

# REPRESENTING THE 1909 ADANA MASSACRES IN ARMENO-TURKISH: GARABED ARTINIAN AND THE CASE FOR A HISTORICAL READING

*Bedross Der Matossian*

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA*

This article concentrates on the literary representation of the Adana Massacres of 1909. While most of the material lamenting these massacres was written in Armenian, this article deals with a rare and unpublished *destan* (lamentation poem) of the massacres in Armeno-Turkish. The author, Garabed Artinian, penned the longest *destan* that has existed on the massacres. Unlike a historical narrative, the *destan* is a poetic way of expressing sorrow and pain for the loss of lives, belongings, humanity, and honor. Artinian who witnessed both waves of the Adana Massacres in April, lost his wife and child, described in detail the unfolding of the horrifying crime. Artinian's *destan*, which is made up of fifty-seven stanzas, was written in the third person in a lyrical style, while delivering a chronological account of the massacres. He experienced these events first-hand and thus through his *destan* Artinian ventured to "speak" the "unspeakable." He wrote it to bear witness to the catastrophe. Hence, the *destan* is a work of art, a work of testimony, and an expression of pain and sorrow at the same time. The result achieved at least three things: a striking lamentation written in Armeno-Turkish about an incomprehensible catastrophe, a record and reconstruction of the trajectory of the events that transpired, written almost in real time, and a personal expression of pain and anguish by a survivor and witness to the massacres and their aftermath. Therefore, the *destan* has literary as well as historical value and should be treated as a uniquely informative source and expression. Through entering in dialogue with literary theories of the representation of the catastrophe and trauma studies, this article argues that the *destan* has literary as well as historical value and should be treated as a uniquely informative source and expression.

**Key Words:** Adana Massacres, lamentation, literary representation, survivor testimony, trauma.

**How to cite:** Bedross Der-Mattossian, "Representing the 1909 Adana Massacres in Armeno-Turkish: Garabed Artinian and the Case for a Historical Reading," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* 8, no. 1 (2023): 5-50.

This article was submitted on 31.02.2023 and accepted for publication on 25.05.2023.

## Introduction

On June 4, 1909, only five and a half weeks after the Adana Massacres of 1909, Garabed Artinian, penned one of the longest *destans* (epic poems) known to exist in Armeno-Turkish, lamenting the catastrophic events. Artinian's life was marked by multiple traumas. Not only were his wife and child killed in the massacres in Adana, but his parents were also killed in the Hamidian massacres (1894-96) in the previous decade. His unpublished *destan*, written in the midst of fresh personal loss and incomprehensible catastrophe, provides a unique account of the Adana Massacres of 1909. Previously unpublished, a copy of Artinian's original *destan*, along with my transliteration to Turkish and translation into English, appear for the first time in the Appendix of this article. The *destan* consists of fifty-seven stanzas written in the third person and follows an *aaab* rhyme structure.<sup>1</sup> The work remained in the possession of the Artinian family until recently, when his great grandson Robert Artinian shared it with me.<sup>2</sup> While a few poems and songs have survived from the Adana massacres, nothing of this length, complexity, and sophistication was known to have existed. To our knowledge, Artinian did not produce any other work besides this *destan*.

The *destan* (desdan) genre is of Persian origin, and dates back to the 13th century. In the minstrel (*âşık* or *ashough*) literature or tradition of the region, the *destan* usually recounts the heroic deeds, romantic tales, and in some cases great events such as calamities. Given its secular nature, the *destan* was also used by Christians (Armenians, Greeks, Syrians), Jews, and Muslims of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Lament narratives were a sub-branch of this genre. For example, Crimean Tatars and Russian Muslims who fled to the Ottoman Empire as a result of the Russo-Turkish wars in the second half of the 19th century wrote *muhajir destans* (refugee epic poems) lamenting the loss of their houses, villages, and farms.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that we find the lament form of *destan* in Armeno-Turkish, in response to the catastrophic events of Adana.

From Siamanto to Taniel Varoujan and from Zabel Yesayan to Suren Bartevian, the literary responses by Armenians to the Cilician massacres attempted to describe the horrors of Adana through poetic and narrative forms.<sup>5</sup> Rubina Peroomian has argued

---

\* I would like to thank Talar Chahinian, Nazife Kosukoğlu, Mehmet Polatel, and Barlow Der Mugrdchian for reading earlier drafts of this article and providing substantial feedback.

1 The general rhyme scheme of a *destan* is abab cccb eeeb. While the Armeno-Turkish original rhymes, the English translation does not.

2 According to Robert Artinian the *destan* was kept by his grandfather Frank (Garabed's son) for decades until his death in 1986, when he left it for his uncle James. It was then that his father and his siblings became aware of its existence. Frank must have been given the manuscript either by his mother Asanet (d. 1966) or, just as likely, by her brother Krikor Essayan (d. 1964), who stepped in as Frank's surrogate father after Garabed/Charles's death.

3 Özkul Çobanoğlu, *Âşık Tarzı Kültür Geleneği ve Destan Türü*. Kızılay (Ankara: Akçağ, 2000).

4 Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 29.

5 For books written in Armenian see Suren Bartevian, *Կիլիկիական սրբաշիրտերը* [The Cilician Horrors] (Con-

that Siamanto, in his nerve-shattering poem «Պարը» [The Dance], “was in absolute defiance of humanity, its principles, and its values when portraying a despicable scene of Turkish atrocity.”<sup>6</sup> Taniel Varujan’s «Կիլիկեան մոխիրներուն» [In the Cilician Ashes] graphically described death and destruction, bodies and skeletons. Yesayan’s literary description of the human and material suffering of the city in «Աւերակներուն մէջ» [In the Ruins] provides a testimony of the Adana Massacres, but published two years later. Like many of her contemporaries, Yesayan was shocked by the horrors she saw in Adana.<sup>7</sup> The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 was seen by the Armenians of the empire as a promising beginning. More than any other group, the trinity of ideals of the Revolution – *liberty, fraternity, and equality* – found a strong echo among the Armenians who had suffered the most under the absolutist regime of Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1878-1909). However, the hopes and expectations raised by the revolution and new constitutional era soon proved to be illusory and the Adana massacres came to prove otherwise. Armenians were unable to comprehend the catastrophe and its magnitude.

Artinian’s *destan* contributes to but stands apart from this literature in a few important ways. First, most of these literary works were written in Armenian, including the famous poem «Աղանայի Ողբը» [The Lamentation of Adana] (1909) by Smpad Piwrad (Ter Ghazariants 1862-1915), sung to this day in different Armenian communities around the world. In addition, none of their authors were present during the massacres, although some went to Adana in their aftermath and bore witness to the destruction of the city and the anguished condition of the survivors. Artinian’s *destan* is therefore distinctive for its language (Armeno-Turkish), date of composition, and authorship by survivor-witness of the massacres.

This essay will analyze Artinian’s *destan* from historical perspectives, as a means of offering alternative, generative approaches to recent discussions on the (im)possibility of representing catastrophe and trauma in literary form. What does the *destan* tell us about the massacres? Why write in a poetic rather than narrative form? Why did the author choose to write in Armeno-Turkish and not in Armenian? Finally, to what extent can the *destan* as a genre represent the catastrophe?

---

stantinople, 1909); Hagop Terzian, *Կիլիկիոյ աղէտը* [The Catastrophe of Cilicia] (Constantinople, 1912); Arshagouhi Teotig, *Ամիս մը Ի Կիլիկիոյ* [A Month in Cilicia] (Constantinople: V. and H. Ter-Nersesian, 1910). For literary works see Daniel Varujan, *Բանաստեղծական երկեր* [Poetic Works] (Antelias: Publishing of Daniel Varuzhan literature foundation, 1986); Siamanto, *Ամբողջական երկեր* [Complete works] (Antelias: Printing house of the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, 1989) and Zabel Yesayan, *Ավերակներուն մէջ* [In the Ruins] (Constantinople: Armenian Publishing Society, 1911).

6 Rubina Peroomian, “Religion: A Driving Force but not a Major Cause of the Turkish Genocide of Armenians,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Mass Atrocity, and Genocide*, ed. Sara E. Brown and Stephen D. Smith (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 113.

7 On the literary importance of Yesayan, see Marc Nichanian, *Writers of Disaster: The National Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2002), 187-243, and “Catastrophic Mourning,” in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. D. L. Eng and D. Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 99-124. See also the chapter on Zabel Essayan by Rubina Peroomian in her book *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish* (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1993), 89-116.

This essay is divided into five sections. In the first section, I provide a brief sketch of Garabed Artinian's biography, followed by a brief history of the Adana Massacres in the second section. In the third section I discuss the literary and cultural contexts of Armeno-Turkish. In the fourth section I analyze the *destan* from historical perspective. In the final section, I consider Artinian's *destan* in terms of the limits and possibilities of representing catastrophe and trauma. I argue that instead of refuting the "unspeakability" of such catastrophic events in the literary form, we need to embrace an ethical approach to understand and interpret these texts that articulate various historical and emotional registers of traumatic events.<sup>8</sup>

## Garabed Ozoone Artinian: The Author of the Destan

Garabed Ozoone Artinian was born in Adana on August 20, 1879 (1880?) and died on May 22, 1925 in Malden, Massachusetts. His middle name Ouzun or Ouzoun (meaning tall, "uzun" in Turkish), appears only on his U.S. military registration form in 1918 as "Ozoone".<sup>9</sup> According to his family, Garabed began using the name Charles only after immigrating to the United States, and the name appears on his tombstone (see **Image 1**). Prior to the Adana Massacres, Artinian was a student at the Armenian Seminary of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and was therefore literate and well educated, as the seminary was renowned for providing excellent education. When his parents were killed during the Hamidian massacres (1894-1896), the church refused to give them a proper burial. This slight eventually prompted Artinian to leave the seminary at the age of twenty, sometime around 1899. He was twenty-nine years old when the Adana Massacres took place and claimed the lives of both his wife and child. According to his descendants, he was never the same after this devastating trauma. A few years later, he married again to a woman named Asante (or Annette). According to his great grandson, Robert Artinian, in the wake of the massacres, Artinian took what remained of his family in Adana to Argentina via Alexandria, where they stayed until 1917.<sup>10</sup> According to U.S. immigration records, Charles Artinian arrived in New York, in January 1917, on the ship *Vestiris* (**Image 2**, Artinian's Photo).<sup>11</sup> His wife Asante, and children (Marie and Frank) joined him five months later. The family settled in Malden, Massachusetts, where Charles began working as a shoemaker at the Converse Rubber Company between 1917-1918. After staying one year in Malden, Charles moved with his family to Detroit where he worked at

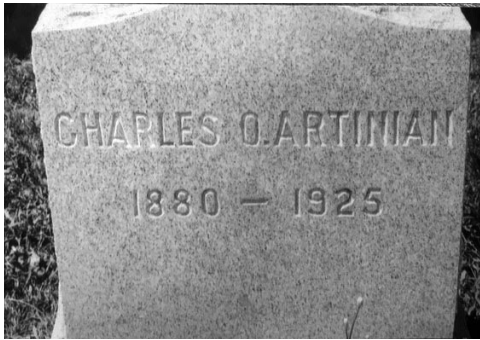
---

8 Naomi Mander, *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

9 U.S. Military Registration Card, Serial Number 1834, Order Number 2661.

10 Robert Artinian (grandson of Garabed Ozoone Artinian), interviewed by the author, 15 September 2021.

11 Armenian Immigration Project, View Ship Manifest/Border Crossing Entry, "Garabed Artinian," <https://mark-arслан.org/ArmenianImmigrants/Public-ViewDetail-ArmenianImmigrants-Main.php?submit=View&Staging=&SourcePage=Public-ViewSummary-ArmenianImmigrants-Main-ByPassengerLastName&SelectLastName=Artinian&argument1=VEST-25JAN1917-3-4-0010>, accessed 10.10.2022.



