THE GENOCIDE OF THE ASSYRIANS

RAPTOPOULOU OLGA

Supervisor: KONSTANTINOS FOTIADIS

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I hereby declare that the work submitted by me is mine and that where I have made use of another’s work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student’s Handbook.

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Abstract

This Thesis analyzes the religious, linguistic and historical background of the genocide of the Assyrians. Through a meticulous, though, coherent presentation of the Assyrian identity, historical phases of the genocide of the Assyrians is uncovered. Systematic persecution of the Assyrians as well as Armenians and Greeks, during the Ottoman and Turkish authority, steadily led one of the most ancient people of Upper Mesopotamia to extinction. Thus, one of the main goals of this Thesis is to make the Assyrian genocide broader known. On the other hand, this Thesis reminds us of our responsibility towards the danger of oblivion, while at the same time it suggests strategic counter-attacks against it, by demonstrating the power of memory. Besides, the struggle for recognizing genocide is a means to fight against the genocide of memory itself.
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To the Unborn Justs
Introduction

This paper is a Master Thesis dealing with genocide of the Assyrians as well as a strategy for attaining recognition of genocide in favor of the victims and those who struggle for justice. The Assyrians along with other Christian populations who were situated in the current Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi territories suffered from systematic extermination before, during and after the World War I. The term to characterize this pattern of deliberated and systematic targeting against the Christians, i.e. Assyrians, Armenians and Greek of Pontus is the word genocide.

The contribution of R. Lemkin to the invention of a new legal term defined as “the attempt to destroy a national, ethnic or religious group, in whole or in part” is valuable to this end. The barbaric, murderous and genocidal behavior of Kurds, Turks and Persian Muslims resulted in massacring, torturing, raping, incarcerating and deporting the peoples of Assyrians and Armenians. Although, today Turkey denies the historic fact of genocide and rejects the blames for committing a crime against Humanity, seventeenth resolutions have been already issued especially in Greece by Greek and Armenian refugee associations on the recognition of this case of genocide.

Though several books on genocide of Assyrians documenting and supporting with sufficient evidence this tragedy with genocidal dimensions have been written, there is still lot to be done, many initiatives to be undertaken and a strategy to be carried out to proceed to a new phase as regards the future of the Assyrian people.

The culmination of the genocide of the Assyrians took place immediately after the outbreak of the WWI. Newspapers all over the world including those in New York, London, Paris and Los Angeles described the misfortunes occurred on the Assyrian people. Assyrians and Armenians shared the same pitiful life that was stigmatized by such a horrific crime. They used to live in the same villages, especially in the provinces of Diyarbekir and Van. Unlike those areas, Hakkari was inhabited exclusively by independent and semi-independent Nestorian tribes. Even in Urmia plateau in western Persia, Armenians and Assyrians were
neighbors. Also, both people had embraced Christianity as early as the Apostolic period.

Before the first Kurdish massacres against the Assyrian civilians in the 1840s, the atmosphere reminded the silence before the storm. After the attacks on Tiari and Khoma, two clearly Assyrian villages, the reign of terror began and ended up only after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne (July 24th 1923).

Hardly is denial of genocide based on stable grounds; there are overwhelming evidence that Turks and their Kurdish allies massacred tens, and more likely hundreds, of thousands of Assyrians in order to exterminate the Christian population\textsuperscript{1}. Consequently, we have to strengthen our counter-attack against those who still question the genocide and at the same time, we have to assist those who are about to recognize the genocide of the Assyrians. Especially as regards the latter ones, we have to share with them a series of strategic advice in order to support their weaponry of argumentation in favor of the recognition.

More specifically, this thesis consists of three chapters. The first one presents the linguistic and religious background of the genocide while, we may say, at the same time illuminates a small part of the Assyrian cultural heritage through language and religion. In the beginning the chapter describes how Assyrians approached Christianity and recounts the creation of the first two religious sects: the Jacobite Church and the Nestorian one. Since the 6\textsuperscript{th} century there was not a united Church. The chapter provides historical information regarding the evolution of Christianity throughout the centuries. The Nestorian Church had spread and disseminated Christianity from the Caspian See to China waters. But after the siege of Constantinople the future of Christianity waned and considerably declined.

Moreover, what is presented is a meticulous insight on the millet social engineering as well as the political contribution of the western mission. The chapter continues shedding light on the sacred language of Assyrians: the Aramaic. A large part of this chapter is dedicated to a further elaboration of the Biblical Aramaic as it is well-known that Assyrians were talking the “language of

\textsuperscript{1} Travis 2006, 328.
Jesus”. In this part, the Aramaic of the Old and New Testament are presented, word by word. However, the dialects which prevailed among Assyrians until their genocide were the NENA. As there was no tradition for written dialects, what is preserved is a considerably small amount of literary works written in Urmi, which constitutes the most famous dialect.

The second chapter highlights the genocide step by step from its beginning with the massacres of the 19th century, to its climax in 1915 until its completion in 1923 after the Treaty of Lausanne. The first indications that the Ottoman Christians risked their lives within the Ottoman territory became clear with the massacres in 1842 and 1847. The alliance between Sultan and Kurdish princes was a vicious omen. Especially after the Berlin Congress the situation deteriorated and the number of the murderous massacres increased. The “Hamidyan” massacres of 1894-1896 opened the theatre of systematic annihilation of the Christians under any religious denomination. The first population who suffered from the inhuman destruction was that of Urmia plain. When the Russians advanced in Caucasus, and the British marched north from Mesopotamia, the Ottoman policy of Christian oppression broadened across the empire and increased in genocidal cases. The historical narration is based and shaped according to the assertions made by Ottoman and Turkish Officials, by their German allies, American and British officials, journalists and missionaries. The countless written statements made by the victims and survivors of the genocide constitute a major contribution to the argumentation of the genocide.

