of Armenians in Anatolia before WWI. Wedding photographs from family albums constitute a separate section (fig.4 (b)). A special emphasis is given to education in Armenian communities of the pre-genocide period (fig.4 (c,d)).



Fig. 4 (b) Armenian wedding in Tokat, Ottoman Empire, 1899 Archives of Project SAVE



Fig. 4 (c) Female college, Adabazar, 1900



Fig. 4 (d) The graduates of monastic school, Ardashir, 1899-1900

The historiography here constructs what Horowitz (2000:162) calls "the normal world" and the photographs shape both the individual and collective memory. On the first level, the pre-genocide images are explicit, depicting the everyday life of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey. However, "the narrative pull forces one to ride along." (Meijer 1993:371). On the second level, the pre-genocide photos depict the presence of *normal life* in the family, education and other social institutions. On the third level, they could be interpreted as *naturalizing* the collective identities of Armenians as educated, as well as socially and economically advantaged citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Besides, the photos emphasize how important family values were for Armenian communities.

On the fourth level, according to Meijer (1993:372) "empathy is extended" from those individuals to the entire community, as the photographs present a "prelude" to the death marches and massacres. Finally, the fifth level is that the photographs make part of the AGMI permanent exhibition, being located in the only genocide museum-institute in the territory of Armenia.

Here the dominant discourse creates categories of a unified nation that keeps the family traditions and the Armenian identity, living stateless in the Ottoman Empire. The discourse on the perpetrator is still vague, hidden behind the happy images of an educated and progressing nation-family which will be exterminated soon.

The tranquility is broken and contrasted by the absence of it and by the *absence of life* and the horror of the massacres. A strong ideological and emotional effect is reached via the order the images are exhibited in the cool, vault-like halls of the museum. The tranquil and happy people in the pre-genocide photos gradually turn to tortured victims of the Turkish atrocities. The images depict "the virtually limitless power of the shearer over his victim" (Morrison 2004:350). The Turkish soldiers carrying out the massacres look calm, and some of them even seem to enjoy the process of killing.

The photograph called "*Armenians burnt alive in Sheykhalan by Turkish Soldiers, 1915*"²² depicts two Turkish soldiers staring at the pile of burnt corpses and skulls. The soldiers stand nonchalantly both as executioners and witnesses of the conflagration (fig. 4 (e)). The discourse on dehumanization of the victims by the perpetrators is fostered by another photograph called "*Bebeaded Armenians*" (fig. 4 (f)).

If the selective choice of certain images can shape "reality" and construct collective identities, then these photos frame the image of a nation that was not only deprived of life, but had no possibility to die humanly. The categories of dehumanized victims are echoed in the state-produced narratives that shape collective identities and the unified history of the Armenian nation.

In other photographs, the dominant theme is *motherhood* and the loss of the child. One of the central exhibits in the thematic section is probably the photograph called "*Starved Armenian woman with her son in the Syrian desert, 1916*" (fig. 4 (g)). The narrative of tortured and starved women and children repeats several times in the exhibition. What we see in the picture is a tortured and naked woman with her starved child, both giving an "insane" smile at the photographer. Here again, the categories of dehumanized victims come into play. To unveil the symbolic representation of the photograph, it would

²² http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/gen_museum.php

perhaps be worth analyzing the body positions of the woman and the child. Combined with the whole Christian setting of the exhibit halls and the symbolic representations of the cross-shaped windows, the image resembles 'Madonna with the Child'.

"The image of the Madonna signifies hope and provides salvation from political and economic injustice as well as resolution to personal problems. It represents the power of the weak. Expressing in a symbolic way the interests of any particular group and transcending them at the same time, it lends itself to cultural manipulation and binds different groups together." (Jakubowska 1990:12)

Symbolizing the starvations and deaths during the Armenian deportations, the photograph creates symbolic representations of the ravished Armenian mothers with hopeless and weak children. As to the representations of the Christian cross, "they symbolize despair, sacrifice, and death, but also resurrection, they appeal to people barred from recognition and power by the prevailing social and political order." (Jakubowska 1990:12).