*Image 1. Charles Artinian's grave in Malden, Massachusetts (courtesy of James Artinian)*



*Image 2. Charles Artinian (courtesy of Kiri Manookin, a direct descendent of Charles's sister, Nora Artinian/Manookian)*

the Ford Factory in Highland Park and ran a fruit stand. The family traumas he endured, including the murder of his parents and his family, and the horrors he witnessed in Adana had taken a toll on him and his health. He frequently suffered from health complications. In 1925, at the age of forty-five, Charles passed away from a massive heart attack.

## **A Brief History of the Massacres**

During the second half of April 1909, the province of Adana in the southern section of the Ottoman Empire and present-day Turkey witnessed two major waves of violence that claimed the lives of thousands of people. More than 20,000 Christians (predominantly Armenian, as well as some Greeks, Syrians, and Chaldeans) were massacred by Muslims, and around 2,000 Muslims were killed by Christians.<sup>12</sup> Despite being marginalized in the historiography of late Ottoman and Modern Middle Eastern history today, the massacres

---

<sup>12</sup> See Bedross Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2022), and “From Bloodless Revolution to a Bloody Counterrevolution: The Adana Massacres of 1909” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2011): 152-73.

at the time were widely covered by the national and international press.<sup>13</sup> Thousands of documents and eyewitness accounts testify to the enormity and the cruelty of these massacres. From Ottoman and German archives to the Armenian and Vatican archives, these horrors were discussed in detail in contemporaneous political and diplomatic circles. Books, booklets, pamphlets, and articles were printed in dozens of languages to inform readers about the events.

At the time, the province of Adana had a diverse population of Muslims (Turks, Kurds, Circassians, and Arabs) and Christians (Armenians, Greeks, Syriacs, Chaldeans, and Arabs), and a large population of seasonal migrant workers. From the second half of the 19th century onward, Adana was one of the important hubs of cotton production in the Ottoman Empire. At the end of April 1909, over a period of two weeks, brutal massacres shook the province of Adana and its capital, the city of Adana. Armenian shops, churches, residences, were completely destroyed. The violence that began in the city of Adana spread eastward into the province of Aleppo. The central Ottoman government immediately sent two investigation commissions: one representing the parliament and the other the government. Furthermore, it established court-martials to try the perpetrators of the massacres. However, these courts failed to prosecute the main Turkish culprits of the massacres – a miscarriage of justice that would have repercussions in the years to come.

How can we, as historians, explain such horrendous events? As Jacques Semelin argues in his influential work *Purify and Destroy*, “‘massacre’ as a phenomenon in itself is so complex that it requires a multidisciplinary examination: from the standpoint of not only the historian but also the psychologist, the anthropologist and so on.”<sup>14</sup> In my recent book, *The Horrors of Adana*, I strove to provide an interdisciplinary explanation of the Adana massacres. I argued that the massacres were the result of long- and short-term factors. The former consisted of the major transformations that took place in the province in the 19th century as a result of global economic changes, the Tanzimat reforms, the sedentarization of nomadic tribes, migrations from the surrounding provinces, and the influx of Muslim refugees from the Caucasus. Adana’s economic importance also attracted Armenian as well as Muslim migrant workers who arrived in Adana twice a year (spring and autumn). Around 60,000-70,000 migrant workers came to the Cilician plain on an annual basis for tilling and harvesting. Muslim migrant workers composed the majority and Armenians were the minority by a ratio of 2:1. The modernization of tilling and harvesting implements towards the end of the 19th century led to a dramatic acceleration in the pace of cotton production. Armenians were at the forefront of the modernization of this industry. However, such innovation had a negative impact on migrant workers, who supported their families by itinerant labor in the fields. In the age of modernization, the increasing replacement of hand labor by mechanical labor in cotton production led to a growing resentment among migrant workers – as well as Muslim lower and lower-middle

---

13 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 168-182.

14 Jacques Sémelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 5.

classes – towards Armenians, who they considered to be the main beneficiaries of Adana's incorporation into the global economic system.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the sedentarization of tribes and the resettlement of Muslim refugees led to extensive competition over resources.<sup>16</sup>

The short-term developments that fueled the conditions leading to the Adana Massacres can be parsed into three processes: the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the emergence of opposing public spheres in the Empire, and the counterrevolution of 1909. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 with its mottos of *liberty, equality, fraternity*, and *justice*, altered the power dynamics within the Empire, resulting in serious repercussions on political processes. In Adana, a power struggle developed between the *ancien régime*, represented by strong local notables, and the new order, represented by weak elements of the Young Turks' main political party, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). An important outcome of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 was the emergence of public spheres after a period of extreme censorship under despotic rule. The extensive activities of Armenians and Armenian revolutionary parties in the post-revolutionary public sphere alarmed the notables as well as the Young Turks of Adana. They were especially anxious about the intentions of the Armenian revolutionary movement. The inflated romanticism of the Armenians towards their historical past, combined with their purchase of weapons for purposes of self-defense were seen as provocative measures. Rumors spread that the Armenians were preparing an uprising to form an independent state, and erect an Armenian Kingdom. In this charged situation, fear, hatred, resentment, and rage became the lenses through which the dominant group viewed the activities of the Armenians. Rumors about the purported Armenian uprising played a critical role in the solidification of the ethno-religious boundaries of the dominant group, by giving them a sense of bonding and preparing the ground for a violent backlash against the non-dominant group.

The counterrevolution by the reactionary forces against the Young Turks in the capital, Istanbul, on 13 April 1909, echoed strongly in Adana. The underlying socioeconomic and political tensions, at a time in which thousands of migrant workers were present in the city, became a recipe for disaster. A few days before the massacres, an altercation between an Armenian and a few Muslims resulted in the death of two of the Muslims; this became a precipitating event.<sup>17</sup> After the termination of the first wave of massacres, the public sphere was not restrained. The Young Turk newspaper *İtidal* and its editor İhsan Fikri along with his colleagues played an important role in fomenting the second wave of massacres. In a

---

15 The American Civil War of 1861-65 had a huge impact on Adana. When cotton production was disrupted in the American South which was Great Britain's main cotton supplier, the Ottoman government capitalized on the situation. See Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2015), 242-273. In 1866, with the aim of encouraging cotton production, the government distributed free American cottonseed to the peasants. Ani Voskanyan, *Ադանայի նահանգի հայերի տնտեսական վիճակը. 1909 թ. ունեզրկում* [The Economic Situation of the Armenians of Adana Province. Expropriation of 1909] (Yerevan: Gitut'yun Publishing House, 2017), 35.

16 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 27-50.

17 Ibid., 67-96.

series of articles, they publicly “confirmed” the “prophecy” regarding the seditious plans of the Armenians to kill the Muslims of Adana and reestablish the Kingdom of Cilicia.<sup>18</sup> On April 25, three battalions from Rumeli arrived in the city of Adana to preserve law and order.<sup>19</sup> After their arrival the second wave of massacres began which lasted for two days. These soldiers played an important role in the killing of Armenians and the looting of their properties.<sup>20</sup>

The twin massacres in Adana resulted in the death of more than 20,000 Armenians and 2,000 Muslims. The massacres also inflicted tremendous damage on Armenian property. Many of the villagers, tribes, and immigrants who took part in the massacres were motivated not by ideology but by the prospect of plunder, compounded by economic resentment toward the Armenians. For these groups, it was a unique opportunity for personal gain and satisfaction. In the aftermath of the massacres the local government arrested more than 100 Armenians as well as some Muslims and threw them in prison. Those prisoners were tortured and forced to provide false statements that they were planning to rise against the government.<sup>21</sup> The local court-martial that was formed by the perpetrators used these testimonies to accuse the Armenians of instigating the events. The second court-martial from Istanbul also used these testimonies together with the biased findings of the local court-martial in passing its verdicts. It accused Armenians of being responsible for the events. However, after much lobbying by the Armenians, specifically by Hagop Babigian, a member of the parliament and one of the members of the parliamentary investigation commission, the government decided to send an “unbiased” court-martial. This final court-martial sentenced the main culprits of the massacres, but gave them light sentences.<sup>22</sup> However, more than thirty Muslims (some of whom were innocent) and six Armenians were sentenced to death, and hundreds received sentences ranging from life in prison to two weeks in prison and banishment. On 12 August 1909, the Council of Ministers officially exonerated the Armenians in Adana of an attempted uprising.<sup>23</sup>

In the aftermath of the massacres, selective humanitarian aid was provided to the victims of the massacres in order to alleviate their suffering. In this context, the international press played an important role in raising awareness about the condition of Adana. It became a medium that facilitated the fundraising efforts for the destitute of Adana.

---

18 On 20 April 1909, thousands of free copies of Issue number 33 of *İtidal* were distributed in the streets of Adana. In this issue, Fikri, along with colleagues such as İsmail Sefa and Burhan Nuri, vehemently attacked the Armenians. See *İtidal*, no. 33, 20 April 1909.

19 These battalions were the first of the 81st regiment of the second Army, the second of the 83rd regiment, and third of the 10th regiment. See *İtidal*, no. 35, 28 April 1909, 3.

20 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 142-151.

21 Ibid., 183-184.

22 Ibid., 183-223.

23 *Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 300, 13 August 1909, 1.

## Lamenting through Armeno-Turkish

Lamenting the massacres of the pre-genocide periods through the genre of *destan* has been rare. In the context of the three phases of violence inflicted upon the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire (1894-1896, 1909, 1915-1923), it is the Armenian Genocide that has received the lion's share of lamentation and has preoccupied the attention of scholars due to its magnitude and reach.<sup>24</sup> What is unique about genocide lamentations is that some of them are written in Armeno-Turkish. The reason for this could be that a disproportionate number of those who survived the genocide were from Cilicia, who were predominantly Turkish speakers.<sup>25</sup> While most of the narratives on the Adana Massacres were written in Armenian, they were done so months or years after the event. In other words, they were written mostly by people who had not experienced the massacres firsthand.

Therefore, Artinian's *destan* presents an interesting case study with regard to language choice and proximity to the violence. Its appearance in Armeno-Turkish was not necessarily a given. Although the majority of the Armenians of Adana and Cilicia were Turkish speakers and some wrote in Armeno-Turkish, Artinian's education at the Armenian Seminary of Jerusalem (where instruction was in Armenian) would have allowed him the possibility to write his *destan* in Armenian. However, he chose to write it in his "mother-tongue".