The last Chapter suggests a series of specific movements which are required by a necessary strategy to be followed aiming at recognition. There are various initiatives which enable a decisive and more efficient struggle. The Assyrians are not alone especially in this triple genocide that involves the Armenians and the Greeks. Since 2006, new given and resolutions have changed the approach adopted until recently on the matter of recognition. Now, we know that the genocide was single and targeted against the Armenians, the Assyrian and the Greeks. Publication of resolutions on the recognition of the Assyrians by various refugee associations has recently started in Greece. We have enriched the

— Travis 2006, 342.
work and we should continue to boost every effort for the recognition; such as writing and translating cinema scenario, theatrical scripts, fairytales etc. Finally, erection of new and protection of older memorial, apart from contributing to preservation of our collective memory, they would also encourage the discussion on the necessity of penalization of the non-recognition.

The material of this study is mainly based on various books in Greek and English languages; especially on the books of Gabriele Yonan, “A forgotten Holocaust” as regards the argumentation of the genocide, and those of Nikos Lygeros on the matter of strategy were considerably helpful before and during the writing of this dissertation.
Chapter 1: Linguistic and religious background of the genocide of the Assyrians

The embrace of Christianity in the Assyrian land

When Christianity started to spread out, the world of the East showed its receptive mood and embraced this new religion as early as the Apostolic period. The refusal of Jerusalem to become the center of Christianity gave ground to Antioch to be transformed into a cradle of the world’s evangelization. Although Christianity and its bearers had to deal with each national peculiarity, in the end not only was it developed but also proliferated to China and India.

Since the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C. the Assyrians dwellers of the rich lands of Upper Mesopotamia between Euphrates and Tigris Rivers suffered from consecutive invasions by Romans, Greeks and Persians. They witnessed destruction of their cities, burning of their land, and captivity of their fellow-inhabitants. Nonetheless, many people who survived from the conquerors and victors continued speaking their own language and preserved their historic origin and names. Specially, when the endless war came to an end due to the exhaustion of the armies, Christianity grasped the opportunity to enter the warlike plains of Assyria and influence the Zoroastrian Empire. As we have already above mentioned as regards the people of the East who embraced Christianity since the Apostolic period, the tradition says that Thomas preached the Gospel to the Assyrians during his tour in the region and crossed the lake of Urmia; therefore he became their Apostle.

The center of the Syrian Christianity as early as the second century A.D in Antioch gave birth to a church named the Jacobite-West Syrian Church of Antioch which today is called the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch. Regarding the Syrian Christendom living under the reign of the Persian Sassanid Empire, it claimed its independence and separation, which ended successfully

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3 Werda 1924,77.
4 Donabed, S.G & Mako, S. 2009, 89.
5 Werda 1924, 77.
judging by the council’s decision in the year 424\(^7\). The rapid growth in number of believers rendered necessary to establish a new center of Christian influence. Consequently, the Eastern Syrian Church was created having Nestorius as theological teacher, one that influenced it so much to eventually adopt Nestorianism in the 5\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) centuries.

Due to this early separation of the unified Syrian Christianity, the Assyrians had never actually had a national church and it is logical to deduct that from the beginning almost, when they used to be part of two Syrian Churches.

**The evolution of Christianity in the region throughout the centuries**

One of the most important characteristics of the Assyrians is their endurance against all persecutions committed by barbaric people because of their religious identity, due to their Christian identity. Under the Persian dominance Assyrians had to withstand both persecutions and tolerance. It was only after the Saracenes (641-1258 A.D.) who dethroned the Gabree Empire that the way was paved for the Eastern Church to reach its climax of success in their missions. During the Saracene sovereignty the believers of the Assyrian land and the surrounding region found their tranquility and managed to disseminate the religion through missions in Arabia and to the remotest regions of the earth. They accomplished the goal of extending a helping hand to the fallen races of Humanity and preach the message of Christ. Needless to say that by 1258 A.D. the Nestorians had 25 Metropolitan Sees\(^8\), from the Caspian See to Chinese waters, and from Scythia to the southern extremity of the Hindoostan Peninsula\(^9\).

They enjoyed special privileges like for example protection for the whole sect, freedom to practice their religious habits, respect in their customs, no violence or any force to change religion; the Christian subjects were to preserve their ceremonies as well.

\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Beynon 1944, 261 n6.
\(^9\) For the analytical location and names of the 25 churches see Werda 1924, page 89.
No matter any precise explanation that led the Saracenes to keep this stance upon the Christians of the Eastern Church, the only sure thing is that when the Mosulmans conquered Persia they encountered the Christians being far superior regarding knowledge, know-how of that period and educational level. The rulers based their own learning and education on the Christian subjects and it is certain that the successful expansion of Christianity to other places is the result of this fact of liberty and admiration. The main link between the Saracenes and the Christians was the educational progress sought by the former and this is the chief factor for the Christians’ securing their flourishing orbit within the new Empire.

Despite the religious difference between the Arab invaders and the Christian of the Eastern Church or Nestorians, by order of Caliphs a huge work of science and literature was translated into the vernacular of the Arab conquerors. The invaders were amazed by the scientific progress of the Nestorians and curious enough to learn. By that period, Nestorians were keeping in public libraries entire “treasures” consisted of scripts and studies on geometry, music, astronomy, medicine, arithmetic poetry, rhetoric, dialects\textsuperscript{10}. Undoubtedly, the world owes part of the preservation of precious cultural heritage to this people, to the Assyrians; without their care for the continuity of knowledge, the world today would not be the same.

