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THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN DIARBEEKIR (TIGRANAKERT) PROVINCE

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Introduction

Diarbekir (Tigranakert) province (vilayet) was one of the six provinces of Western Armenia. After final demarcation of provinces in the 1870–1880s Diarbekir province itself was divided into three sanjaks: Diarbekir, Arghana-Maden and Mardin. In his accounts T. Mkrtchian, the English vice-consul in Diarbekir mentioned that the Armenian population of Tigranakert was counted about 150.000¹. However, according to the data of Constantinople patriarchate, as of 1912 in the territory of Diarbekir province, except for the southern part, the Armenian population counted 105.000². According to the 1913–1914 lists there were 106.867 Armenians living in the area³. It can be assumed that on the eve of the Armenian Genocide approximately 130.000 Armenians⁴ lived in Diarbekir province. Moreover, there were other Christians living especially in Mardin sanjak as well⁵.

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¹ Մկրտիչեան 1919, 87:

² Տեր Յակովբեան 1914, 808–809:

³ Kevorkian, Paboudjian 1992, 59.

⁴ On more details see Բաբլումյան 1920, 91–119. See also Bablumyan 2021, 43–62.

⁵ According to the 1912 statistics of the Armenian patriarchate, apart from Armenians, 60.000 Nestorians, Jacobites, Chalcedonians, also 4000 Yazidis, 82.000 settled or nomadic Kurds and Qizilbash and 45.000 Turks lived in the territory of the province. However, according to the statistics of the Ottoman government as of 1914 the number of Muslim population was estimated 492.101. See Karpas 1985, 188.

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The appointment of doctor Reshid as the new governor of Diarbekir in March 1915 was connected with the realization of the resolution that the Ittihad Central Committee had already made in regard to the Armenian population. When on March 28, doctor Reshid arrived in Diarbekir, no doubt, he already had the plan of actions to be carried out against the Armenian population⁶. During the years of the Armenian Genocide, the Armenian population of Diarbekir province as in other provinces of Western Armenia was subjected to massacres, deportation and extermination. The policy of forced conversion to Islam was implemented everywhere. The survivors of the Armenian Genocide were forced to find refuge in neighboring territories or in more distant countries.

Human Losses

In Diarbekir province the mechanisms of extermination of Armenians were the same: in spring the arrests and imprisonments started, then massacres and deportation followed. Noteworthy is the circumstance that in the province, in 1915 the organizational matters, concerning the actions of exterminating Armenians were highly prioritized. The given fact was perhaps connected with governor Reshid's person, his views and goals.

Numerous settlements of the province and rocks, were turned into large slaughterhouses. Such areas were Goza, Sheitan Dere next to Tigranakert, the gorge of Pezwani by Shgavtan village, the gorge of Utueleo by Mardin, the Roman cells and dungeons of Tara, the wells of Ras ul-Ayn⁷. In the vicinity of Pagar Maden the main slaughterhouses were a settlement called Tepo where hundreds of youngsters were massacred, the second was Zaylgh, the other torture place was Tokhmakh, as well as the Galemtnan tavern⁸.

It should be noted, however, that among the Armenians massacred in the territory of Diarbekir were also people who were deported from other provinces. As for the exact number of the victims residing in Diarbekir, we should refer to certain numerical data recorded in sources. In governor Reshid's telegram of September 15, 1915 to the Minister of Internal Affairs it was stated that 120000 Armenians of Diarbekir province were deported⁹. Referring to the human losses

⁶ Кеворкян 2015, 395–396.

⁷ Մկրտիչեան 1919, 77:

⁸ Պէրպլերեան 1984, 145:

⁹ Кеворкян 2015, 392, 404.

of the Armenian population in the province, T. Mkrtichian stated that the loss of the Armenian population in the city was 25–26000 and in the province it made up 60–65000 and about 59000 Armenians must have still been alive¹⁰. According to T. Mkund, the author of a memoir book on Diarbekir, the number of Armenians exterminated in Diarbekir was 35–36000, while in neighboring settlements – 40–45.000¹¹. These data refer to the number of Armenians deported or martyred from 1915 to 1918–1919 which as further events evidenced also could be changed. We consider that the majority of the deported groups were killed, others died of hunger and sufferings. Thus, Khosrov Ohannesian was in one of the groups deported from Tigranakert. He stated that their group, initially consisting of 1500 people was taken towards Severek. The group was attacked on their way, and only 300 people managed to reach Urfa¹². The only thing is to hope that at least the majority of those who reached Urfa managed to survive the Genocide, although it is quite possible that some of them would die in the further course of events. According to another report, the second group of refugees having set out from Severek consisted of more than 2000 people: however only 1000 reached the Tigris. Thence the group was taken to Adifiaman (Adiaman) by rafts and only 300 people reached the destination¹³. We can consider that only 15–20% of the groups of women and children managed to survive, while very few people remained alive among the labor groups and the ones drafted into the army.