Armeno-Turkish (Ottoman Turkish written in Armenian letters) played an important role in the lives of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>26</sup> At a time in which good portion of the Armenians of the Empire did not speak Armenian, Armeno-Turkish came to fill an important gap. It led to the proliferation of literacy among Armenians; it also enabled them to mark and strengthen their ethno-religious boundaries vis-à-vis other ethno-religious groups in the Ottoman Empire, while simultaneously allowing for the crossing of these boundaries, which were generally rather fluid. The development of Armeno-Turkish in the 19th century can be attributed to a host of factors, including the impact of the Armenian Zart'onq (awakening), the spread of Catholicism and Protestantism, the impact of the Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1876), the development of Armenian ethno-religious boundaries, and the role of print culture. Finally, Armeno-Turkish raises important questions regarding identity formation, belonging, and cross-cultural interaction. Artinian's choice of lamenting the massacres in Armeno-Turkish could have been the result of a few converging factors: first, it is possible he felt more comfortable expressing himself in

---

24 See Verjine Svazlian. *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors* (Yerevan: Gitut'yun Publishing House, 2011).

25 During the first phase of the genocide, the liquidation targeted primarily the populations of the six eastern provinces. Convoys of deported Armenians were systematically destroyed and only a fraction of those survived and were able to reach their final destination. The second phase of the genocide targeted the convoys sent from the eastern provinces and Cilicia to Syria. See Raymond H. Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

26 Bedross Der Matossian. "The Development of Armeno-Turkish in the 19th Century Ottoman Empire: Marking and Crossing Ethnoreligious Boundaries," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 8, no.1 (2019): 67-100.

Armeno-Turkish; second, Armeno-Turkish was the language for the people of Adana, and it made the most sense to write a lament in this common language; and finally, he may have wanted to reach a wider audience beyond Armenians.

## **Garabed Artinian's *Destan***

Artinian's *destan* tells the story of the Adana Massacres from the beginning to end, adhering to the historical events that took place in the city, and presenting testimony from a survivor who was present and bore witness to the massacre. It does not discuss the massacres in the other *sanjaks* or the province of Aleppo. Unlike a historical narrative, the *destan* is a poetic way of expressing sorrow and pain for the loss of lives, belongings, humanity, and honor. Artinian's *destan* is written in the third person in a lyrical style, while delivering a chronological account of the massacres. While narratives that seek to reconstruct events from eyewitness accounts the *destan* infuses the unfolding events with traumatic feeling. In this respect, the *destan* genre provides what singular eyewitness accounts and oral histories cannot: an in-depth emotional and harrowing manifestation of an incomprehensible crime. Through its repetitive *aaab* rhyme structure, the *destan* becomes a painful recitation of events by a witness and survivor. Each stanza ends with the word "cried". Uniquely, the lament meticulously tracks the chronological events of a heinous crime, while also evoking the impact of the massacres on the writer himself. It is an account that communicates on multiple levels, both historical and personal, in a register that is reflective yet still fresh, as the massacres and his immense personal loss had occurred just weeks before.

Critically, the information provided in the *destan* corroborates actual events. In the first two stanzas Artinian describes the beginning of the massacres. He presents the crime scene as the plain of Seyhan where a "smoke arose" (*tüttü bir duman*), referring to the burnt Armenian Quarter in the city of Adana. He then speaks about the slaughter (*kesilmiş*) of the Armenian notables Shadrig, as well as Tavit Urfalian, the latter being the president of the Armenian National Council and a member of the Court of Revisions. During the first day of the massacres, Urfalian along with Abdülkadir Bağdadizade, one of the most prominent notables of Adana, and a few other Muslim notables, went to the market to deliver the governor's (Cevad Pasha) assurances and persuade the Armenians to open their shops.<sup>27</sup> According to Hagop Terzian and other eyewitnesses, on their way to the market, Urfalian was killed on the orders of Bağdadizade.<sup>28</sup> Artinian goes on to lament the freedom that was obtained after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, only

---

<sup>27</sup> Terzian, *The Catastrophe of Cilicia*, 24. See also FO 195-2306, From William Nisbett Chambers to Barton, Adana April 15, 1909.

<sup>28</sup> In an earlier article, Hagop Terzian, writing under the penname Hagter, did not mention Bağdadizade when discussing the murder of Urfalian. See Հայտնիություն [Time], 154, 1 May 1 1909, 1.

to end in counterrevolution and violence.<sup>29</sup> Stanzas three through five present a chaotic situation. To evoke the magnitude of the agony, he describes pain as a sea (*bahri elem*) in which the Armenians were drowning (*gark oldu*). Armenians in the square were beaten. Many Armenians were sacrificed (*oldular kurban*). Artinian's choice of the word "sacrifice" (*kurban*) here seems intentional in order to signify a religious connotation of Armenians having been sacrificed like lambs for the sake of cleansing the sin of the constitution.<sup>30</sup>

### *The First Wave of Massacres (April 14-16, stanzas 6-22)*

Artinian describes the first day of the massacres as shops were closed and migrant workers joined the Turks (6). He then describes how Armenians found refuge in the churches (7-10). He describes how churches became "overcrowded" (*mahşer*) and the people inside turned "yellow and withered" (*sarardık solduk*). He calls Armenians "the children of Haig whose houses were destroyed on April 1 [14], 1909". To show the magnitude of pain, he says that "father, mother, and children cried blood" (*peder mader evlat hep kan ağlar*). Artinian then describes the resistance: "heroes" (*kahraman*) who "dug trenches" (*meterizler yaptı*) and fought with "martini rifles in hand"<sup>31</sup> (*elde martin*) (11), and describes the Turks attacking the Armenian Quarter and setting it on fire (12). He also notes that numerous Turks were shot (*vuruldu Türklerden*) by the Armenian youth in self-defense. After describing the looting that took place, he places the responsibility on the "vile Vali [governor] who ordered the massacre" (*emretti kıtala alçak valimiz*) (13-14). He recounts how the Vali sent telegrams to the periphery, calling in thousands of "savages" (*vahşiler*) to aid in the massacre and abduction of Armenians (15). He implicates villagers who came from the mountains to take part in the slaughter, looting, and raping girls, and laments the destruction of the latter's honor (*namus mahvoldu*) (16). He then elaborates on the fate of the Armenian "virgin girls" (*bakire kızlardan*) who were raped, and laments that "the past has not witnessed such a massacre" (*böyle kurgın görmemiş maziler*) (17-18). He then dwells upon the looting of the Armenian possessions and the conflagration of their houses (19), and discusses the magnitude of bullets that killed Armenians (20). Even those who tried to find refuge in foreign institutions were turned away, as these places were full. He remarks that Europeans sympathized with the Armenians (22).

---

29 On the Young Turk revolution and the reaction of the Armenians, see Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* [Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014].

30 Conservative elements within the empire saw the constitution as an abrogation of the Islamic Shari'a. On the theme of sacrifice in the Adana massacres see Nicheanian, "Catastrophic Mourning," 116-119.

31 The type of firearm used by the Armenians was called Martini-Henry, a breech-loading single-shot rifle with a lever action that was used by the British Army. On the Martini-Henry see Stephen Manning, *The Martini-Henry Rifle* (London: Osprey Publications, 2013) and Julian Bennett, "The 'Aynali Martini': The Ottoman Army's First Modern Rifle," *Anatolica* XLIV (2018): 229-255.

*The Second Wave of Massacres (April 25-27, stanzas 23-33)*

Artinian says the massacres ended after three days (April 14-16), after which five thousand soldiers entered the city (23). Here, he is referring to the Rumelian battalions that entered the city of Adana on April 25th to bring law and order. He writes that these soldiers claimed to be the army of freedom, but then “suddenly struck and every side cried” (*vurdular birden her yan ağladı*). This is the beginning of the second wave of the massacres. There are multiple explanations from contemporaneous eyewitness accounts of the reasons for the second wave of massacres.<sup>32</sup>

Artinian provides his account of how the second wave took place, how Armenian houses (24) and people burned, lamenting how “many souls under the rubbles cried” (*enkaz altında çok cenan ağladı*) (25). He describes in detail how Armenians hid in St. Stepanos Church, and how the Jesuits saved them (26). At this point, his account follows the chronological order of events: the intervention of the British vice-consul, the taking of refugees to the government palace who were then accused by the soldiers of being solely responsible for the events (27-28). He elaborates on the experiences of the caravans as they moved from the Armenian Quarter to the government palace; on the way they stumbled over the corpses (29-30). He discusses the hopeless fate of three thousand Armenians who found refuge in the Mousheghian school after the first wave of the massacres, only to be “all burnt and shot” (*hep yandı vuruldu*) in the second wave (31).<sup>33</sup> Only in two stanzas does Artinian mention names of some of the other locations where the massacres spread; these include but are not limited to Karataş Adana, Tarsus, Sis, Bulanık, Osmaniye, Yarpuz, Payas Missis and Hamidiye (32). He notes, only Dört Yol did not suffer the fate of the other cities (33).<sup>34</sup>

*The Condition and Treatment of Armenians and Refugees (stanzas 34-57)*

After his description of the main events of the massacre, Artinian turns toward describing the arrest of Armenians, their condition as refugees, and the injustices they suffered. He describes how they became refugees and “fell on the roads” (34-35). Some found refuge in Cyprus and Alexandria, while 20,000 Armenians remained in Cilicia including many orphans who became homeless. He evokes the spectacle of displaced refugees “under the tents” and laments the arrests of Armenians being thrown into the “dungeons, and the dungeons cried” (*Attı zindanlara zindan ağladı*) (36-37). In addition, he castigates the constitution (39), criticizes the “dishonorable and vile officers” (*ahlaksız namussuz alçak memurlar*) for their treatment of the Armenians (39), and bemoans the condition of Armenian leaders in the prisons who “were chained” (40). He addresses the unjust ways in which innocent people were interrogated and punished (41-42). He deplores the

32 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 145-147.

33 Ibid., 143.

34 Ibid., 123-124.

fact that the heads of the courts were themselves criminals (*katillerdir meclislerin amiri*), and directly accuses İhsan Fikri and his *İtidal* newspaper of fomenting the second wave of massacres: “It was due to him that the second massacre took place” (*Hep yüzünden oldu ikinci kıtal*) (43-44). He bemoans that the Young Turks were once called liberals. He directly calls upon Europe and the United States to intervene, as “[Armenians] were all sacrificed on the road to freedom” (*hürriyet yoluna hep olduk feda*) (45).

At this point, Artinian dwells upon the condition and treatment of the refugees (46-49). He describes how Armenians were likened to rodents and treated as such. They had to eat whatever it was “no matter whether tough, bad, painful or cruel” (*Zor şer acı zulüm ney olsa yersin*). He laments the food that they were given (50). Conditions improved when some refugees were taken to the Armenian church (51), and Artinian describes this experience and the sympathy and role of the Germans in aiding them (52-55). He specifically praises the director of the Greek Trypani factory for housing thousands of refugees in its factory. He also praises the Armenians of Alexandria for hosting refugees from the massacres, and Boghos Nubar Pasha – the president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) – and Apraham Partogh Pasha for the important role they play in aiding the refugees who arrived in Egypt (56-57).

Artinian ends the *destan* by informing the reader that on 4 July 1909, along with other refugees, he left Mersin, took a ship to Iskenderun and then to Latakia, from Latakia to Tarabulus (Tripoli), from Tarabulus to Beirut, from Beirut to Haifa, from Haifa to Jaffa, from Jaffa to Beirut, and then to Iskenderun.