Memorable days of tranquility were toppled when barbarous hordes of the Tartars, Mongols, Seljuks and Turkmenes besieged the Asiatic nations and swept the Dynasty of the Arabian Prophet. The Caliphs unable to resist the innumerable warriors and their wrath against almost anything they fell and succumbed under the merciless and ferocious barbarity. Such ferocity immobilized and put an end to any missionary activity from other region of the earth. The Nestorians, having established Metropolitan Sees as far as China, they could not but foresee that the most flourishing era of the Nestorian Church had come to an end. At the same time, many Nestorians were wiped out and by the end of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century the Christian religion had almost vanished from China, India etc. and almost disappeared in Persia.

\textsuperscript{10} Werda 1924, 88 n15.
Had it not been for the final blow of the blood-thirsty Turks in the 15th century, the missionary activity in the Eastern world by the Nestorians might have survived. The Turkish sovereignty and the Muslim “duty” blotted out the “Gavoors”, a fact that rendered them not less barbarians than the Tartars. The Syrian churches would never again recover.

Both Syrian Churches, the Nestorian and the Jacobite ones, had incorporated missions of Christian expansion into their activities. On the one hand the East Syrian-Nestorian Church was characterized by a more universal spirit due to its expansion into Asia, while the West Syrian-Jacobite Church was more self-contained and expanded less. However, the missionary activity after the 12th century paralyzed whereas from the 17th century the Syrian churches were approached by other western missionaries. In the beginning, the western missionaries were aiming at converting the Muslims but after failing to manage that, they turned to the Christians who had remained in Upper Mesopotamia and Urmia, chiefly Assyrians and less Armenians, in order to lead them to “the right way of Christianity”.

Missions with strong correlation with political interests were launched by France, England, United States, Germany and Russia. More precisely, as far as the French missionaries are concerned, they took action in Mesopotamia and Kurdistan, establishing their stations in Mardin, Mosul, Amadia. Their main goal was to pave the way for the Catholicism to enter the Nestorian Church. Result of this experience was the emergence of the Chaldean Church. As regards the protestant mission, the American missionaries devoted their efforts to expand the Protestant culture, namely to translate the Bible, to construct schools, hospitals and colleges and later on a publishing company. In the same vein, the German mission also aimed at educating and training the Assyrians, building several charitable institutions. One of the last missions in the region was the English one by the Archbishop of Canterbury that had undoubtedly played a more political role studying by the numerous documents and letters that were found in the archives of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Their plan was to maintain contacts within a political context with the Nestorian Patriarch till the last minute of their

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mission rather than to establish parishes or relative communities for the sake of religion. Last but not least is the Russian Orthodox presence mainly in Urmia, Northwestern Persia. Just for the records it is worth to mention that the city of Urmia and even the surrounding region was the most suitable missionary territory. The Nestorians seemed more familiar with the less foreign and “western” Russians than Americans and Europeans a fact that led to mass conversion. Nonetheless, the Russians as well as contributed in other missions to the Assyrians’ education, opening several schools despite the fact that their leverage soon waned.

As a consequence, the active western missions opened the way for the Catholicism and gave rise to the two Syrian Catholic Churches. A large part of the Nestorian Church was separated and opted for a union with Rome, forming the Chaldean Church. Those who were converted to Chaldean Christians had lived the most of their life in the Mosul Plateau and by 19th century the Assyro-Chaldean population was significantly larger. Conversely in the 19th century, a smaller part this time of the Jacobite Church, embraced Catholicism and thus the fourth Syrian Church emerged. Both Catholic movements created two more autocephalous Syrian churches with their own patriarchs.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{Yonan 1996, 24.}\]
**Millet**

When the Turks besieged Constantinople and totally conquered the Byzantine Empire a new system of millet was established. In the beginning, the millet system (the technical term for a subject nation of Christians)\(^{13}\) provided privileges to each religious community such as freedom to act according to their own religious code of laws. These privileges were conferred to the Greeks, Armenians and Jews. The four Syrian Churches were represented and acted under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate until the 19\(^{th}\) century\(^{14}\), when the four Syrian Churches were recognized as millets and became independent churches with four Patriarchs dwelling in the Ottoman state territory. The Jacobite Patriarch was living near Mardin, the Nestorian one in Kochanes, the Chaldean in Mosul and the Patriarch of the Catholic Syrians in Aleppo. It was almost impossible for the Armenian Patriarch and the Turkish government to control especially the Nestorians living in the remote and inaccessible mountain of Hakkari. As a result, they were nominated as millets, a fact that created obstacles to form a single national church and construct a common national identity as the rich bibliography explains\(^{15}\). However, we should not confuse ethnicity with religion. No matter the sect, Chaldean, Nestorian etc., ethnically they are Assyrians and we should not mix everything\(^{16}\).

The geographical distribution of Nestorian population was near their Patriarch in Kochanes, i.e. they used to live mainly in the Ottoman territory occupying the inaccessible and rugged mountain of Hakkari in Turkish Kurdistan. Those tribes who were independent due to the remote and dangerous place to live were five: Tiari, Tkhuma, Baz, Jilu and Diz\(^{17}\) and used to live without being suppressed or subjugated by the Kurds. Assyrians dwelling in the foothills and

\(^{13}\) Beynon, 1944, 261.
\(^{14}\) Ντόνεφ 2001, 3.
\(^{15}\) Nevertheless, in this dissertation we will refer to the Assyrians, Nestorians, Chaldeans, Jacobites and Syriac/Syrian Christians as collectively as Assyrians taking into account that “Nestorian”, “Chaldean” etc. are all religious appellations. Besides, the members of all the churches are descended principally from the inhabitants of the Ancient Assyria. For more bibliography on the matter see Hanibal Travis’s n2 of the article “Native Christians Massacred”: The Ottoman Genocide of the Assyrians during World War I”, 2006.
\(^{16}\) Petrosian, 2006 n10.
\(^{17}\) Beynon 1944, 262.
surrounding the Hakkari Mountain could not but suffer under the Kurdish yoke. Some tribes were situated beyond the Ottoman boundaries, in the Persian province of Azerbaijan, including the plains of Salamas and Urmia. Some of the Assyrians were living within the Urmia city.