According to another researcher D. Gaunt, at the end of 1915 more than 100.000 people were killed in the province¹⁴. Historian Hilmar Kaiser, having authored an important research on Diarbekir also concludes that the number of Armenian victims in Diarbekir is sure to surpass 100.000. Undoubtedly, the mentioned number doesn't include the people who were deported from other provinces and were killed in the territory of Diarbekir. Their number exceeded that of the local Armenians. The author thinks that 15% of the total number of Armenians (1.300.000) killed in the Ottoman Empire was in the territory of Diarbekir¹⁵. Moreover, Faiz El Ghusein, an Arab public figure and an eyewitness of

¹⁰ Մկրտիչեան 1919, 97:

¹¹ Մկունդ 1950, 252–253:

¹² Մկունդ 1953, 371–372:

¹³ Արապեան 1971, 268–269:

¹⁴ Gaunt 2006, 310.

¹⁵ Kaiser 2014, 423–424.

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the Armenian Genocide, wrote that at the end of August, 1915 one of his colleagues from Diarbekir, who was a close friend with one of the people accused of massacring Armenians, visited him in prison. He said that only in Diarbekir 570.000 people, both from Dirabekir vilayet and other vilayets had been exterminated¹⁶.

It seems that after the deportation and extermination of the majority of Armenians in 1915, the massacres and persecutions of Armenians were to stop. However, the Armenian survivors were still living in the environment of fear and persecution, including those who were forcibly converted to Islam. Significant is the fact that many Armenians converted to Islam were also subjected to deportation and massacres. A notable incident occurred in Severeke, in 1915. During the massacre of 1895 two brothers from the Merchanian family were converted to islam. They did not go back to the Christian faith and the Armenian community in the successive years. All along these brothers acted far worse than the Turks themselves. During the events of 1915, they gave false testimonies against the members of the Merchanian family as if the latter had weapons. The police searching the Merchanians' house and not finding anything, imprisoned the Turkified brothers, beat them and then set them free. Six months later the brothers were imprisoned again and taken in the direction of Urfa to a place called Cham-chay where they were shot¹⁷. This was one of the cases when a 20-years' conversion and hatred for the Armenians did not save the apostates. Moreover, there was mistrust towards the newly converted people. This approach characterized the vali (governor) of Diarbekir Reshid who made every possible effort to annihilate Armenians. When the rumor of his discharge from office spread, the Armenians and other Christians left their hideouts and started walking without fear in the city. Vali started deporting Armenians with even greater zeal, and those who had left their hideouts had to return there. One of the officials of Diarbekir said that the night before vali's departure an Armenian paid 50 Turkish pounds to a resident for him to find refuge in his house. Another individual recounted that he was promised to be paid 3 pounds per night but fearing the authorities he declined the offer¹⁸.

¹⁶ **Faiz El-Ghusien** 1918, 41.

¹⁷ **Արապեան** 1971, 257:

¹⁸ **Faiz El-Ghusein** 1918, 36.

The Resettlement of Muslim Refugees

Like in other provinces of Western Armenia in Diarbekir also, the consequences of deportations were disastrous for the province. According to the list made by the acting governor of Diarbekir Bedri bey, after the deportations of Armenians from the province, individuals, practicing 758 crafts were highly in demand. Craftsmen were to settle in the Armenians' houses, while food, money and the necessary items for them were to be taken from the property of the Armenians¹⁹.

The absence of Armenians' laborious work was also visible in agriculture. Moreover, according to H. Kaiser, the Muslim population also suffered because of the deportation of Armenians. Meanwhile, certain representatives of the Muslim elite as a result amassed great fortune. Governor Reshid was among them, despite the fact that he "described himself as an official tirelessly defending 'national interests' by relentlessly engaging the Armenian revolutionaries"²⁰. The scale of the fortune that Reshid amassed during the deportations and killings of Armenians was really huge. In one of its editorials the "Chakatamart" newspaper mentioned that during the massacres Reshid amassed a fortune of more than 1.000.000²¹. As for the national interest that Reshid claimed to be championing, after exterminating Armenians his goal was to settle Muslim newcomers in the Armenian settlements. On June 3, 1915 Reshid informed the Minister of Internal Affairs that the majority of the Armenian villages in Diarbekir were empty which would allow settling Muslim newcomers, especially Turkish emigrants from the Balkans. According to Reshid, the most suitable newcomers to be settled in Diarbekir were the Turks coming from the European part of the Empire, arguing that "the 'turkification' of the prevailingly Kurdish local population demanded Turkish settlers"²². Almost 10.000 families according to Reshid, could be settled in these areas. The Minister of the Internal Affairs did not hold the same view, demanding that Reshid should settle Muslim and not only Turkish newcomers in the territory. Since November, 1915 a large number of Kurdish families, following the instructions of the Ministry arrived in Diarbekir from Bitlis. They were to be

¹⁹ Kaiser 2014, 291.