## Historical Analysis of the *Destan*

Such an agonizing and detailed account leaves no doubt that Artinian himself was present during the massacres. As mentioned earlier, both his wife and child were killed during the massacres. Moreover, he composed this *destan* only weeks after these events, quite likely when his grief and traumatic experience remained fresh and consuming. His overwhelming pain and sorrow are heightened by the compacted rhyme scheme of *aaab*. Each *destan* ends with the word “cried” (*ağladı*). Hence, the *destan* generates emotional power in its shortened rhyme scheme that ends each stanza with ‘and x cried’. There is a powerful cumulative effect that conveys an entire world in pain and sorrow, weeping, which one could argue is an attempt at representing the magnitude of the catastrophe. The object that cries in the end of each stanza differs. It includes a wide variety of people, places and things including girl, man, group, rose, river, conscience, victims, fire, mothers, bodies, prisoners, the Patriarch, homeland, tongue, liberals, Dashnaks and Hnchaks, Jesuits and Americans, and so on. The effect of this enumeration is powerful, evoking the entire Armenian people in lament.

The *destan* coherently portrays the massacres and its impact on the Armenians of Adana in a way that corroborated to the real events. By doing so, Artinian himself becomes a

“poet-historian”. In addition to being an eyewitness to the events, he also records the most important phases of the massacres. For the sake of brevity, I would like to bring few examples in order to demonstrate this. At several points Artinian uses nature to embody the pervasiveness of the pain and anguish. He uses flowers such as roses, tulips, and hyacinth to describe sorrow, and invokes the sea as a metaphor to demonstrate the magnitude of the pain in which Armenians drowned. He mentions multiple times two major rivers, Seyan and Ceyhan, where Armenian bodies were dumped. Indeed, during the aftermath of the first wave of massacres (April 14-16), garbage carriages from the municipality collected hundreds of bodies from the streets and threw them in the Seyhan river.<sup>35</sup>

Surprisingly, religion or Christianity does not appear in the *destan*. God appears only twice: “Help us, oh just God” (*Yârdim et bize ey adil Allah*), and “Seeing this from the skies, God cried” (*gördü ta göklerde sübhan ağladı*). Churches on the other hand appear multiple times not as religious edifices but as physical locations of refuge. However, Artinian laments that even churches failed to protect the Armenians. Indeed, Armenians who survived the first round of massacres found shelter at the Gregorian Armenian, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Protestant, Jesuit, Syriac, and Chaldean churches. During the second wave of massacres Surp Step‘anos Church was besieged and set on fire. The people inside were able to escape to the nearby Syriac Church, where the Syriacs were hiding, but the mob soon broke into the church-yard and started killing. Armenians and Syriacs had no choice but to return to Surp Stepanos Church.<sup>36</sup>

Artinian’s lament focuses on women and children, as they are helpless and vulnerable. They are divided into three categories: mothers, daughters, and children. The mothers agonized and cried over the fate that would befall them. However, in one place Artinian indicates that “Father, mother, children — all cry blood” suggesting that anguish spared no family member, young or old. Even the Armenian “heroes” were unable to defend the Armenian girls from sexual violence.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, during the massacres of Adana there were numerous cases of rape. Most of those who violated minors, girls, or women were sentenced by the Courts Martial to three years in prison with hard labor according to the article 198 of the Imperial Ottoman Penal Code (IOPC). Girls and women were usually abducted to Muslim households and forced into marriage or becoming concubines.<sup>38</sup> Other girls and women were burnt alive or killed. In stanza sixteen, Artinian laments this loss saying: “so many tall and beautiful ones, burned and destroyed by you! – Ah, the fires!” (*nice suna boylu çok keman kaşlar, yaktı kül etti öf sizi ateşler*). Artinian emphasis on fire in his *destan* should not come as a surprise. During the second wave of massacres the mob destroyed the entire Armenian residential quarter, as well as most of the houses in the

35 S. Z., *Адаанские черные дни* [The Black Days of Adana] (Baku: Electric Printing House of the Newspaper Baku, 1909) and from the Austro-Hungarian Consul of Mersin to the Consul of Aleppo, Mersin, April 15, 1909, no. 3368, in Artem Ohandjanian, *Österreich – Armenien: 1872-1936, Faksimilesammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke* (Vienna: Ohandjanian Verlag): 3368.

36 Terzian, *The Catastrophe of Cilicia*, 101.

37 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 213.

38 Ibid., 115.

outlying districts that were inhabited by Christians. The mob used kerosene liberally to ignite the houses.<sup>39</sup>

Resistance as a theme is mentioned in passing in the *destan*. Armenians fought back and attempted to stop the massacres, mainly during the first wave. Artinian dedicates two stanzas to such resistance, which was mainly carried out by the youths who “dug trenches and hastened to work” (*meterizler yaptı işe girdi*). They fought hard with “rifles in hand”. While he lists the other places leveled by the massacres (32), he suggests that resistance in Dörtyol was more successful, saying that while “Cilicia came to ruin, Only in Dörtyol are there houses [remaining]” (*hasılı Giligia oldu verane, yalnız bir Dörtyol tek hane*). Indeed, during the first wave of massacres, Armenians defended the Armenian Quarter and fortified themselves in their houses. Had they not mounted a strong defense, “destruction of life and property would have been complete”.<sup>40</sup> While outside the city of Adana most of the Armenian resistance efforts did not yield to any result, it was only in Dörtyol (Chorkmarzban), a city in the northern part of İskenderun, where Armenians were able to resist the massacres successfully.<sup>41</sup>

Artinian implicates the governor and officials and provides more specific details of the carnage:

The Vali and high officials had sent telegrams  
Thousands of savages had entered all places  
They killed all those who were Armenians  
Girls were abducted and women cried.

During the first wave of massacres the Vali of Adana Cevad Bey was in “state of panic” and did not know how to handle the situation. Observers at the time said that he “had done absolutely nothing” in order to find a remedy to the urgent situation.<sup>42</sup> He only sent telegrams lamenting the situation. It is a known fact that mob that Artinian calls them “savages” who participated in the massacres was composed of migrant workers, Kurds, Circassians, Cretan Muslims, Muslim refugees, and Başiboziuks (irregular soldiers) wearing white turbans (*sarık*s) around their fezzes in order to distinguish themselves from the Christians and carrying hatchets, blunt instruments, axes, and swords.<sup>43</sup>

Another fact explored by Artinian is the manner in which Armenians were killed by concentrating on two methods: fire and shooting. Indeed, primary sources corroborate

---

39 Henry Charles Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe: Changes and Problems in the Near East* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1911), 137.

40 From William Nesbitt Chambers to Barton, Adana, April 15, 1909, FO195-2306.

41 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 123-125.

42 Doughty-Wylie to the British Ambassador in Constantinople, April 21, 1909, FO195/2306.

43 From the Consul of Austria-Hungary in Mersin to his excellency Marquis von Pallavicini Ambassador extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of his Majesty, Mersin, April 30, 1909, in Ohandjanian, *Österreich–Armenien*, 3397.

these details.<sup>44</sup> Fire and bullets engulfed the Armenians, and even some who escaped the fire later would be shot:

So many lambs that escaped the fire  
They are hit by the bullet and ache so intensely  
The bullets of the soldiers do not stop buzzing  
Seeing this from the skies, God cried.

Indeed, the use of firearms as a method of killing was widely used during both waves of massacres. For example, on April 21 – seven days after the first massacres – the British ship *Swiftsure* docked in Mersin. Dr. Richard Connell, the surgeon from the ship, rushed to the city of Adana in order to examine the condition of the wounded in the American Mission, the French nuns' school, the French Jesuits' school, the Armenian churches, and the hospital established by Lilian Doughty-Wylie. He estimated that 50-60 percent of the patients' wounds were caused by Martini rifle bullets; 15-20 percent by swords and other sharp instruments; 15 percent by clubs and sharp sticks; 10-15 percent by Mauser and revolver bullets; 5 percent by bayonets; and 3-6 percent by revolver and short-gun wounds. These figures show the superiority of the Martini rifles in causing bodily harm.

In his description of killing by fire Artinian uses the terms “flames” (*ateşler*) “immolated” (*yanan*) and “burnt” (*yandı*). In one place he says: “Fire has spread, people have been struck with terror” (*yangın sardı dehşetlendi halımız*). One of the worst conflagrations in the city took place at the Mousheghian-Apakarian<sup>45</sup> school during the second wave of massacres:

Those who came from village to city with great difficulty  
So many girls and women, so many brides  
The three thousand that entered the Mousheghian school  
All of them were burnt and shot, and those who escaped cried.

During the first wave of massacres, Armenians from the surrounding villages poured into the city of Adana in order to find refuge in the churches and schools including the Mousheghian-Apkarian school. During the second wave of massacres, those who were in the Mousheghian-Apkarian school were burned alive. Hagop Terzian, an eyewitness to the event describes:

Stepping barefoot on the piles of embers which blocked the streets, we were running for our life, with the aim of arriving to the Jesuit church as soon as possible. Not far away we saw hundreds of bodies in front of the Mousheghian-Apkarian school, which were burned during their

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 136.

<sup>45</sup> The school is also sometimes referred to as Mousheghian-Apkarian.

escape and were hit mercilessly, and some, half-naked, were rendering  
their souls with roaring agony.<sup>46</sup>

Artinian tends to concentrate on injustice. Only once does he refer to the perpetrators of the massacres as Muslims; another time he calls them “the hypocrite peasants who joined the Turks” (*Türklerle birleşti mürai fellah*). Here, he is likely referring to migrant laborers or the *fellahin* (Muslim agricultural workers), who took part in the massacres. He also singles out the “riffraff” (*çirpılilar*) and the “savage people who poured from the mountains” (*boşaldı dağlardan vahşi ahali*). For the second wave of the massacres, he implicates the Rumelian battalions saying:

Three days later, they say the massacre is over  
Five thousand soldiers entered the city altogether  
We are the army of freedom, they say do not be afraid  
Suddenly they struck and every side cried.

Indeed, on the morning of Sunday, April 25, three battalions from the second Army arrived in Adana in order to preserve law and order.<sup>47</sup> A day after their arrival, the second wave of the massacres began. The troops actively participated in attacking and burning the Armenian schools that housed the injured and the refugees from the first wave of the massacres and perpetrated attacks on the Armenian Quarter. Multiple explanations have been provided by contemporaneous eyewitness accounts about the reasons for the participation of the Rumelian soldiers in the massacres.<sup>48</sup> For example, one explanation contends that after the battalions set up camp in Adana, shots were fired at their tents and a rumor immediately spread that the Armenians had opened fire on the troops from a church tower in town.<sup>49</sup> Another argued that rumors spread that Armenians had attacked the Muslims neighborhood and killed all the Muslims. An additional explanation is that when the battalions arrived in Adana, they demanded that the Armenians of the Armenian Quarter surrender their weapons, to which the Armenians responded by shooting five soldiers, precipitating the second wave of the massacres.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to the battalion, he accuses İhsan Fikri the editor of *İtidal* newspaper for fomenting the second wave of the massacres:

Especially that İhsan and that evil İtidal!  
It was due to him that the second massacre took place

---

46 Terzian, *The Catastrophe of Cilicia*, 109.

47 These battalions were the first of the 81st regiment of the second Army, the second of the 83rd regiment, and third of the 10th regiment. see *İtidal*, April 28, 1909, no. 35, 3.

48 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 145-147.

49 Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe*, 135.