In the same context, the Chaldeans were living mostly around Mosul, where the Patriarch’s home was situated. In the Mosul Vilayet the majority of the population was Assyro-Chaldeans while smaller Nestorian communities were located in the region. Another mountainous people who were characterized by their independent spirit and warlike nature\textsuperscript{18} were the Jacobites of Tur abdin and Diyarbekir. Before the “invasion” of the Catholic missions, they constituted a large religious sect but soon after the 19\textsuperscript{th} century the number of their believers declined considerably. They were speaking an Aramaic dialect, far different than the one of the Nestorians.

\textit{Linguistic background of the genocide}

No matter the religious sect of the Assyrians inhabiting within the triangle of Tur abdin, Mosul and Northwestern Persia was, what is best known, is that they all spoke in Aramaic. Aramaic, such as Hebrew and Northern Arabic, belongs to the Western Semitic branch of the Semitic language family\textsuperscript{19}. In the same vein, Aramaic is divided according to the western Semitic linguists to the Aramaic spoken in Palestine named as “Biblical Aramaic” or western Aramaic, and the Eastern Aramaic spoken in Mesopotamia and Syria. Aramaic is the third sacred language, along with Hebrew and Greek, in which a portion of the Bible was originally written\textsuperscript{20}. Many people recognize Aramaic as the “language of Jesus” despite the fact that the meticulous study of the Biblical Aramaic had been put aside for years and considerably had been dwarfed by large by Hebrew and Greek, namely the languages in which the Bible was written. Furthermore, another obstacle which contributed to the difficulty in studying Aramaic was that it was not the official language of any nation or ethnic group. Indicative still remains the

\textsuperscript{18} Dominian 1915, 866.
\textsuperscript{19} Yonan 1996, 11.
\textsuperscript{20} Bowman 1948, 65.
fact that it was only over the last years that grammars on Biblical Aramaic were published. However, Biblical Aramaic constitutes only a small part of the entire Aramaic culture.

Apart from the biblical material, various excavations in the region have revealed a few inscriptions, the oldest of which were found in the 9th or possibly the 10th century B.C. The oldest Aramaic inscription written in the Old Aramaic is a mixture of Canaanite alphabet with letters similar to those of contemporary Phoenician while reminding Hittite Hieroglyphs. The odd combination of Old Aramaic, which was a result of a cultural influence reflected upon the writing, has almost nothing clearly Aramaic. It was not before the 8th century B.C. that the inscriptions started to include more Aramaic elements and become less multicultural. This change heralded a new era where the Aramaic language would obtain even greater significance becoming lingua franca and the language of commerce and diplomacy. The means which brought this irreversible change was the empowerment of the Assyrian political influence of the time. In this way, the Assyrian Empire moved en masse Aramaic speaking population from the East towards depopulated areas of the Empire. The resettlement of the region strengthened the Aramaic population of the area and as a consequence promoted the Aramaic language. The vernacular language, i.e. the Assyrian of the Empire was affected to the extent that more and more Aramaic words were used. Gradually, the Assyrian language waned and Aramaic predominated as the main medium of communication. Another factor that contributed to such a language “swift” is that the Assyrians found the Aramaic alphabet far easier to use compared with the almost 700 syllables or so, used in the complicated Assyrian script. It seems that the Aramaic language began to advance further to the South from the more Aramaic East namely to the more Canaanite West.

Unfortunately, there are not extensive inscriptions from Assyria but as it can be seen by the evidence, the Assyrians of the time were bilingual, i.e. able to communicate in both Aramaic and Assyrian languages or less probably they spoke only in Aramaic. The Assyrian letters were not anymore consisted by

\[^21\] Ibid., p28.  
\[^22\] Ibid., p22.
Phoenician alphabet and the Assyrian language (i.e. Aramaic) was spread throughout the Empire thanks to commerce. Since the late Assyrian Empire one could speak in Aramaic; the official recognized language by the kings. Even when the Assyrian Empire fell (612 B.C.) and was conquered by Chaldeans who were likewise conquered by the Persians, the Aramaic language was kept alive and was spoken overpassing the calamity. Especially under the Persian Empire, the language reached its zenith and increased its use in Mesopotamia. The Persians known by Herodotus as the people who adopts foreign habits, either good or bad, adopted the Aramaic alphabet as well instead of their unique cuneiform Persian script. Wherever they had travelled and fought, they brought with them the Aramaic language; from Kurdistan to Afghanistan and Ural mountains to Caucasus.

**Western Aramaic**

As we have mentioned above, the Aramaic language neither died out nor disappeared after the fall of the Empire. On the contrary, it became the common language of Palestine and the adjacent countries and was chiefly used as the third language of the Bible. The Aramaic occurring in the Old Testament is found in the following passages:

Ezra 4:8 – 6:18 and 7:12 – 26 (documents from the Achaemenid period concerning the restoration of the temple of Jerusalem).

Daniel 2:4 – 7:28 (five Oriental historical tales involving Jews and an apocalyptic vision).

Jer. 10 - 11 (a stray Aramaic sentence in a Hebrew context denouncing idolatry).

