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# FROM THE HISTORY OF THE EGYPTIAN ARMENIAN PRESS

#### **Abstract**

The administrative, economic, educational and military reforms carried out by the Leader of Egypt Muhammad Ali made Egypt a strong and stable state, laying a solid foundation for its development. The impact of the reforms carried out by Muhammad Ali was positive on the Egyptian-Armenian community as well. Egyptian Armenians actively participated in the development of the economic and cultural life of Egypt. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Armenian cultural life in Egypt has become more active, the number of schools has increased, new cultural and educational unions and organizations have appeared, and new periodicals have been published.

**Keywords:** morality, Egyptian-Armenian community, the "Partez", Sasun, Kurds, Hayduk, Ottoman government.

#### Introduction

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Egyptian-Armenian community was one of the largest cultural centers of Armenians. Many prominent intellectuals gathered there and played an invaluable role in the development of the Egyptian-Armenian press, which occupied a worthy place in the social and political life of the Egyptian Armenians. This article is dedicated to the study of the Egyptian-Armenian periodical the "Partez" of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an attempt is made to identify its main direction, sections, and the issues raised in it. As a

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source for the present research all the issues of the "Partez" have been used, and parallels have been drawn with several other Egyptian-Armenian periodicals of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

# The Main Sections and Purpose of the "Partez"

The Armenians who had emigrated to Egypt took an active part in the development of the economic and cultural life of the country. The Armenian periodical press occupied a worthy place in the social and political life of the Egyptian-Armenians. One of the famous Egyptian-Armenian periodicals of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the weekly newspaper the "Partez", which was published in Alexandria from November, 1903 to October, 1904. The editor was Mihran Askanaz. The periodical mainly published scientific, literary and pedagogical articles. Most of the scientific and pedagogical materials are of a religious-moral nature. However, their content was rather poor. The Egyptian-Armenian periodical, with articles, poems and publications related to educational and school issues, tried to educate the reader, to encourage scientific, religious and moral thinking, to familiarize them with old and new traditions and manners. The periodical greatly emphasized the role of kindergartens in human education. The weekly newspaper the "Partez" emphasized, that "Kindergarten teachers should have a family and moral conversation with their godchildren every day". \*\*

Most of the materials of the "Partez" were included in the following sections; Educational, Scientific response, Linguistic response, Kindergarten, Bouquet, Sports, Games, National life, Political news, etc. The newspaper was staffed by V. Tekeyan, T. Chrakyan, R. Perperyan, M. Kyurchyan, B. Shahpaz and others.<sup>5</sup>

The educational orientation of the Egyptian-Armenian periodical was Christian morality. The pages of the newspaper referred to high and noble human qualities: honesty, sincerity, loyalty, etc. The periodical delivered morals in an understandable language and accessible forms of expression. When choosing the materials, the periodical was guided by the principle of the latest pedagogy: "learning without moral education is not only useless, but also very harmful".6

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> **Kirakosyan** 1970, 424.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> **Topuzyan** 1978, 324.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> **Petrosyan** 1957, 32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> **Asganaz** 1903, 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> History of Armenian periodical press 2017, 382.

<sup>6</sup> Uzunyan 1904, 4.

Pedagogical articles discussed issues, concerning the opening of female schools, establishing schools and pre-school institutions in rural areas, discipline and school healthcare.<sup>7</sup>

The periodical devoted a lot of space to the coverage of the translations of parts of the works of famous European authors (novels, comedies, etc.), as well as artistic gems of Armenian national authors, significant pages of literary bibliography and etymologies of complex words. In addition, the periodical presented theoretical and practical introductions to arts and crafts, pedagogy, provided fresh information about new European and American educational methods, pedagogical experience, reflected on the coverage of new theories of prominent scientists. In each issue, the magazine presented moral lessons, riddles, children's games, various exercises on the development of memory and thinking.

Starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> issue, at the request of the readers, the periodical also begins publishing news of national, political and local importance. Among the local news, the periodical focuses on the coverage of important events in the life of the Egyptian-Armenian community, as well as news related to Egypt in general. In 1904 the periodical considered the opening of the reading room of the Tigran-Yerkat National Union on June 2 as an important event of the Egyptian-Armenian community in the first half of the year. In addition, the periodical described in detail the funeral ceremony of the Egyptian-Armenian leader Archbishop Hovsep Ayvazyan, which took place on June 5, 1904 and was attended by the entire Egyptian-Armenian community, the governor of Alexandria, the representative of the Khedive of Egypt, the leaders of the Christian communities of Egypt, and many ordinary Egyptians.<sup>8</sup>

The national news section of the periodical presents the coverage of important events in both Eastern and Western Armenia. Based on the news from European newspapers, the periodical regularly refers to Russia's colonial policy in Eastern Armenia. Moreover, the periodical reports information about the Armenian liberation struggle initiated after the tsarist law, on the confiscation of the property of the Armenian church on June 12, 1903, which eventually ended with the victory of the Armenians. The newspaper rightly notes that in addition to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> History of Armenian periodical press 2017, 383.

<sup>8 &</sup>quot;Partez", 12.06.1904, № 32, 13.

<sup>9 &</sup>quot;Partez", 24.01.1904, Nº 13, 13.

closing schools in Eastern Armenia, the Russian authorities wanted to appropriate the estates that provided income to those schools.<sup>10</sup> Like the famous Egyptian-Armenian national, literary and political periodicals of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the "Azat Bem" and "Joghovurd", "Partez" also describes the implementation of the law on the confiscation of church property as a disaster for the Armenian people. The periodical considers it the duty of every Armenian to fight against the impending disaster, and unite around the Catholicos, to continue the struggle within the limits of the law.<sup>11</sup>

# The Coverage of the Situation of Western Armenians

Unlike the Egyptian-Armenian periodicals the "Pyunik", "Arshalouys", "Azat Bem", which severely criticized the persecution policy practiced by the Ottoman authorities against Armenians, the "Partez" and "Joghovurd" periodicals were satisfied with only reporting some information about the situation of Western Armenians. In the news about Western Armenia, a great deal of space was devoted to the Sasun uprising. The newspaper reported that on December 26, 1903, news reached them from Sasun about the situation being very serious there. About 1.000 Armenian Hayduks had gathered there under the leadership of Andranik, and Kurdish guerrilla groups had camped in the bordering areas of the province to prevent new Armenian Hayduk groups from entering Sasun.

Further on, the periodical adds: "The Armenians of Sasun are anticipating the repetition of the events of 1894". <sup>12</sup> In this regard the Egyptian-Armenian periodical the "Joghovurd" also notes that a new massacre similar to the massacres in 1894–1896 was in process in Sasun, which also threatened the unarmed and defenseless Armenians of Erzurum and Van. <sup>13</sup>

The Ottoman government started the campaign against Sasun at the beginning of the spring of 1904. Uneven fighting continued until mid-May. The enemy, having taken over Sasun, retaliated against the civilians who remained there, looting and desolating the villages. Reporting various information about the course of the uprising, the periodical noted that the events of 1894 were repeated. The "Partez" periodical reported that during the clashes at the

<sup>10 &</sup>quot;Partez", 10.07.1904, № 36, 13.

<sup>11 &</sup>quot;Partez", 10.07.1904, № 36, 14.

<sup>12 &</sup>quot;Partez", 17.01.1904, № 12, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> "Joghovurd", 30.06.1904, № 12, 3–5.

beginning of April, 20 Ottoman soldiers were killed, 23 were wounded, and 12 villages of Talvorik region were destroyed. In another article about the Sasun uprising, the newspaper reported that on May 15, they received a telegram from Mush, in which it was said that the residents of Sasun resisted valiantly 14 Turkish regiments and a 700-strong Kurdish militia led by Sheikh Ahmad on the heights of Talvorik, but the forces were very unequal. 45 Armenian villages of Sasun were destroyed, 12,000 Armenians were captured, and another 8,000 Armenians were killed by Turks. To avoid torture and massacre, 12 Armenian women in Talvorik threw themselves into the river with their children. In this regard according to the private sources in Constantinople, the "Azat Bem" periodical informed that contrary to the claims of the Ottoman authorities, a large number of unarmed and innocent people were killed in Sasun.