50 SMS Hamburg, telegraph from Mersin, April 29, 1909, no. 202, in Ambassador in Constantinople (Marshal von Bieberstein) to the Foreign Office, April 30, 1909, DE/ PA-AA/R 13184.

It turns out that the catamite had no just judgment on violence  
He brought so much shame on himself, the language cried.

According to all sources, in the aftermath of the first massacres the *İtidal* newspaper and its editor, İhsan İskenderi, the CUP leader, along with his comrades, were instrumental in shaping public opinion and convincing the masses that Armenians had initiated a failed revolt in an attempt to reestablish their kingdom. Regardless of the veracity of the claims made by *İtidal*, they were vital in shaping public opinion in Adana, particularly the belief in an Armenian conspiracy. This played an important role in heightening the emotions of the Muslims of the city of Adana, who saw themselves as victims.<sup>51</sup>

He continues saying that “They are the murderers and they are the cruel” (*katil kendiler hem gaddar kendiler*) who “alas... were once called liberals” (*hayıf ki bir zaman ahrar dindiler*). Artinian here appears to be blaming the Young Turks without mentioning them by name. He calls upon Europe and America to help the Armenians who “were all sacrificed on the road to freedom.” This line refers to the Armenians who backed the revolution and constitution, and paid a high price for it.

Immediately after the massacres, Armenians were arrested and thrown into prisons. They were accused of fomenting an uprising. Artinian decries the attitude of the local government calling them “immoral, dishonorable and vile” (*Ahlaksız namussuz alçak*). He describes in detail the condition of the Armenians in the prisons saying:

The leaders in the dungeons – what a grief is this!  
They were chained – what type of court is this!  
Beatings were struck – what kind of belief is this!  
There is no justice at all, the Kuran cried.

Hagop Terzian, one of the people arrested at the time, explains in detail how confessions were forcefully extracted from the Armenians.<sup>52</sup> According to him, after the second wave of massacres, prominent Armenian figures in Adana were arrested and taken to the military barracks near the train station. Armenian prisoners were also brought from Mersin, Tarsus, Sis, and Haçin.<sup>53</sup> The Armenians who were arrested were tortured during the interrogation and forced to sign fake statements claiming that the Armenians were indeed planning an uprising.<sup>54</sup> Artinian continues:

The inquisition started in a discretionary manner  
Innocent people were summoned ten times a day

---

51 Der Matossian, *The Horrors of Adana*, 137-142.

52 Terzian, *The Catastrophe of Cilicia*, 340-364.

53 Ibid., 358.

54 Artin Arslanian, *Adana'da adalet nasıl mahkûm oldu* [How justice was convicted in Adana] (Le Caire, 1909 [1325]), 7.

Discretionary punishments, reprimands and sentences, all were issued  
unjustly  
Innocents who were convicted cried.

Artinian laments that those who issued the sentences were themselves the criminals. This corroborates actual events. In the aftermath of the massacres a local court-martial was formed by some of the participants of the massacres.<sup>55</sup> This court accused Armenians of initiating an uprising.<sup>56</sup> Although convicted by the biased court-martial under the presidency of Kenan Pasha, the Council of Ministers exonerated them a few months later.<sup>57</sup>

Artinian provides unique insight into the condition of the refugees through a visceral description of food. He dedicates a whole stanza describing the food:

Tasteless soups come to aid  
Full of bones and left-over meats  
It has a bad smell and the stomach cannot bear  
We gave up the soup and the compote cried.

Artinian here describes the food that was given to the thousands of refugees who were crammed in the Greek Tyrpani factory and the German cotton factory. Due to the fact that most of the mills and the bakeries were burned, making the task of supplying bread more difficult. Hence, the refugees had to comply with the quality of food that was given to them even if that meant to eat the inedible.

## The Representation of Catastrophe and Trauma

As discussed above, the literary responses to the Adana Massacres have attempted to represent the magnitude of the catastrophe, but many scholars debate whether or not it is possible to represent a crime of such a magnitude in literary form. Can a memoir, a novel, or a *destan* do justice to the victims of the catastrophe? Is a *destan* like Artinian's able to represent the echoes of death and the pain of the survivors? Were these texts written as a way of mourning the catastrophe? Was Artinian himself able to mourn the massacres through his *destan*?

Based on the above-mentioned examples that corroborates with historical events, I

---

55 Major Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 14 June 1909, enclosure in no. 149, in Sir. G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey (Received 29 June 1909), Constantinople, 22 June 1909, in *Further Correspondence*, April-June 1909 and Vice-Consul Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 8 May 1909, in enclosure 4 in no. 103, in Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey (Received 24 May 1909), no. 346, Pera, 17 May 1909, in *Further Correspondence*, April-June 1909.

56 Ferriman Z. Duckett, *The Young Turks and the Truth about the Holocaust at Adana in Asia Minor, during April, 1909* (London, 1913), 104.

57 *Takvim-i Vekayi*, 13 August 1909, no. 300,1.

argue that Artinian's *destan* offers us more than a literary lamentation of the event itself. It provides us a detailed coverage of the anatomy of the massacres, from its beginning to its termination. Thus, in addition to its literary importance, it should also be considered as an important historical source. Artinian's attention to historical details coupled with his literary skills presents us a grim image. An image that was seen and experienced through one survivor who unlike thousands of other survivors had a voice and a style through which he was able to pen down the *destan*.

The question of a catastrophic event's representability has been discussed extensively in Armenian literary criticism. For example, the philosopher Marc Nichanian develops a thesis around the idea of the impossibility of representing the catastrophe. Nichanian argues that in both cases of the Hamidian and Adana massacres, Armenians were "barred from mourning."<sup>58</sup> He contends that the "collective murder imposed on the collective psyche of the victims a generalized interdiction of mourning."<sup>59</sup> Following Hagop Oshagan, Nichanian argues that massacres (*aghed*) are unrepresentable, since catastrophe "obliges us to imagine more than murder, pain, and death. It calls for, it demands, an image of the totality, the *sum*."<sup>60</sup> He elaborates:

This something beyond the representable, beyond all possible narration (a narration supposes in any case an unshattered language, but inversely, if a narration were possible, it would not say or represent the Catastrophe), has no name. One cannot fix it, look at it directly, make of it an idea or a concept, nor can one make of it an object of science or knowledge. No discipline could account for it in its essence and wholeness.<sup>61</sup>

Nichanian goes further by arguing that what is horrific about the catastrophe is not the murder of the collective, but the "will to annihilation that is expressed in justice redoubling the crime."<sup>62</sup> Such a will is not representable because it resists comprehension on any level:

Again, what is catastrophic for the victim is not extermination, it is the *will to extermination* ... not the deaths in tens of thousands or in millions. No, it is the will to annihilate, *because it cannot be integrated* into any psychological, rational, or psychical explanation whatever.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> Nichanian, "Catastrophic Mourning," 100.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 115-16. Italics appear in the original.

I concur with Nichanian that it is impossible to fully represent a catastrophe of such a magnitude in a literary form. However, some poetic forms, if they do not exactly “shatter” language, at least they seek to conjure that which is not directly expressible. It is not a matter of “imagining” catastrophe or presenting “an image of its totality, the sum.” Rather it is a form of expression that can or attempt to evoke an experience of shattering, to approach in some groping way, the “unrepresentable.” What is notable about Artinian’s *destan* is the way in which he juxtaposes a timeline of events reconstructed from his first-hand experience and transpired events with a lament that conjures an entire world crying out in pain and sorrow. If his *destan* does not represent a “totality”, it does summon a collective wail. Moreover, his response is valuable both as a historical source and as an expression of trauma’s infliction, both on the personal and the communal levels.

Unlike Zabel Yesayan, the works of whom Nichanian dwells upon, Artinian recounts the events of the month of April 1909. He experienced and witnessed first-hand what happened in the city. He wrote the *destan* to bear witness to the catastrophe. In this way, it is a *destan* of mourning written “against the interdiction of mourning.” The *destan* is, at the same time, a work of testimony and a historical record.

Most literary responses to the massacres were written in Armenian, while Artinian’s *destan* was written in Armeno-Turkish. This choice makes the work more striking as it was written in the language of both the perpetrator and the victim. Armeno-Turkish was the language that people wrote during the catastrophe. It was the language he heard crying out. It was his language and part of his culture. Indeed, employing Armeno-Turkish as a language of lament raises the question of how, among neighbors who share the same language and “culture,” a person decides one day to suddenly rise and kill a neighbor. In Hagop Oshagan’s words:

The naked, terrible and cold reality is that one spring morning one of the two peoples who had lived side by side for centuries took up arms against the other, and skewered with a sword everything they could get their hands on, woman, man, son and daughter. When the knife does not suffice, fire takes over. When the evening falls, there is nothing left but smoke, and bones to cover over. I repeat: the tragedy is not in the Why! It’s the How that revolted our conscience and our intellect. How the hearts of men could be transformed into stone from one instant to the next, in order to tolerate all the things that transform each page of this book into a miniature Passion, much more terrifying than anything similar one might read in Dante and the others?<sup>64</sup>

More importantly, it is necessary to confront the conundrum of how and why ordinary people can become perpetrators of violence in a very short period of time. The

---

64 Hagop Oshagan, Համապատկեր սրեւնտեսի գրականութեան [Overview of Western Armenian Literature] Vol. 6 (Beirut: Hamazgayin, 1968), translated by Marc Nichanian in *Catastrophic Mourning*, 104.

literature on genocide and massacres in recent decades has demonstrated that in particular circumstances, ordinary men and women from many different religious and cultural backgrounds are capable of barbaric crimes.<sup>65</sup>

Literary responses to catastrophic events can also provide insight into the impact of the event on the author, the “poet-historian”. Especially in the case of Artinian – who, when writing his *destan*, must have still been engulfed in the catastrophe, in its wake – a literary response is a manifestation if not a representation of the emotional and mental state of the writer. Artinian not only witnessed the onslaught of massacre, but he also lost his wife and child to it. Who could ever “be the same” after suffering such trauma? This raises a question about catastrophe ancillary to the one Nicanian is asking: is trauma as an experience representable in literary form?

Much scholarly attention has been given to this question from a psychoanalytical perspective. While Nicanian focuses on the missing archive and missing testimony to develop his theory of irrepresentability, the field of trauma studies focuses on how trauma cannot be integrated into a person’s sense-making faculties. The concept of trauma “is generally understood as a severely disruptive experience that profoundly impacts the self’s emotional organization and perception of the external world.”<sup>66</sup> The first wave of scholars in trauma studies argued that trauma was an unrepresentable event.<sup>67</sup> Cathy Caruth, relying on Freudian theory, argued that “trauma’s latency and dissociation disrupts the ability to fully understand or represent a traumatic experience.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Michelle Balaev maintains that, “Since traumatic experience enters the psyche differently than normal experience and creates an abnormal memory that resists narrative representation, the unique process of this remembering results in an approximate recall but never determinate knowledge.”<sup>69</sup> As a critique of this early trauma studies approach, some scholars developed a new theoretical approach called the Pluralistic Model of Trauma.<sup>70</sup>

---

65 Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017), and James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Murder* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

66 Michelle Balaev, “Trauma Studies,” in *A Companion to Literary Theory*, ed. David H. Richter (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 360.

67 For the traditional model that follows the unrepresentability of trauma in literary form, see Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010); and Dominic LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014).

68 Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 11.