Gen. 31 – 47 (two words translating a Hebrew toponym into Aramaic said to be the language of Laban).

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23 Ibid., 78.
The Aramaic texts in the Bible were written within three centuries, during the Persian dominion, by men belonging to different social classes. Taking into account some sections from the book of Ezra (written approximately in the end of 4th century B.C.) and the book of Daniel (about 167 B.C.) becomes obvious that in that period both writers and readers were familiar with Aramaic and Hebrew as well. It was well-known that both languages had mutual influence and both people, Arameans and Hebrews, were in constant contact. As a result, Hebrew was affected by Aramaic vernacular.

In particular, the book of Daniel carries a type of Hebrew albeit the very nature of that Hebrew reflects the popular use of Aramaic in the land\(^\text{25}\). The book is partly in Hebrew and in Aramaic.

As far as the Aramaic in the New Testament is concerned it is once again clearly stated in the text that Aramaic was the dominant language of the Jews and we present here some Aramaic words attributed to our Jesus: Talîth ȃ qûmî (Mark 5:41), ’ephphatha (Mark 7:34), and Elôî Elôî  lemâ sabaqthanî (Mark 15:34= Matt. 27:46)\(^\text{26}\). Some other Aramaic words found in the New Testament are given below:

\[
\alpha \beta \beta \alpha = \overset{\text{αββα}}{\overset{\text{ο πατήρ}}{\text{πατήρ}}}, \text{Mark XIV.}, 36 \text{ and elsewhere.}
\]

\[
\Gammaολγοθά = \overset{\text{γολγοθά}}{\overset{\text{ἀδησθαι}}{\text{ἀδησθαι}}}, \text{in Matt. xxvii.}, 33\text{\(^\text{27}\).}
\]

The New Testament is rich in Aramaic names of persons, all starting with the element Bar meaning “the son of”, such as Bar Jesus, Bar Timaeus, Bar Jonan etc. In the same context, there are mentioned in the texts some Aramaic places like Golgotha, Gabbetha etc.

Due to the incoming Greek culture in the region, the sway of the Aramaic language slowly declined. For instance, we can certainly say that after Alexander the Great, Greek was considered as the proper language of an educated man of the Orient, and this resulted in adopting second names (cf. New Testament Cephas

\(^{25}\) Bowman 1948, 82.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) For more Aramaic words and Aramaic sentences see on Kautzsch.
and Peter; Saul and Paul\textsuperscript{28}. Owing to that tendency, official inscriptions were written also in Greek. Overall, so powerful was the Greek influence that led the West Aramaic in gradual extinction. On the other hand, the East Aramaic underwent an evolution under the Hellenistic influence\textsuperscript{29} and nowadays modern Aramaic dialects spoken until today by the Assyrians all over the world derive from that branch.

**Modern Aramaic**

Modern Aramaic dialects have been categorized into four groups according to the geographic distribution. Western Aramaic includes the dialect of Ma’lula, central Aramaic includes the Turoyo, Modern Mandaic of the Eastern Aramaic is placed in the third place and last but not least is the Northern Neo-Aramaic known by the acronym NENA\textsuperscript{30}.

NENA is a group of many modern Aramaic dialects spoken by Christians and Jews up to the beginning of the genocide in a wider area extending between southeast Turkey, northern Iraq and western Iran. Briefly, below, we name eleven dialects that belong to NENA and strongly constitute a coherent group clearly differentiated from Turoyo and Mandaic\textsuperscript{31}: Hertevin, Zahko Jewish, Aradhin, Tisqopa, Jilu, Tkhuma, Sanandaj Christian, Urmi, Koy Sanjak, Azerbaijan, Halabja\textsuperscript{32}.

Those modern dialects that are not developed and based on earlier dialects of Eastern Aramaic such as Syriac\textsuperscript{33}, Babylonian Talmudic and Classical Mandaic, were difficult to be studied by the scholars because of the violent deportations during the genocide that scattered the NENA speakers. Even during the first massacres of 1842, the NENA speakers were forced to abandon their homes, those of course who survived from the barbarous hands of the Kurds and

\textsuperscript{28} Bowman 1948, 84.
\textsuperscript{29} Yonan 1996, 12.
\textsuperscript{30} Mccollum 2006, 570.
\textsuperscript{31} Fox 1994, 159.
\textsuperscript{32} For a further study on the results of the investigation for the eleven NENA dialects see Fox 1994.
\textsuperscript{33} Yonan 1996, 12.
Turks and relocated themselves. We know little of their movements but on the contrary we know a lot about the consequences of the genocide and the way in which they have determined the future of Assyrian dialects over time until nowadays. In conjunction with the territorial proximity, we note how Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish have affected those dialects. The above-mentioned co-territorial languages have exerted some influence that can be traced among NENA dialects.

Of the many modern Aramaic dialects that were not written until the 19th century, the one supported by the western missionary organizations, and in which a great amount of literature was produced was the dialect spoken around the city of Urmia. Thanks to the American missionaries, theological texts, the New Testament, other educational material were published in Aramaic and distributed among the Assyrians of Mesopotamia. The written form of Urmi dialect gradually became so popular that opened the way for a flourishing journalistic activity using various Aramaic dialects. Over the last years, many studies have been conducted regarding the journalist production under the Ottoman yoke and a presentation of the Assyrian periodicals published in the Ottoman Empire and abroad is now at the disposal of any scholar.