During the spring in 1904 the Armenian villages of the Mush plain were captured by Turkish regular troops, and the Armenians of the province to avoid torture and massacre, climbed the mountains of Sasun.<sup>17</sup> The "Partez" testified that the ambassadors of England and France presented a complaint to the Ottoman government, regarding the Armenian massacres, adding that under the guise of suppressing the Sasun rebellion, Ottoman troops together with Kurdish guerrillas killed many innocent Armenian villagers.<sup>18</sup>

After the massacre of Sasun, the Ottoman government began to forcibly deport the Armenian population of Sasun, more than 6,000 Armenian women, children and the elderly. In addition, construction of 8 new barracks began in Sasun, as well as the process of formalizing lands belonging to Armenians in the names of Kurds. The newspaper reports that despite the presence of foreign consuls, the Armenian massacres continued in the Mush field, during which the villages of Araks, Alita, Komar, Tatrako and Trink were almost completely destroyed, many women and children committed suicide, most of the Armenian corpses were left unburied.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14 &</sup>quot;Partez", 08.05.1904, № 27, 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> "Partez", 19.06.1904, № 33, 13–14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> "Azat bem", 19.06.1904, № 9, 3–4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> "Partez", 22.05.1904, № 29, 14.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> "Partez", 05.06.1904, № 31, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> "Partez", 24.07.1904, № 38, 13–14.

The situation in the settlements of the Mush field was getting worse. The Ottoman government forbade them to go to the city of Mush. On July 3, 1904 the women of the destroyed villages of Mkragom and Temert sent a petition for help to the governor of Mush. As a response, the soldiers raped the 4 Armenian women carrying the petition. The Ottoman authorities placed around 1300 Armenian refugees in the Basdr settlement, forbidding the locals to provide them with food for 15 days, as a result of which most of the Armenian exiles died, and some were tortured by Ottoman soldiers and Kurds.<sup>20</sup>

The struggle did not stop with the fall of Sasun. In May-August 1904, Armenian Hayduks waged guerilla battles against Turkish-Kurdish regular and irregular military units. On August 2, 1904, the Kurds set fire to the Armenian village of Goms, and on August 11, bloody Armenian-Kurdish clashes took place, during which 2 Armenians and 24 Kurds were killed. On August 12, a massacre of the population of the Armenian villages of Khavu and Akhchan was organized.<sup>21</sup> The newspaper notes that this information was only a small part of the Kurdish atrocities.

The newspaper also reports some information devoted to the coverage of the situation in other provinces of Western Armenia in 1904. In particular, in the 13<sup>th</sup> issue, it is reported that on January 9, 1904, atrocities took place in Van, during which a large number of Armenians were injured. The garrison of the city, dissatisfied with the unfair distribution and delay of salaries, rebelled, during which the military also attacked and looted houses and shops belonging to Armenians.<sup>22</sup>

After the massacre of Sasun, a difficult situation was also created in Erzrum. The newspaper reports that arrests of Armenians became frequent, and local authorities were inciting Muslims against Armenians. The situation was the same in Khnus and Baghesh, where many Armenian shops remained closed.<sup>23</sup> On July 9, 1904, a fire broke out in the Christian neighborhoods of Marzuan, a city of 2,000 inhabitants in Svaz province. While the Christian population of the town tried to move their families and movable property to safety in terror, the two wells of the governorate did nothing to put out the fire. During that fire, about 600

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> "Partez", 07.08.1904, № 40, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> "Partez", 11.09.1904, Nº 45, 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> "Partez", 24.01.1904, № 13, 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> "Partez", 03.07.1904, № 35, 13.

houses and 200 shops belonging to the Christian population of the city, including Armenians, were burned.<sup>24</sup> On July 9 the Armenian market of Baghesh was also burned down. Local authorities banned journalists from covering the fire. On July 13, Sheikh Salo with his gang attacked and killed the population of the villages of Ivchkilise and Gumlupuchak, and another Kurdish gang destroyed and looted the villages of Chupan and Kharagazar.<sup>25</sup>

Referring to the article published in the English "Standard" newspaper, the periodical reports that the English consul in Erzurum was arrested as a revolutionary while visiting the Armenian provinces, but after a short time the local authorities apologized and released the consul. The newspaper notes that the Ottoman government deliberately created such obstacles for foreign consuls so that the latter refused to visit the distant provinces of the Empire and did not learn about the conflicts that were actually happening there.<sup>26</sup>