²⁰ Kaiser 2014, 292–294.

²¹ Մեկ միլիոնի հարստություն դիզած է փախստական Ռէշիտ, Ճակատամարտ 05.02.1919:

²² Kaiser 2014, 300.

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accommodated in Mardin and Midiat. As issued by the government, the needs of the Muslim newcomers were taken care of with the property and food expropriated from the Armenians. In response to the inquiry made by the Minister of Internal Affairs on the number of Kurdish emigrants on January 26, 1916, Bedri bey stated that by February 10, 1916, 84.967 Kurds had come from the warzone. The majority of them arrived from the provinces of Van and Bitlis²³. As a result, contrary to Reshid's wishes, the province became even more Kurdish than it had been before²⁴.

By Talaat's order Abdul Ahat Nuri who being in Aleppo, had been supervising this process since the spring of 1916. Noteworthy is the fact that the majority of new emigrants also crossed the territory of Tigranakert. The general chief of emigrants from Diarbekir Shakir bey, on August 14, 1916 informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that 40.000 emigrants had reached the center of Diarbekir by then. 12.000 emigrants were accommodated in Diarbekir and neighboring villages²⁵. The resettlement of Kurdish newcomers in Diarbekir added to the existing problems in the province. The Kurdish tribes started robbing and destroying with greater "zeal".

Cultural Genocide, Expropriation of Property

One of the important elements of the Armenian Genocide was the Cultural Genocide which grew larger in scale in 1915–1916 and continued in the successive years as well. In general, according to the patriarchate's statistics of 1913–1914 there were 148 churches and 10 monasteries²⁶ in the territory of Tigranakert province. Many of them were destroyed during the years of the Armenian Genocide, while others were converted into mosques. According to H. Ghazarian, among the losses recorded in Tigranakert province were 105 churches and 6 monasteries. The general material loss made up 24.000.0000 gold²⁷. Two churches of Tigranakert, St. Sargis and St. Kirakos, were robbed and defiled. The Armenian Catholic Churches of St. Hovsep (Joseph) and St. Gevorg (George) first were robbed then transformed into a military hospital and stable, whereas the

²³ Kaiser 2014, 306.

²⁴ Kaiser 2014, 307–308.

²⁵ Ղազարեան 2010, 281–282.

²⁶ Kevorkian, Paboudjian 1992, 59.

²⁷ Ղազարեան 2010, 278:

unique manuscripts of the patriarchate were burned by the Turkish army for them to get warm²⁸. In Severeke, the Armenian Church and school along with the Protestant chapel and Assyrian church were destroyed. All the construction materials and metals were sold to the Turkish rich. According to Turkish eyewitnesses' accounts in a metal chest at the Armenian Church 5.000 English and 10.000 Turkish gold was found, which was shared among the chief of the police, manager and bandit leader²⁹. Approximately 1500 families of Turkish emigrants from Van, Mush and Erzurum were to dwell in the Armenians' houses³⁰.

T. Mkrtchian mentioned several names of wealthy Armenian families that lost all their property during the years of Genocide. For example, the Gazazian brothers, who lost all the members of their family had more than 250.000 gold. The Trpenchians also lost all their family had a fortune of 300.000 gold³¹.

The Final Stage of Exterminating Armenians in the Province in the 1920s

After deportation and massacres in 1915, few Armenians remained in different settlements of the province. In Severeke, specifically there were about a dozen of Armenians who bore Turkish names and were obliged to teach their crafts to young Turkish men. The craftsmen stayed in Severeke up until 1920 after which they were free to go wherever they wished to³². According to Mkrtchian, there were hardly 200 families living in the city of Mardin. The number of the latter was reduced to dozens³³. A number of Armenians, having survived the atrocities of Mardin, found refuge on Mount Sinchar whom the chief of the Hammo Shero tribe gave shelter. After the cease-fire the survivors returned to their birthplace³⁴.