69 Balaev, “Trauma Studies,” 364.

70 On Pluralistic Trauma Theory see Michelle Balaev, *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2012) and Michelle Balaev (ed.), *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Naomi Mandel, *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Ann Cvetkovice, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); and Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

It challenged the trauma-as-unspeakable trope and argued that the “unspeakability of trauma is one among many responses to an extreme event rather than its defining feature.”<sup>71</sup> Instead, the pluralistic model contends that traumatic experience “uncovers new relationships between experience, language, and knowledge that detail the social significance of trauma.”<sup>72</sup> This approach acknowledges and accommodates flexibility in human experience and expression and “provides greater attention to the variability of traumatic representations.”<sup>73</sup> Critically, it at least allows for the possibility of language to convey different meanings or registers of traumatic experience.

Accepting the traditional approach to trauma, one might argue that Artinian’s *destan* could only ever fail to represent his traumatic experience. However, such a hardened stance effectively, even if unintentionally, devalues the experience of survivors like Artinian and his efforts to express or convey the magnitude of collective pain, sorrow and trauma. As human beings we have a moral obligation to engage with his text and to acknowledge the trauma, however ‘inadequately’ represented. Instead of refuting the “speakability” of trauma, we should adopt an ethical approach that embraces what is left by survivors and treat these as valuable, informative accounts that articulate various historical and emotional registers of traumatic, catastrophic events. Whether or not catastrophe is unexplainable or trauma is unspeakable, scholars, historians and descendants have the duty to understand and interpret these texts.

## Conclusion

Unlike the literary reactions to the Adana massacres that were written ex post facto, Artinian’s lamentation of these massacres represents a rare account written nearly simultaneously with the events as they unfolded. Through his *destan* Artinian ventured to “speak” the “unspeakable.” It was written in Armeno-Turkish, a language in which Artinian felt comfortable to lament the massacres. Artinian wrote the *destan* to bear witness to the catastrophe. He experienced these events first-hand. Hence, the *destan* is a work of art, a work of testimony, and an expression of pain and sorrow at the same time. Through mourning the massacres, Artinian provided us with a chronological order of the events that transpired over several weeks in the city of Adana. The *destan* was written on 4 June 1909, a mere five and a half weeks after the end of the second wave of massacres. There was no time to process the catastrophe. Each stanza in the *destan* is a testimony to that fact. It is full of anguish and pain. Through the *destan*, Artinian attempted to comprehend the incomprehensible. The result achieved at least three things: a striking lamentation written in Armeno-Turkish about an incomprehensible catastrophe,

---

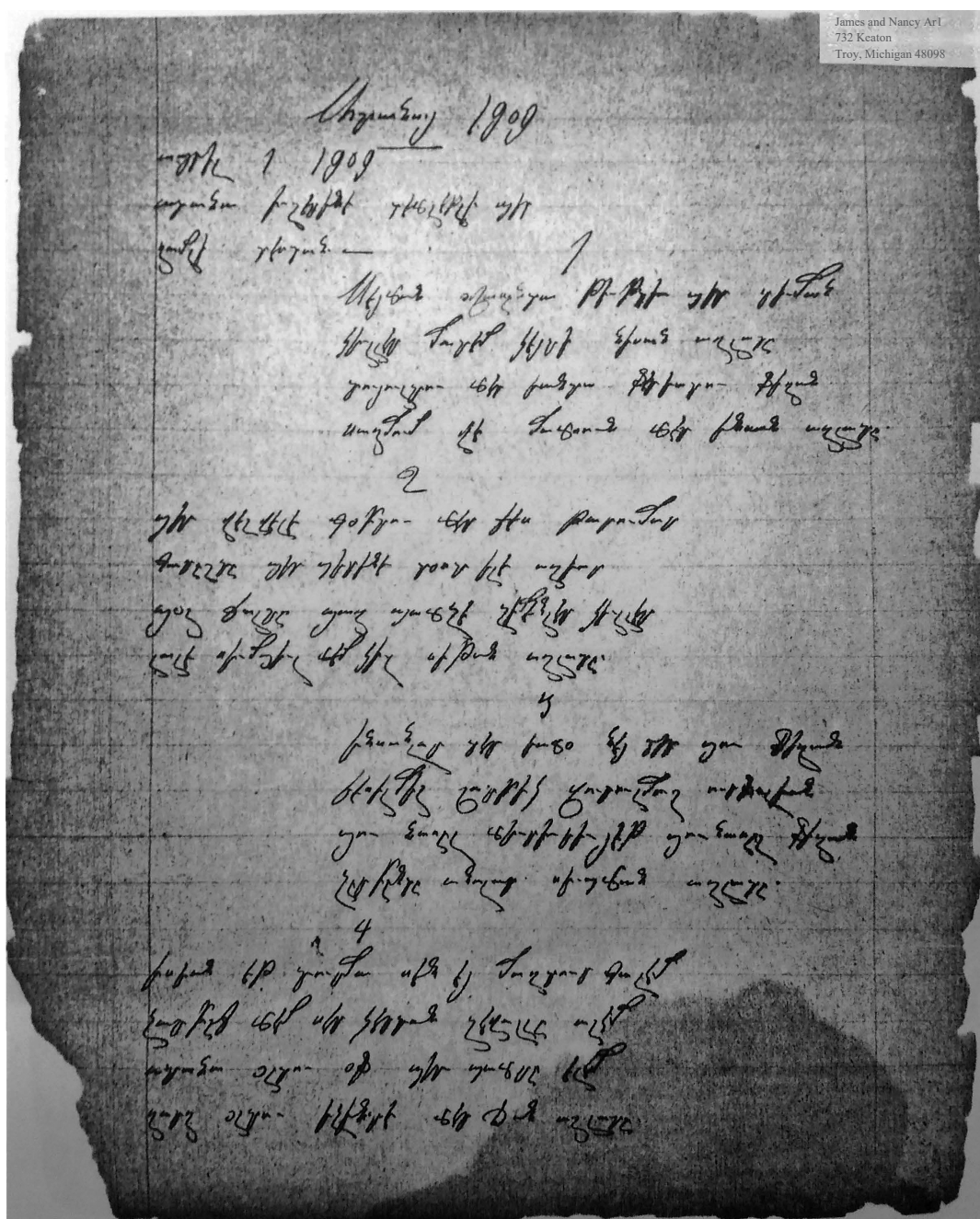
71 Balaev, “Trauma Studies,” 360.

72 Ibid., 366.

73 Ibid.

a record and reconstruction of the trajectory of the events that transpired, written almost in real time, and a personal expression of pain and anguish by a survivor and witness to the massacres and their aftermath. Hence, the *destan* has literary as well as historical value and should be treated as a uniquely informative source and expression.

Most of the lamentation *destans* written in Armeno-Turkish or conveyed orally pertain to the Armenian Genocide. This article introduces a unique *destan* written in Armeno-Turkish on the Adana Massacres. The unstudied material from the Adana Massacres as well as the Armenian Genocide deserve further consideration by historians, literary critics, and scholars of trauma and memory studies, as it provides potentially new and different perspectives on less studied phases and registers of the catastrophe, which could be illuminated by serious engagement with literary criticism and trauma and memory studies.



Charles Ozun Artinian - A Story of Adana (original manuscript\_pdf)

## **Appendix**

### **Turkish Transliteration**

Charles Ozun Artinian Poem

Adana 1909 April 1 1909

Adana üzerine dehşetli bir gamlı destan

1

Seyhan ovasında tüttü bir duman  
Güller matem geydi nisan ağladı  
Duyuldu her yanda feryat u figan  
Sağmum ve mahsun her insan ağladı

2

Bir velvele koptu herkes tarumar  
Karıştı birbirine dost ile ağpar  
Boş kaldı bağ bahçe çimenler güller  
Lale sümbül hem gül-sitan ağladı

3

İnsanlar der yahu neydir bu figan  
Kesilmiş Şadrig vurulmuş Urfalian  
Bu nasıl hürriyet bu nasıl figan  
Çırpında analar sıbyan ağladı

4

İsyân et durma ey mağdur kalem  
Çarpık hem ser-gerdan zevallı alem  
Adana oldu öf bir bahrı elem  
Gark oldu içinde her can ağladı

5

Meydanda ahali çırpışırılar aman  
Zira başladı bir harb-i nagehan  
Nice Ermeniler oldular kurban  
Nehirler doldu ta Cihan ağladı

6

Dükkanlar kapandı alındı silah  
Türklerle birleşti mürâi fellah  
Yârdim et bize ey adil Allah  
Ümitsiz kaldı Seyhan ağladı

7

İmkânsız çaresiz meydanda kaldık  
Herkes her yerden camlara dolduk  
Camlar mahşer mahşer oldu sarardık solduk  
Sahab-ı servet hep üryan ağladı

8

Nisan 1dir dokuz yüz doksan senesi  
Altüst oldu Haig sübyan lânesi  
Çün insiz kaldı herkesin hanesi  
Herkesi merhamet vicdan ağladı

9

Derman mı kaldı hep çocuklar ağlar  
Bayılır evladın ciğerin dağlar  
Seyhan u Ceyhan usulden çağlar  
Peder mader evlat hep kan ağlar

10

Fırlarsın dışarı lakin ne çare  
Evlat u ayalın camda biçare  
Gezersin şorda ve şurda avare  
şaşırdı evli kahraman ağladı

11

Kahraman gençlerdir derhal yetişti  
Meterisler yaptı işe girişti  
Tütün gibi sündü zalım vuruştı  
Elde martin her nev cihan ağladı

12

Gençler martinleri gümüşler yaman  
Hay mahallesine girmiş Müslüman  
Çok niyetler oldu kestiler duman  
Vuruldu Türklerden kalan ağladı

13

Talan oldu encam her bir malımız  
Emretti kıtala alçak valimiz  
Yangın sardı dehşetlendi halımız  
Çırpılılar geldi hep erkan ağladı

14

Boşaldı dağlardan vahşi ahali  
Her yeri kesmişler köyler hep hali  
Çok yaman oldu Adana hali  
Namus mahvoldu duhtirun ağladı

15

Vali ve erkanı teller vermişler  
Binlerce vahşiler her yere girmişler  
Ermeni olanı hep öldürmüşler  
Kızlar kaçırıldı nisvan ağladı

16

Gaddar pençelere düştü kardaşlar  
Nice suna boylu çok keman kaşlar  
Yaktı kül etti öf sizi ateşler  
Üstünüzde tüten duman ağladı

17

Artık Yetiş sen ey gaddar asuman  
Bakire kızlardan niceler üryan  
Adana şehrimiz oldu küllü han  
Nâleden mamul çok harman ağladı

18

Haylarda doğdu öf nice yazılar  
Her biri bin değer nice gaziler  
Böyle kırgın görmemiş maziler  
Yas libası geydi devran ağladı

19

Figani ve feryaddır gayrı halimiz  
Yandı yağma oldu bütün malımız  
Ateşler içinde hep ahalimiz  
Çırpını çırpını her ane ağladı

20

Yangından kaçan şol nice kuzular  
Kurşunu yer sızım sızım sızılar  
Asker kurşunları durmaz vızılar  
Gördü ta göklerde sübhan ağladı

21

Ahali pek çoktur yerler almadı  
Ecnebilerde boş bir yer kalmadı  
Hiçbir memlekette böyle olmadı  
Kül oldu şehrimiz veren ağladı