After climbing the mountains, under the pretext of looking for the Armenian Hayduks, the regular Ottoman troops and the Kurdish guerrilla groups attacked the Armenian settlements with fire and sword. In particular, in August and September, 1904, the small town of Shahira, located on the shores of Lake Van, suffered a similar fate. The newspaper testifies that in the same period in Van they were waiting for a new massacre every minute. "The local authorities distributed weapons to the terrorist group of 150 members in the city, and if clashes occurred in Van, the Ottoman government would bear all the responsibility".<sup>27</sup>

The newspaper, referring to the telegrams sent by the local authorities to Constantinople, regularly reported on the infiltration of new Armenian fidaic groups into Western Armenia. On August 31, 1904, one of these groups entered the city of Van and occupied 4 houses. Immediately after that, there was an armed clash with the Ottoman troops, during which the parties suffered losses on both sides. The newspaper reported that after that incident, the Armenian population of Van took refuge in the Armenian churches of the city.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> "Partez", 17.07.1904, Nº 37, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> "Partez", 31.07.1904, № 39, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> "Partez", 03.01.1904, № 10, 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> "Partez", 25.09.1904, № 47, 10–11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> "Partez", 04.09.1904, Nº 44, 11.

The uprising of Sasun in 1904 and the subsequent guerrilla struggle was the last outburst of the Armenian armed struggle in Western Armenia. Despite its efforts, it remained isolated and did not develop into a nationwide uprising.

#### Conclusion

The "Partez" weekly is one of the most prominent Egyptian-Armenian periodicals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The educational orientation of the Egyptian-Armenian periodical was Christian morality. The pages of the newspaper taught readers high and noble human qualities: honesty, sincerity, loyalty. The periodical also published important news of national, political and local character. Among the local news, the periodical focused on the coverage of important events in the life of the Egyptian-Armenian community, as well as news related to Egypt at large. The national news section covered the important events in both Eastern and Western Armenia. The newspaper notes that closing schools in Eastern Armenia, the Russian authorities wanted to appropriate the estates that provided income to those schools. In the news about Western Armenia, a great deal of was devoted to the coverage of the Sasun uprising; the details of its course were also presented. The periodical notes that the events of 1894 were repeated.

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#### ԵԳԻՊՏԱՀԱՅ ՄԱՄՈՒԼԻ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԻՑ

#### ՄՅԱՍՆԻԿ ԵՍՈՅԱՆ

# Ամփոփում

«Պարտեզ» շաբաթաթերթը XX դարասկզբի եգիպտահայ նշանավոր պարբերականներից է։ Լինելով գիտական, գրական և մանկավարժական

պարբերական՝ այն իր հրապարակումներով փորձել է դաստիարակել ընթերցողին, մղել դեպի գիտական, կրոնական ու բարոյական մտածողություն, ծանոթացնել հին ու նոր ավանդույթներին, բարքերին։ Բացի այդ, պարբերականը անդրադարձ է կատարել ազգային ու տեղային բնույթի տարբեր իրադարձություններին՝ մեծ տեղ հատկացնելով 1904 թ. Սասունի ապստամբության, հայ-քրդական բախումների լուսաբանմանը։ Ի տարբերություն եգիպտահայ «Փիւնիկ», «Արշալոյս», «Ազատ բեմ» պարբերականների, որոնք խիստ քննադատության են ենթարկել օսմանյան իշխանությունների հայահալած քաղաքականությունը, «Պարտեզը» բավարարվել է միայն որոշ տեղեկատվություն հաղորդելով՝ արևմտահայության դրության վերաբերյալ։

**Բանալի բառեր՝** բարոյախոսություն, եգիպփահայ համայնք, «Պարփեզ», Սասուն, քրդեր, հայդուկ, օսմանյան կառավարություն։

# ИЗ ИСТОРИИ ЕГИПЕТСКОЙ АРМЯНСКОЙ ПРЕССЫ

#### **МЯСНИК ЕСОЯН**

#### Резюме

Еженедельник «Партез» является одним из наиболее известных египетско-армянских периодических изданий начала XX века. Еженедельник являл собой научное, литературное и педагогические издание, имевшее огромное просветительское значение и освещавшее как вопросы религиозно-нравственного характера, так и старых и новых традиций. Помимо этого, на страницах этого органа периодики публиковались материалы, касающиеся событий 1904 года – восстания в Сасуне, армяно-курдских столкновений.

**Ключевые слова:** мораль, армянская община Египта, «Партез», Сасун, курды, гайдук, османское правительство.