There were no conditions of subsistence for the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. In Diarbekir and in other settlements of Western Armenia. Here the atrocities, fear and famine were still ubiquitous. In a letter addressed to Patriarchate it was mentioned that there were little children starving to death on

²⁸ Թեոդիկ 2014, 384:

²⁹ Արապեան 1971, 306–307:

³⁰ Արապեան 1971, 299–300:

³¹ Մկրտիչեան 1919, 97:

³² Արապեան 1971, 297:

³³ Մկրտիչեան 1919, 67:

³⁴ Տրապիզոնի թեմին վիճակաւոր Յովհաննէս արք. Նազլեանի յուշերը, 1960, 392

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the street, begging money, while the harems were full of Armenian women and girls. There were also many Armenians converted to Islam by force, who had to wear turbans³⁵. It should also be noted that the killings in Diarbekir continued in 1920s. According to the information published in the "Chakatamart", Kemal ordered the governor of Diarbekir to kill all the remaining Christians in the territory under his rule. The governor complied with the order and robbed all the property of the massacred, setting their houses on fire³⁶.

As a result of the Armenian Genocide Armenians were exterminated in Diarbekir province like in the entire Western Armenia. In some places there still lived a few survivors of Armenian genocide or converted Armenians. Over time, however, the survivors of the Genocide leaving their hideouts gathered in this or that settlement. Some of them seemingly Islamized waited for an opportunity for reclaiming their identity.

Researcher Alin Ozanian in one of her articles has referred to a document that Constantinople patriarchate sent to the US State Department. According to that document there were about 3000 Armenian orphans in Diarbekir³⁷. The given information was identical with the list published in the annual "Amenun Tarecuyc" where the number of the Armenian population in different provinces was presented. Thus, as of 1921, according to the annual, there were only 3000 Armenians in Diarbekir province³⁸, but it did not state whether the people were orphans or adults, moreover they could have been deported from other provinces. According to the record by Archbishop Hovh. Nazlian, the head of the Trabizon diocese, in 1919–1920, supposedly about 3.500 Armenian survivors were also in Mardin³⁹.

Even after the Treaty of Lausanne the remnants of the deported and massacred Christian minorities tried to continue their existence in such regions neighboring Syria as Diarbekir, Urfa, Adana, southern territories of Kharberd, etc. According to historian V. Tachjian, during that period Armenians were found in Urfa, rural areas of Diarbekir and in the southern part of Bitlis province⁴⁰.

³⁵ Ճակատամարտ 06.02.1919:

³⁶ Ճակատամարտ 01.09.1920:

³⁷ **Խանյարեան**, 2009, 48:

³⁸ Ամենուն տարեցույցը, 1922, 261:

³⁹ Տրապիզոնի թեմին վիճակաւոր Յովհաննէս արք. Նազլեանի յուշերը, 1960, 362:

⁴⁰ **Tachjian** 2006, 520.

Back in 1924 the Turkish authorities focused their attention on the Christian elements of Urfa, Malatia, Diarbekir and Mardin. As V. Tachjian claims, the majority of those Christians, who lived in cities were followers of Syrian Orthodox Church, Catholics or Chalcedonians⁴¹, thus, it can be presumed that Armenians lived in rural areas where it was easier to remain invisible for the authorities. It was more than clear that this situation could not remain sustainable for a long time and the existence of Christians, especially Armenians was to be repressed. According to V. Tachjian, the French sources include the sequence of steps aimed at the ultimate decimation of Christians in these territories. Firstly, the people of rural areas were forced to move to urban settlements, and then unbearable conditions and the environment of fear were to be created for them in cities which would force the Armenians to leave these territories⁴². The succession of steps evidenced the policy consistently pursued by the Ottoman Empire for a long time.

After 1925 the situation escalated even more when Kurdish Sheikh Said's rebellion broke out in the territories lying between western areas of Lake Van to the southern areas of Erzurum. It took authorities some months to quell the rebellion and reinstate the centralized government in those regions. The Kurdish leaders were no longer able to protect the Armenians sheltered by them⁴³. Besides the Armenian-Kurdish cooperation became apparent, thus, once again according to the authorities, the solution of the problem consisted in annihilating all the remaining Armenians in the territories. It refers also to those Armenians who were living next to Kurds and speaking Kurdish. In some cases Kurdish leaders concealed the ethnic identity of the sheltered Armenians from the Turkish authorities. As it was expected, in 1928–1930 thousands of Armenians especially from Diarbekir and Kharberd provinces and Sgherd region found refuge in Syria. According to a testimony, in 1929–1930 more than 30.000⁴⁴ Armenians were deported from Kharberd, Tigranakert, Mardin. According to Y. Khatanasian, half of the Armenians were Kurdish speaking⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Tachjian 2006, 522.