The first publishing company and thus the first journalist production occurred in the Northwestern Persia where large Assyrian communities were dwelling. Only after the fall of the Abdul Hamid’s reign and the loosening of censorship, the number of periodicals in the Ottoman territory increased. Despite the fact that the Assyrians before the genocide were a small community, they embraced such an activity in great enthusiasm and managed to preserve five active publications. In only five years, between 1909 and 1914, no less than six periodicals were established: three in Harput, two in Diyarbekir and one in Mardin. More specifically, the content of the publications had to do more with periodicals rather than newspapers describing the news. The most parts were written in Aramaic alphabet whereas only few texts were written in Ottoman

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35 Yaure 1957,73.
36 For the complete catalog of all the Assyrian periodicals see Trigona-Harry 2009.
37 Trigona-Harr 2009, 289.
Turkish or Arabic using the Arabic alphabet. The idea of using Aramaic alphabet derived more from ideology rather than practical reasons.
Chapter 2: The historical background of the genocide

Instigation and massacres. The setting of the genocide.

According to historians the first massacres of the Assyrians began in the 1840s. The massacres committed in the beginning by the Kurds with the full consent of the Turks took place in the Hakkari Mountain and thereabouts; however, that does not preclude the existence of other bloodbaths in the capital, Constantinople, and in the provincial towns of the Empire.\(^{38}\)

Regarding the massacres in the Hakkari region, the Turks deceived the Assyrians and left them exposed to the Kurdish ferocity without keeping their promise to protect them in case of a potential attack. The conspiracy and alliance between the Kurdish princes, Nurallah and Badr Khan, targeted to topple the Turkish sovereignty in Mosul. Although many Christian tribes encouraged the Patriarch Mar Shimun of that period to support the Kurdish alliance, he opted for trusting the Turks and the European protectors by revealing to the Turkish Pasha the upcoming blow in exchange of his assistance and protection in case of a Kurdish assault. The loss and consequent retreatment of the Kurdish battalions prompted severe attacks against the Nestorians of Tiari, who, of course, did not receive the protection promised by the Ottoman governor. Basically, the Ottoman Turks allowed the Assyrians to be massacred by the Kurdish chieftain Badr Khan Bey, who summoned the surrounding Muslim population to a “Holy War”, killing 10,000 Assyrians, enslaving many women and children, and ravaging villages.\(^{39}\) The same fate marked the Assyrians of Tkhoma, who after the 10,000\(^{40}\) slaughtered Assyrians of Tiari, suffered an indiscriminate massacre as well. “Nearly half the population became victim of the fanatical fury of the Kurdish chief.”\(^{41}\)

When another serious massacre in 1847 occurred\(^{42}\), the terrible news became known to the British Embassy in Constantinople. Under the pressure by

\(^{38}\) Travis 2006, 330 n31.
\(^{39}\) Ibid. n23.
\(^{40}\) Beynon 1944, 265.
\(^{41}\) Ibid. n15.
\(^{42}\) Stafford 1934, 160.
the British and other European governments the Turkish one was obliged to launch punitive measures against the Kurds. Badr Khan and Nurallah were banished\textsuperscript{43} and consequently the administration of the districts passed to the Turkish hands. As the administration of the Turkish government grew stronger, the situation of the Assyrians deteriorated. Nonetheless, this horrible situation caused by the Kurds continued throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.

The obvious manipulation of Kurds by the Turks against the Assyrians and other Christian subjects in conjunction with the intervention of the western missionaries in the Ottoman Empire contributed to the social upheaval which later culminated in the genocide of the Ottoman Christians, i.e. Armenians, Assyrians and Greek of Pontus. Especially during the Turco-Russian war, the position of the Assyrians was more precarious than before as they had to prove their loyalty to the Turkish officials by paying taxes and supporting the Empire in its war. At the same time, the situation in the Christian villages grew worse and more dangerous, with the Kurds and other Muslims “massacring all Christians without distinction”\textsuperscript{44}.

The fact that the genocide was being planned step by step and executed against any Christian civilian in the Ottoman Empire can be demonstrated by the written report during the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Even from that period, the Armenian representatives were talking about problems and attacks against Christians in the Empire\textsuperscript{45}. Since then, the beginning of the plan of the genocide was more than expected. As a result, Great Britain took into serious consideration the aggressive and murderous stance of the Ottoman Empire and forced it to establish new reforms in order to protect the Christian millets. In parallel, the British officials became supervisors of the reforms and placed military consuls in Van, Diyarbekir and Erzerum to the benefit of the Armenians and Assyrians\textsuperscript{46}.

All these changes in favor of the Christians in combination with rumors that Armenia was about to proclaim its independence poured oil in the fire and

\textsuperscript{43} Yonan 1996, 36.
\textsuperscript{44} Travis 2006, n34.
\textsuperscript{46} Yonan 1996, 40.
instigated once again the Kurdish emirs to enter the city of Urmia to threaten and frighten the defenseless Christians. Despite the hypocritical Turkish policy of finally recognizing the Assyrians as millets and despite using further pacifying dodges, the Empire did not manage to appease the situation but to fuel the already tensed condition.

While the decisive Berlin Congress was taking place in Germany, Abdul Hamid II seized power and took the reign of the Empire. As a paranoid personality, Abdul Hamid daydreamed spies all over the Ottoman territory, a fact that led him to imprison hundreds of suspects, torture them and even kill them. His dangerous idiosyncrasy intensified the atrocities and cruelties against the Assyrians as long as he conceptualized the Kurd cavalry section “Hamidiye”.