22

Avrupa der gayri nedir bu vahşet  
Çırpılılar gelir etmez merhamet  
Derler bu millete çoktur bu mihnet  
Yetişir artık çok zaman ağladı

23

Üç gün sonra kıtal hitamdır derler  
Beş bin asker birden şehre girerler  
Biz hür askeriz korkmayınız derler  
Vurdular birden her yan ağladı

24

Her mahallere ateş verildi  
Kudurgan alevler tekrar görüldü  
Kuzular vuruldu öf yere serildi  
Sorma ses rız oldu yanan ağladı

25

Sarıldı birbirine nice kız karı  
Kim duysa dayanmaz ol ah û zârı  
Yangınlar çok bisunçlar mezarı  
Enkaz altında çok cenan ağladı

26

Sp. Stepanosda figanlı sesler  
Ateşler içinde figanlı sesler  
Yangın sarmış dehşetlenmiş neferler  
Cizvitler kurtardı kesen ağladı

27

İngiliz konsülü derhal atıldı  
Bütün mağdurlar öne katıldı  
Nice gençler cansız yatıldı  
Sarayda her mihman olsun ağladı

28

Mihman oldu sarayda binlerce canlar  
Asker sitem eder ağlar insanlar  
Dizildi pakdamen kaşı kemanlar  
Esir gibi orda duran ağladı

29

Askerler bitakib yola dizildi  
Hiç kimsede hal kalmadı ezildi  
Çocuklar uykusuz gözler süzüldü  
Yürüdü bu esir kavran ağladı

30

Bu kervandır başlar sokağa yörür  
Dost nicelerinden harmanlar görür  
Evladını görsen derhal devrilir  
Ölüler başında Cenana ağladı

31

Köylerden zor şer şehre gelenler  
Nice kız karı ve nice gelinler  
Musheghian mektebine üç bin girenler  
Hep yandı vuruldu kaçan ağladı

32

Karataş Adana Tarsus ve Sis  
Bulanık Osmaniye Yarpuz ve Payas  
Misis Hamidiye her Kalata (?) kaya  
Vuruldu duydu Hayasdan ağladı

33

Hasılı Giligia oldu verane  
Yalınız bir Dört Yol tek hane  
Çeşitli Figanle olduk divane  
Patrik şol İzmirlian ağladı

34

Muhacir olduk düştük yollara  
Atıldık biçimsiz nice kollara  
Muhtaç olduk nice adi kullara  
El pençe durduk haneden ağladı

35

Kıbrıs İskenderiye'dir mekânımız  
Hep avara olduk yok imkânımız  
Kaldı vatanda 20,000 canımız  
Öksüz dul çıplak vatan ağladı

36

Vatanda hiç ev yok çadır kuruldu  
Yangından kıtalden herkes yoruldu  
Patrik Hanelerden haller soruldu  
Panasdeghdz Badriark şol Turian ağladı

37

Bu kafi değildir zalim hükûmet?  
Çoklarına da ettiniz eziyet  
Merhamet etmeye hiç etmiş niyet  
Attı zindanlara zindan ağladı

38

Bu mu meşrutiyet işit ey dünya  
Namustur dünyada ulyadan ulya  
Namus payumal oldu değildir ulya  
Ashabı namus duhteren ağladı

39

Ahlaksız namussuz alçak memurlar  
Verirler her gün çok adi emirler  
Hep adaletsizdir öyle umurlar  
Geldiğinde Vehabedian Ağladı

40

Zindanda büyükler bu ney figandır  
Zincirlediler bu ney divandır  
Dayaklar vuruldu bu ney imandır  
Hiç adalet yok kuran ağladı

41

Başladı istintak keyfine göre  
Çağrılır bir bisunç günde on kere  
Tazir tekdir hüküm hep hâksız yere  
Besunç bisunç mahkûm olan ağladı

42

Katillerdir meclislerin amiri  
Mümkün bu zalumun değer tamiri  
Mutaassıbdır hep bir nas-ı kerih  
Bu gaddar huzura çıkan ağladı

43

Hele şol İhsan alçak İtidal  
Hep yüzünden oldu ikinci kıtal  
Meğer yokmuş puştta ahkem cebir hal  
Pek çok rezillendi lisan ağladı

44

Katil kendiler hem gaddar kendiler  
Her bir çeşit rezaleti edenler  
Hayıf ki bir zaman ahrar dendiler  
Eğer var ise ahraran ağladı

45

Bu ney figandır işit Avrupa  
Ney duruyorsun ey Amerika  
Hürriyet yoluna hep olduk feda  
Tashnaktsagan ve Hnchakian ağladı

46

Hayli düşkün fakir gurbet ellere  
Dayanılmaz adi mağdur dillere  
Benzettiler bizi gelengilere  
İhanet yeyen şu dehan ağladı

47

Ağlaya ağlaya yedik ihanet  
Fakiriz etmeyiz hiçbir bahane  
Biz başladık için için figane  
İş güç yoktur hep kahtagan ağladı

48

Zaman bizleri of bura getirdi  
Kuru topraklar üstünde yatırdı  
Bir ekmek için öf nice patırtı  
Remi olfa (?) gittik seğan ağladı

49

Seghanda çömllekler kime ney dersin  
Zor şer acı zulüm ney olsa yersin  
Unudur halini bir emir edersin  
Duymazlar aslını bilen ağladı

50

Suratsız çorbalar gelir imdada  
Kemikler karışık etler ziyade  
Menşur çok tüter yutamaz mide  
Vaz geçtik çorbadan koshhaf ağladı

51

Nasıl sa sonrada hep acıdılar  
Yormadılar bizi Cama aldılar  
Kahtaganlar bundan memnun oldular  
Husa (?) edip hali duyan ağladı

52

Çadırlar altında kaldık biçare  
Alırsınız derler biz gibi ne çare  
Her bir ufak söz binler hançere  
Sükûta Mahkum Zadigian ağladı

53

Her kesin çeşitli derdi büyüktür  
Biz fakire zarar çok zalim yüktür  
Ekmek yok derler bu söz çok tok dır  
Umutsuz kalmış her revan ağladı

54

Perişanız bir de olursa adem  
Biz Adanalıyız kalbimiz matem  
Böyle vakitte belli olur adem  
Bize değil siz, Alman Ağladı

55

Tyrpani Şartıye bizi aldılar  
Günlerce bizleri bir hal oldular  
Her ney lazım ise elden saldılar  
Şol Cizvit ve Amerikan ağladı

56

İskenderiye'deki millet sen yaşa  
Yaşasın Partogh ve Boghos Paşa  
Böyle felaketler Gelmessin başa  
Mağdur feryat etti cihan ağladı

57

Sanemin ağlattı beni ey Nubar  
Sensin hülya bize büyük iftihar  
Partogh ve Boghos etmeyiz inkar  
Bu gibi paşalar yaşasın her bar

Senemiz 1909 Hunis 4

Mersinden hareket hunis 4de bindik vapura avdet ettik İskenderun'a İskenderun'dan  
Latakya Latakya'dan Trablus'a Trablus'dan Beyrut'a Beyrut'tan Hayfa'ya Hayfa'dan  
Yafa'ya Yafa'dan Beyrut'ta Beyrut'tan İskenderun'a

İskenderiye'yi 1909 hulis 24 Alaturka hulis 6 Alafranga hulis 6da urpat günü eniştem  
vapura binmesi.

## **English Translation**

1

In the plain of Seyhan a smoke arose  
The roses dressed in sorrow and the April cried  
Lamentations and wails were heard in everywhere  
Every fit and strong cried

2

A cry broke out everyone scattered  
Friend and brother blended  
Vineyards orchards meadows roses remained empty  
Tulip, hyacinth too and rose garden cried

3

People are asking oh what is this lamentation  
Shadrig has been slaughtered and Urfalian has been shot  
What kind of a freedom is this what type of lamentation?  
Mothers agonized, children cried

4

Revolt don't stop oh betrayed pen  
Crooked and bewildered poor world  
Ah Adana turned into a sea of pain  
Within it, there was drowning and every living being cried

5

People in the square were beaten  
Because a sudden war began  
So many Armenians were sacrificed  
Rivers were filled even universe cried

6

Shops were closed and weapons were taken  
The hypocrite peasants joined the Turks  
Help us oh just God  
Remaining hopeless, Seyhan cried

7

Hopeless and desperate we remained helpless  
Everyone from everywhere we filled the churches  
Churches became overcrowded we turned into pale  
People of fortune all cried naked

8

It is April 1, the year nine hundred and nine  
The home of Haig's children was wrecked  
Whenever everyone's houses remained empty  
Everyone who had mercy and conscience cried

9

Has any remedy remained all children cry  
Your children faint and tear your heart out  
Seyhan and Ceyhan cascade silently  
Father mother children all of them cry blood

10

You burst outside but what good it would do  
Your children and family are helpless in the church  
You stroll here and there as a vagrant  
The married ones were perplexed and the hero cried

11

The heroes are the Youth who immediately arrived  
They dug trenches and hastened to work  
They wilted like tobacco, fought hard  
With martins in hand, all the worlds cried

12

The youth polished the martins formidably  
The Muslims entered the Armenian Quarter  
They had so many motives and they started the fire  
From the Turks many were shot, and the remaining ones cried

13

Finally, all our property was looted  
Our vile Vali ordered the slaughter  
The fire spread our condition became horrible  
The riffraff came and all great men cried

14

The savage people poured from the mountains  
They have slaughtered everywhere and villages were all empty  
The situation in Adana became terrible  
Honor was ruined and girls cried

15

The Vali and high officials had sent telegrams  
Thousands of savages had entered all places  
They killed all those who were Armenians  
Girls were abducted and women cried

16

Brothers and sisters fell into the cruel claws  
So many tall and beautiful ones  
Burned and destroyed you ah the fires  
The smoke hovering above you cried

17

Now come you oh brutal fate  
So many of the virgin girls are naked  
Adana our city became a house of ashes  
Made out of wailing many harvests cried

18

So many writings were born from Armenians  
Each one worth a thousand so many veterans  
The past has not witnessed such an injury  
It wore the mourning dress and the time cried

19

Now we are in a state of wailing and lamenting  
All our possessions were burned and looted  
All our people are in flames  
By striking their knees every mother cried

20

So many lambs that had escaped from the fire  
They are hit with the bullet and ache so intensely  
The bullets of the soldiers do not stop and buzz  
Seeing this from the skies, God cried

21

People were many, they could not fit  
No place was remained among the foreigners  
Nothing as such has happened in any country  
Our city turned to ashes and the giver cried

22

Now Europe says what is this savagery  
Riffraff come and show no mercy  
They say that this suffering is too much for this nation  
It is enough now, they had been crying for so long

23

Three days later, they say the massacre is over  
Five thousand soldiers entered the city altogether  
We are the army of freedom they say do not be afraid  
Suddenly they struck and many souls cried

24

All neighborhoods were put on fire  
The raving flames were seen again  
Lambs were hit ah and spread on the ground  
Don't ask the voice became lost, the immolated cried

25

So many girls and women held to each other  
Whoever listens cannot bear their wailing and cries  
The fires became a grave for many innocents  
Many souls under the rubbles cried

26

In St. Stepanos sounds of lament  
In the fire sounds of lament  
Fire has spread people have been struck with terror  
Jesuits have saved and people cried