Finally, the last category that I analyze in Chapter 4.2 is the representations of dead bodies in the AGMI permanent exhibition. The aim is to find a nexus between the 'situatedness' of the images of dead bodies and the specific knowledge they produce on the Armenian Genocide.



Fig. 4 (e) Armenians burnt alive in Sheykhan by Turkish Soldiers, 1915



Fig. 4 (f) Beheaded Armenians



Fig. 4 (g) Starved Armenian woman with her son in Syrian desert, 1916

4.2. The Language of Dead Bodies

*"...A corpse can be moved around, displayed, and strategically located in specific places."
(Verdery 1999:27)*

The post-memorial generations get the most horrendous image of the Armenian massacres through the photographs of dead bodies. Apart from being properties of the National Archive and AGMI, these photographs are also a familial inheritance for the generations of survivors. According to Hirsch (2001:9), "the work of post-memory defines the familial inheritance and transmission of cultural trauma." Not only do the images of dead bodies produce a traumatic memory on the unified past, but they become "political symbols" (Verdery 1999:1). The images of the massacred and tortured bodies of Armenians are strategically located in a position that transmits them to the dominant political discourses on remembrance.

The visual representations of death place the victims and perpetrators into specific strategic locations in the narrative, extending empathy to the dehumanized dead bodies and triggering outrage by the inhumanity of the executors. Given their "privileged status of a medium of post-memory" (Hirsch 2001:13), the images of the dead ancestors transmit the traumatic memory of the national victimhood to the post-genocide generations.

The power of the discourse to hegemonize certain representations through repeated transmission and re-production of specific memories binds the state-produced narratives on the Armenian Genocide with the visual representations of the dead human bodies, given that "bodies do not exist and operate in a non-discursive vacuum" (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:39). The

question is, how do those images "personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourse produces"? (Hall 2001:80).

Foucault's power theory recognizes the ability of discourse to "strengthen some terms and weaken others" (Foucault 1990:97). As to the discourses on the past grievances, here again, the contingent approach to history may give a key answer to how the personified memories of the human loss found their reflection in the state-produced dominant narratives on the Armenian Genocide.

Analyzing the visual representations of loss and death, Hirsch (2001:21) finds that "photography does not mediate the process of individual and collective memory but brings the past back in the form of a ghostly revenant." As to the AGMI permanent exhibition, the photos of the dead bodies repeat the dominant categories of the "ravished mothers", "starved children", "martyred Armenians" and "dehumanized victims". The categories of victims that were deprived of the chance to have a "good death" and be "buried properly" finds its reflection in the hegemonic discourse of the Armenian martyrdom.

The ability of the dead bodies to "institute ideas about morality by ascending accountability and punishment" (Verdery 1991:127) puts the categories of martyrs and victims into the heart of the hegemonic discourses on the recognition of the "truth" and history. The moral recognition is closely tied to the visual representations of the perpetrators' profanity, showing the castrated and tortured and dead clergymen (fig. 4 (h)). The martyrdom discourse is further backed up by the snapshot of a crucified Armenian woman from the documentary "Ravished Armenia"²³ (fig. 4 (i)).

Another dominant frame in the exhibition is the body of the dead child. The photographs of starved, tortured and killed children create symbolic representations of "orphan Armenia", which later became a political symbol in Armenia's struggle for independence (fig. 4 (j)).

Finally, the discourses on the "survival", "rebirth" and "revival" find their symbolic representations in the photographs of the Genocide survivors and refugees. Death and human loss are always persistent in these photos, creating binary representations of the survivors and the victims (fig. 4(k)) as an ahistorical memory of the Armenian loss.