Abdul Hamid had realized the weakness of the prior Ottoman governors to exert considerable sway in order to control and supervise the Kurdish sheiks and emirs. Due to harsh rivalry between the Kurdish leaders, there was no ethnic unity among the Kurds. Their main concern was to extend their domination through the feudal power and to restrain the privileged position of the Assyrians supported by the western missionaries by exterminating them. Also, they felt threatened in front of the arrival of the Westerns who were considered as supporters of the “infidels”, aiming to limit Kurdish strength and “sovereignty” in the region. Furthermore, the restricting expeditions implemented by the Turks in order to placate the unrest among the Kurds neither did it manage to bring closer Kurds and Porte, nor to deactivate the danger posed by the Kurds. And in that point Abdul Hamid succeeded in manipulating the Kurd leaders and bringing them to his side. Actually, after 1880 the potential Kurdish rebellions against the Porte came to an end. By creating, however, the Hamidiye in 1890, he achieved complete control upon Kurds and curbed the inner frictions within the tribes. But the most critical is that with such a barbarous group, Abdul Hamid had prepared a militia always ready to attack and wipe out Christian population.

Soon after the creation, the Hamidiye horsemen expelled persecutions which suppressed the Armenians and resulted in the major massacres of 1894-1896. The intended annihilation both of Armenians and Assyrians through a well-
organized plan of genocide was implemented under the “consenting awareness” on the part of the red genocidal Sultan Abdul Hamid and other perpetrators.

The smoldering hatred for the Christians and the insufficiency of the European powers to provide the necessary protection for the Christian minority jeopardized Assyrians’ existence. The massacres of Armenians and other Christians spread to Sasun in 1904, and Adana and Cilicia in 1909\(^47\). The unfolding bloodbaths all over the Ottoman Empire made the Assyrians to opt for the Russian protection by collecting signatures for official acceptance into the Russian Orthodox Church\(^48\). That movement was more politically inspired rather than religious. Actually, it was a key-access for Russia in the province of Azerbaijan; by 1917 Azerbaijan would be under Russian domination.

The succession of the Patriarch Mar Shimun Ruwil from the new Patriarch Mar Shimun Benjamin (1903-1918) was marked by the same strategy: the contact between the Assyrian people and the Russians remained and further advanced by Mar Shimun Benjamin especially after the considerable deterioration of the situation. In this context, the Russians established their military force in the wider region of western Persia, i.e. Urmia, Khoi, Diliman etc. after the Turkish menace of occupying Urmia. The Russian force remained there protecting and controlling the area and the Assyrians till 1914, well before their catastrophic, for the Christians of the region, flight back to Russia.

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\(^{47}\) Travis 2006, 330 n43.
\(^{48}\) Yonan 1996, 51.
The Young Turk’s genocide in Urmia plain

In 1908 the red Sultan Abdul Hamid II was dethroned by the Young Turkish government which had promised political and economic liberalization, a state based on freedom of religion and equality among the millets\(^{49}\). This revolution created high expectations and hopes for the fate of the Ottoman Christians but soon proved to be ephemeral. The party of Young Turks calling itself Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) intended to reunify the Empire promote the ideology of Turkification and consolidate power by establishing a dictatorial regime. Even the early Young Turks concealed the idea of the Turkish superiority\(^{50}\) but no sooner revealed with the most brutal way.

After the 1894-1896 massacres, the Adana massacres in 1909 followed. Unfolding events like the Balkan wars threatened the empire with dissolution and as a consequence by 1913 the Ittihadist leaders Talaat Pasha, Ahmed Jemal and Ismail Enver took the reins of the state, established a military dictatorial regime and dismissed all the officials from their post. Buying time for certain policy consideration the Young Turks signed the “Final Reform Plan” that was imposed by the Russians on February 8, 1914 so as to protect and ameliorate the conditions of the Armenian people. Nevertheless, the Ittihadist leaders, concealing their disappointment for the Powers to interfere in the internal and external policy, were ready to annul such Capitulations and use the outbreak of the WWI as a cloak for the extermination of all Christian population, including of course the Assyrians.

Given the opportunity the Young Turks notified on September 10, 1914 to all the embassies the abrogation of all the Capitulation signed in favor of the Armenians. Aided by the fanatic Muslim loyals, the Special Organization, the German officers, launched a wide scope extermination plan against all Christian infidels.

In the case of the Assyrians living in the Northwestern Persia, the military presence of Russian troops in the Urmia plain since 1909 offered a sense of

\(^{49}\) Payaslian 2007, 123.
\(^{50}\) Suny 1996, 676.
security and tranquility. Even during the unsuccessful, though determined, attack on Urmia by the Kurds in October 1914, the Russians protected the town and its population. But the situation changed with the outbreak of war in Europe as the Turks adopted a more aggressive attack policy on the Russians in the Azeri frontiers. The Turks, reinforced by Kurdish irregulars, invaded Russian-controlled northern Persia in the winter of 1914, and in early January 1915 they forced a Russian evacuation of the northern Persian cities of Urmia, Tabriz, Salamas, Diliman, and Gulpashan, among others\(^\text{51}\).

Furthermore the conscription of the able-bodied men caused a devastated economy which exacerbated the conditions. Unfolding attacks in a number of villages in November 1914 in the provinces of Sebastia, Shabin-Karahisar, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbekir, Kharpur culminated the catastrophe of the Christians. After the total disaster of Enver’s expedition in Sarikamish battle and Jemal’s failed campaign in Egypt, the Ittihadist triumvirate, huddled in terror, in order not to jeopardize any further humiliation and loss of political sovereignty, and intensified the attacks on Christian people. The Young Turk regime relied on anti-Christian propaganda in the form of jihad to mobilize the Turkish masses with fanatical nationalism and hostility toward the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek communities\(^\text{52}\).