27

The English consul immediately came forward  
All victims came forward  
So many young people lied down dead  
Everyone present in the palace cried

28

Thousands were taken to the palace  
Soldiers would rebuke and people would cry  
Honorable beauties with arched eyebrows were lined up  
Everyone who stood there as a slave cried

29

Soldiers heedlessly ran out to the road  
None was left with strength, everyone was crushed  
The children were sleepless their eyes swept away  
This caravan of slaves marched and cried

30

This caravan starts walking along the way  
Friends see so many turned into 'merchandise'  
Those whom their parents see immediately tumble  
Watching over the corpses, souls cried

31

Those who came from the villages to the city with great difficulty  
So many girls, women, and so many brides  
The three thousand that entered the Mousheghian school  
All of them were burnt and shot and those who escaped cried

32

Karataş Adana Tarsus and Sis  
Bulanık Osmaniye Yarpuz and Payas  
Misis Hamidiye and every mistaken rock  
Was struck, Armenian heard this and cried

33

In one word Cilicia became in ruin  
Only in Dörtöyl there are houses (remaining)  
With so many lamentations we became crazy  
The Patriarch Izmirlian cried

34

We became refugees and hit the roads  
We were plunged into so many ugly hands  
We had to lean on so many vile men  
We waited hand and foot the dynasty cried

35

Our place is in Cyprus and Alexandria -  
We became idles and don't have any opportunities  
20,000 of our souls remained in the homeland  
Orphans widows and naked homeland cried

36

There is no home at all in the homeland tents were pitched  
Everyone became exhausted from the fire and the massacre  
From the Patriarchate they asked about our condition  
The Patriarch Poet Turian cried

37

Is not this enough the cruel government?  
You tortured so many people as well  
Did it ever intend to show mercy?  
It threw (people) to the dungeons, and the dungeons cried

38

Is this the constitution? Hear, oh World!  
In this world, honor is more sacred than the sacred  
Honor became trampled, it is not a sacred (anymore)  
Honorable daughters cried

39

Immoral, dishonorable and vile officials  
Every day they give despicable orders  
These types of affairs are all unjust  
Upon his arrival Vehabedian cried

40

The leaders in the dungeons, what a grief is this  
They were chained, what type of court is this  
Beatings were struck what kind of belief is this  
There is no justice at all, the creator cried

41

The inquisition started in a discretionary manner  
Innocent people were summoned ten times a day  
Discretionary punishment, reprimand and sentences were all issued unjustly  
Innocents who were convicted cried

42

The heads of the councils are murderers  
Is it possible to repair this cruelty?  
All those despicable people are conservatives  
Those who appeared before them cried

43

Especially that İhsan and that evil İtidal  
It was due to him that the second massacre began  
It turns out that the catamite had no just judgment on violence  
He brought so much shame on himself, the language cried.

44

They are the murderers and they are the cruel  
They are the ones who committed all sorts of wrecked deeds  
Alas once they were called liberals  
If there are any, liberals cried

45

What a lamentation is this, hear, Europe!  
What are you waiting for oh America  
We were all sacrificed on the road to freedom  
Dashnaks and Hnchaks cried

46

These miserable, poor, foreign lands  
These vulgar, injuring words are unbearable  
They likened us to rodents  
This betrayed mouth cried

47

We were betrayed in cries  
We are poor, we do not make any excuses  
We started grieving within  
There is no work all the refugees cried

48

Times have brought us ah to here  
Has made us sleep on dry lands  
So much quarrel for one bread  
We went to Remi Olfa (?) the altar cried

49

On the altar, there were clay pots, what can you say  
You have to eat it whatever it is, no matter whether it is tough, bad, painful or cruel  
You forgot your condition and gave an order  
They don't hear. Those who knew their original selves cried

50

Tasteless soups come to aid  
Full of bones and left-over meats  
It has a bad smell and the stomach cannot bare  
We gave up the soup and the compote cried

51

Somehow they later pitied on us  
They did not strain us and took us into the church  
The refugees were happy about this  
Those who felt sorry and heard this situation cried

52

We stayed in tents helpless  
"You can get used to it" they say to desperate people like us  
Every little word like thousands of daggers  
Zadigian who was sentenced to silence cried

53

Everyone has different and big troubles  
For us, the poor, the damage is very cruel burden  
They say there is no bread, this saying is very tough  
Every desperate wayfarer cried

54

We, especially the men, are miserable  
We are from Adana and our hearts are mourning  
It is at times like this a man's (true character) becomes evident  
Not you but the Germans cried for us

55

Thanks to Tyrpani's words they took us  
They took care of us for days  
They provided us whatever was needed  
The Jesuits and American cried

56

Long live the people of Alexandria  
Long live Partogh and Boghos Pasha  
Let calamities as such not occur  
The victim wailed and the world cried

57

Your statue made me cry oh Nubar  
You are a dream for us, a great pride  
We do not repudiate Partogh and Boghos  
Let pashas like them live forever

Year 1909 July 4

We left Mersin on July 4 and took a ship and returned to Iskenderun and from Iskenderun to Latakia and from Latakia to Tarabulus and from Tarabulus to Beirut and from Beiurt to Haifa and from Haifa to Jaffa and from Jaffa to Beirut and then to Iskenderun

My brother in law took the boat on July 24, 1919

Artin Kelikian,  
Yetem, California

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Armenian Immigration Project. "Garabed Artinian." Accessed January 21, 2023. <https://markarslan.org/ArmenianImmigrants/Public-ViewDetail-ArmenianImmigrants-Main.php?submit=View&Staging=&SourcePage=Public-ViewSummary-ArmenianImmigrants-Main-ByPassengerLastName&SelectLastName=Artinian&argument1=VEST-25JAN19-17-3-4-0010>.

Arsanian, Artin. *Adana'da adalet nasıl mahkûm oldu?* [How Justice was Convicted in Adana?]. Kahire, 1909.

Artinian, Robert (grandson of Garabed Ozoone Artinian). Interviewed by Robert Der-Matossian, September 15, 2021.

Balaev, Michelle (ed.). *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Balaev, Michelle. "Trauma Studies." In *A Companion to Literary Theory*, edited by David H. Richter, 360-372. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2018.

Balaev, Michelle. *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012.

Bartevian, Souren. *Կիլիկիական սոփախորհրդեր* [The Cilician Horrors]. Constantinople, 1909.

Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. New York, NY: Vintage, 2015.

Bennett, Julian. "The 'Aynali Martini:' The Ottoman Army's First Modern Rifle." *Anatolica* 44 (2018): 229-255, <https://doi.org/10.2143/ANA.44.0.3285055>.

Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2017.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Çobanoğlu, Özkul. *Âşık Tarzı Kültür Geleneği ve Destan Türü*. Ankara: Kızılay, 2000.

Cvetkovice, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Der Matossian, Bedross. "From Bloodless Revolution to a Bloody Counterrevolution: The Adana Massacres of 1909." *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 6, no. 2 (2011): 152-173, <https://doi.org/10.1353/gsp.2011.0123>.

Der Matossian, Bedross. "The Development of Armeno-Turkish in the 19th Century Ottoman Empire: Marking and Crossing Ethnoreligious Boundaries." *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 8, no.1 (2020): 67-100, <https://doi.org/10.1163/2212943X-00702011>.

Der Matossian, Bedross. *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Der Matossian, Bedross. *The Horrors of Adana: Revolution and Violence in the Early Twentieth*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2022.

Duckett, Ferriman Z. *The Young Turks and the Truth about the Holocaust at Adana in Asia Minor, during April, 1909*. London, 1913.

FO 195-2306. *From William Nisbett Chambers to Barton*. Adana, April 15, 1909.

FO195/2306. *Doughty-Wylie to the British Ambassador in Constantinople*. April 21, 1909.

Ohandjanian, Artem (ed.). *Osterreich – Armenien: 1872-1936, Faksimilesammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*. Vienna: Ohandjanian Verlag, 1995.

Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.

*Itidal*, no. 33, 20 April, 1909 and no. 35, 28 April, 1909.

Kévorkian, Raymond H. *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2011.

LaCapra, Dominic. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

Leys, Ruth. *Trauma: A Genealogy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Mandel, Naomi. *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006.

Mander, Naomi. *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006.

Manning, Stephen. *The Martini-Henry Rifle*. London: Osprey Publications, 2013.

Nichanian, Marc. "Catastrophic Mourning." In *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, edited by D. L. Eng and D. Kazanjian, 99-124. Berkley: University of California Press, 2003.

Nichanian, Marc. *Writers of Disaster: The National Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2002.

Oshagan, Hagop. Համապատկեր տրեւմտեայ գրականութեան [Overview of Western Armenian Literature], Vol. 6. Beirut: Hamazgayin, 1968.

Peroomian, Rubina. "Religion: A Driving Force but not a Major Cause of the Turkish Genocide of Armenians." In *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Mass Atrocity, and Genocide*, edited by Sara E. Brown and Stephen D. Smith, 109-125. Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.

Peroomian, Rubina. *Literary Responses to Catastrophe: A Comparison of the Armenian and the Jewish Experience*. Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1993.

S. Z. Ада́нские чёрные дни [The Black Days of Adana]. Baku: Electric Printing House of the Newspaper Baku, 1909.

Sémelin, Jacques. *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

Siamanto. Ամբողջական երկեր [Complete works]. Antelias: Printing house of the Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia, 1989.

Svazlian, Verjine. *The Armenian Genocide: Testimonies of the Eyewitness Survivors*. Yerevan: Gitut'yun Publishing House, 2011.

*Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 300, 13 August, 1909.

Teotig, Arshagouhi. Ամիս մը ի Կիլիկիա [A Month in Cilicia]. Costantionople: V. and H. Ter-Nersesian, 1910.

Terzian, Hagop. Կիլիկիոյ տղտը [The Catastrophe of Cilicia]. Constantinople, 1912.

*U.S. Military Registration Card*. Serial Number 1834, Order Number 2661.

Varoujan, Daniel. Բանաստեղծական երկեր [Poetic Works]. Antelias: Publishing of Daniel Varuzhan Literature Foundation, 1986.

Voskanyan, Ani. Արսնայի նստանգի հայերի տնտեսական վիճակը: 1909 թ. ունեցրելով [The Economic Situation of the Armenians of Adana Province. Expropriation of 1909]. Yerevan: Gitut'yun Publishing House, 2017.

Waller, James. *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Murder*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Williams, Brian Glyn. *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Woods, Henry Charles. *The Danger Zone of Europe: Changes and Problems in the Near East*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1911.

Yesayan, Zabel. *Արևմտահայերենի մեջ* [In the Ruins]. Constantinople: Armenian Publishing Society, 1911.

*Ժամանակ* [Time], 154, May 1, 1909.

## **About the Author**

Bedross Der Matossian is a Professor of Modern Middle East History in the Department of History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His areas of interest include ethnic politics in the Middle East, inter-ethnic violence in the Ottoman Empire, Palestinian history, and the history of Armenian Genocide.

Currently he is the vice-chair of the Department of History. He is also the President of the Society for Armenian Studies. He serves on the editorial board of multiple journals, the most prominent of which is the flagship journal of the field: *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES). He is also the series editor of *Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World* published by I.B.Tauris and Bloomsbury Press.

E-mail: bdermatossian2@unl.edu