Fig. 4 (h) Tortured and killed Armenian clergymen

²³ http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_6.php



Fig. 4 (i) A typical exploitative shot



Fig. 4 (j) Dead of exhaustion: a deported Armenian child (Kharberd, 1915), Maria Jacobsen, Diary 1907-1919



Fig 4 (k) Armenian refugees at the pyramid made from the skulls of Armenian martyrs

Chapter 5. Conclusion

The research paper aimed at answering the following question: how were the memories of the Armenian Genocide presented in Armenia's official discourse? Building on the empirical data collected from the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, Armenian government protocols, memorandums and commemoration documents related to the Armenian Genocide, I managed to answer the question. The power of the hegemonic discourse to "strengthen some terms and weaken others" (Foucault 1990:97) gave a specific political context to the Armenian Issue. In different episodes of history, the state apparatus *selected* and *reproduced* memories of the Armenian massacres in a way that they became a 'national point of departure' for state-building and construction of national identity. Being situated in strategic locations, the carefully selected and reproduced memories helped the state to hegemonize its discourse about modern Armenian history.

In times of the 'chosen amnesia', the political leadership of Soviet Armenia was systematically reproducing the narrative of the 'Armenian loss' and the 'good death' in order to strengthen the categories of 'Revived Soviet Armenia' and the Communist 'saviors'. After years of repression and silence, the Armenian Issue appeared on the agenda of the Soviet Armenian leadership in order to build a unified image of the "Armenian people in the family of the Soviet nations." (Harutyunyan 2005:49).

Using Schmid's (2006) proposed model of framing a conflict, I showed that between the 1960s and 1990s, the state-produced discourse on the

Armenian Genocide was in line with the Communist propaganda of state-building and modernization. The state apparatus used remembrance as a tool to blur and deconstruct other, less dominant narratives on the economic, political and moral retaliation of the Armenian Genocide survivors and their successors.

The chronological review of the Armenian Genocide discourse showed that after Armenia gained independence from the Soviet Union, the Armenian Issue became one of the manifestations of national identity and "a component of Armenia's foreign policy." (Marutyan 2010:28). In Chapter 3, the analysis showed how the secular and Communist party-controlled act of remembrance transformed to the religious form of commemoration, while preserving the categories of a victim-nation.

Using Foucault's 'contingent approach to History' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999:4), the analysis showed how the state naturalized the aforementioned categories about the Armenian nation with the help of two memory-producing institutions - the Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex and AGMI.

The scrutiny of empirical data from AGMI and official protocols helped me answer the following question: what power-knowledge relations does the state produce in transmitting the Armenian Genocide memories?

Being embedded in the symbolic and visual representations of the state-produced discourse on the Armenian Issue, the strategically located traumatic memories have become what Verdery (1999:1) calls 'political symbols'. The images of the Armenian Genocide, along with the symbolic representations of the memory-producing institutions, hegemonize the categories of a dehumanized, martyred, orphaned and ravished nation.

Analyzing the state-produced discourse on the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide, I came to the conclusion that the whole notion of the Armenian-Turkish reconciliation is closely linked to the Christian notion of acknowledgment, which, in its turn, creates a binary opposition between commemoration and reconciliation. The latter is more identical to the '*acknowledgment of the past*', rather than to a type of reconciliation that seeks rehabilitation and restitution of the rights of the Genocide victims, survivors and their descendants.

Claiming accountability and punishment for the most heinous crime against humanity is the moral, political and economic right of each group, nation or country.²⁴ However, no retaliation is possible without an exact assessment of the aftermaths of genocide and a thorough investigation of various dimensions of the crime.

The Armenian state, as a dominant narrator of the Genocide discourse, cannot achieve the desired restitution and retaliation by simply selecting and re-producing memories that lead to "the 'othering' of the entire nation." (Staub et al, 2003:722) .

Finally, the power of the hegemonic discourse to naturalize and universalize the category of the Armenian victimhood makes remembrance a mechanical process that renders it impossible to develop a self-reflective and truly critical justice-seeking strategy for the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

²⁴ The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide , adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948
<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html>

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