⁴² Tachjian 2006, 529.

⁴³ Tachjian 2006, 527.

⁴⁴ Խանլարեան 2009, 60:

⁴⁵ Խաթանասեան 1965, 27:

Conclusion

On the eve of the Armenian Genocide there were about 130.000 Armenians living in Diarbekir province. During the years of the Armenian Genocide this province became one of the major centers of extermination of Armenians, where not only local Armenians and partly other Christians were deported and massacred, but also the Armenian deportees from other provinces of Western Armenia i.e. from Kharberd, Erzurum, Bitlis. Hence, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were exterminated in this province.

The main part of the Armenian population was martyred in 1915, others were subjected to persecutions and massacres in subsequent years. Noteworthy is the fact that the forced conversion to Islam did not always secure the safety of a converted person in Diarbekir.

In the 1920s the policy of exterminating all Armenians in the territory was completed: those who survived the Armenian genocide, were forced to find a refuge in other countries.

The Armenians of Diarbekir especially wealthy families also suffered material losses. During the years of the Genocide more than hundreds of churches and monasteries were robbed, desecrated, and set on fire. Many of the churches and monasteries were almost utterly destroyed.

In parallel with the deportations and massacres of Armenians, the resettling of Muslim newcomers in Diarbekir was organized. The majority of emigrants were Kurds: as a result contrary to Governor Reshid's desires the province became even more Kurdish than it had been before.

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ՀԱՅՈՑ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՀԵՏԵՎԱՆՔՆԵՐԸ ԴԻԱՐԲԵՔԻՐԻ (ՏԻԳՐԱՆԱԿԵՐՏ) ՆԱՀԱՆԳՈՒՄ

ԲԱԲԼՈՒՄՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բառեր՝ Արևմտյան Հայաստան, Դիարբեքիր, Տիգրանակերտ, Հայոց ցեղասպանություն, տեղահանություն, իսլամացում, Մարդին:

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1914 թ. հայ բնակչության թվաքանակը Դիարբեքիրի նահանգում կազմում էր շուրջ 130.000: Դիարբեքիրի հայերը, ինչպես Արևմտյան Հայաստանի մյուս նահանգներում, ենթարկվեցին զանգվածային կոտորածների, իսլամացման և տեղահանության: Բազմաթիվ բնակավայրեր վերածվեցին հայերի զանգվածային բնաջնջման կենտրոնների: Դիարբեքիրի տարածքում բնաջնջվեց ոչ միայն տեղի բնակչությունը, այլ նաև այլ նահանգներից, մասնավորապես՝ Խարբերդից, Էրզրումից, Բիթլիսից տեղահանված մի քանի հարյուր հազար հայ:

1920-ական թվականներին հայերին տեղահանելու և ոչնչացնելու քաղաքականությունը ամբողջությամբ ավարտին հասցվեց:

Ցեղասպանության տարիներին թալանվեցին, պղծվեցին, հրդեհվեցին հարյուրից ավել հայկական եկեղեցիներ ու վանքեր, դրանցից շատերը գրեթե ամբողջությամբ ավերվեցին, մյուսները վերածվեցին մզկիթների:

Հայերի տեղահանությանն ու կոտորածներին գրեթե զուգահեռ՝ կազմակերպվեց մահմեդական եկվորների բնակեցումը Արևմտյան Հայաստանի մի շարք բնակավայրերում, մասնավորապես՝ Դիարբեքիրի նահանգի տարածքում:

ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ ГЕНОЦИДА АРМЯН В ПРОВИНЦИИ ДИАРБЕКИР (ТИГРАНАКЕРТ)

БАБЛУМЯН А.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: Западная Армения, Диарбекир, Тигранакерт, Геноцид армян, депортация, исламизация, Мардин.

В 1914 г. численность армянского населения в провинции Диарбекир составляла почти 130.000 человек. Армяне Диарбекира, как и других провинций Западной Армении, в 1915–1923 гг. подверглись массовой резне, исламизации и депортации. Многие поселения превратились в места массового истребления армян. На территории Диарбекира было уничтожено не только местное население, но и несколько тысяч армян, депортированных из других провинций, в частности из Харберда, Эрзерума, Битлиса.

В 1920-е годы политика депортации армян из Диарбекира целиком была претворена в жизнь.

Во время Геноцида армян были разграблены, осквернены и преданы огню сотни армянских церквей и монастырей, многие из которых либо были полностью разрушены, либо превращены в мечети.

Почти одновременно с депортацией и резней армян было организовано расселение пришлых мусульман в ряде населенных пунктов Западной Армении и, в частности, на территории провинции Диарбекир.