During the battle of Sarikamish the Turks wanted to destroy the railway to Tiflis, a fact that feared the Russians and forced them to evacuate, as we have already mentioned above, the Northwestern Persia. The Russian army left the region on January 2\(^{nd}\) and put all Christian suddenly in peril. The news that the Russians were to abandon Urmia and adjacent villages found the Assyrians completely unprepared. The Kurds when informed about the flight of Russians, began to loot, destroy, burn and commit genocide in nearby villages, one after the other: Charbash, Dilgusha, Ardishai, Dizateka, Babarud, Geogtapeh etc. The Kurds advanced from the mountains to the extended Urmia plateau and in their hands Armenians and Assyrians had to suffer atrocities with no parallel in the history. On January 3, 1915, the Turks entered in Urmia but thanks to the

\(^{51}\) Travis 2006, 331 n55.  
^{52}\) Payaslian 2007, 131.
American flag and the influence of the American and French missionaries the total destruction was averted of the city. Consequently, the city of Urmia became a city of refuge for the survived Armenians and Assyrians who sought to find a shelter in the American mission premises\textsuperscript{53}. By the summer of 1915, the Kurds having ravaged many villages of the Urmia plateau drove the Assyrians into the desperate flight to the veritable refuge city of Urmia.

In February 1915, the genocide expanded to the most rich and prosperous village of the plain, in Gulpashan. All men of the village were led brutally to the cemetery where they were submitted to the cruelest butchery. All the Christian villages of the plain of Salamas had to share the similar fate of massacres some days after the genocide of Gulpashan. Once again, the Turks along with Kurds and Persian Muslims gathered all the men and shot them down in cold blood\textsuperscript{54}, others had hacked to pieces in the most horrible way\textsuperscript{55}.

\textsuperscript{53} Yonan 1996, 17.
\textsuperscript{54} Yonan 1996, 27.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 19.
Deportation and population policy

In May and June 1915, the Ottoman authorities drafted a series of programs aimed at the complete expropriation of all Armenian communities\(^{56}\). All Armenians, who had not been totally slaughtered chiefly women and children to the contrary with men, were ordered to abandon their home and leave almost everything but few personal things, behind. The complicity of the German officials to the execution of the genocide was decisive. They signed and supported the deportations abetting the Turks in their drive to annihilate the Armenians. The forcible transfer was organized in three stages, involving confiscation of Armenian property, but only the final stage was ordered by the Temporary Law of Deportation\(^{57}\) drafted after the Allied Powers’ declaration condemning the deportations committed by Turkish government\(^{58}\). Through deportation, which is a powerful mechanism for systematic destruction, the majority of the deportees perished\(^{59}\). The results of the deportation included at least 800,000 Armenian men, women and children according to official Turkish figures\(^{60}\), in addition to many Assyrian victims\(^{61}\). This disguising order of “relocation” served as the perfect excuse to eliminate the Armenian population. It is best-known that the official Turkish euphemism for deportation is “relocation” and it is simple to understand why this is an euphemism. As Taner Akcam has told:

“The fact that neither at the start of the deportations, nor en route, and nor at the locations, which were declared to be their initial halting places, were there any single arrangement, required for the organization of the people’s migration, is sufficient proof of the existence of this plan of annihilation.”\(^{62}\)

By this way it is easy for “the Turkish way of telling the facts” to obfuscate the historically unaware people and establish the grounds so as to be able to claim the post-genocide exculpation and deny any blame or charge of annihilation through deportation.

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\(^{56}\) \url{http://www.hist.net/kieser/aghan/Essays/EssayKaiser.html}
\(^{57}\) Schechla 1993, 245.
\(^{58}\) Payaslian 2007, 137.
\(^{59}\) Dadrian 1995, 219.
\(^{60}\) Schechla 1993, 246 n.37.
\(^{61}\) Ibid., 246.
\(^{62}\) Dadrian 1995, 243 n.45.
As far as the deportation of the Assyrians is concerned, there are documents that prove that Assyrians have been affected by the deportations of the Armenians. Along with the Armenians, the Assyrians were forced to flee towards the Syrian Desert. The “modus operandi” of the deportation, as an effective mean of genocide, was first to kill the men and then deport the rest, i.e. women and children. The plan was first to depopulate all the Christian villages after massacring the men or incarcerating them in large caravanserai while the remaining to be deported. Then, the Ottoman army attacked those deportees en route in order to decimate them. Those deportees who managed to reach the Syrian Desert, the official destination, perished in the extermination camps. Those who survived, were exposed to severe unhygienic conditions and long term starvation and the remaining underwent the major massacres of 1916. By late June 1915 the surrounding villages of the northeastern part of the Empire had been evacuated and emptied by Christians. The deportation apparatus included the Assyrians from the region of Diyarbekir, Mardin, Seert.

**The Young Turk’s genocide in Hakkari Mountain**

At the same time when the deportations of Christian communities began throughout the entire Ottoman Empire and western Persia, the Russians advanced to Urmia once again in the end of May 1915. Russian military pressure obligated Turks and all those together with them to flee and liberated the Christians who were still remaining but had been converted to Islam in order to survive. Russians remained in the region for about 3 months and in mid-August they fled back to Russia, bringing with them hundreds of refuges that had made their escape towards Russian Armenia.

One of the most evidentiary books that compose the genocides of the Armenians and Assyrians is the “Blue Book”. This book which is actually a collection of documents was published in 1916 under the title: “The treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16”. The work of collecting documents

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63 For that documents see [http://www.atour.com/forums/history/16.html](http://www.atour.com/forums/history/16.html)
64 Uğur 2005, 57.
was made during the war by Arnold Toynbee and James Bryce to whom the British government had mandated the general narrative of the occurring massacres. More than three dozen of the reports in the “Blue Book” constituted official State Department records. According to the reports of the “Blue Book”, the survivors among 40 villages in the district of Hakkari numbered only to 17 people.

When the Turks had difficulty to cope with the Russians who had come back to Persia in May 1915, they decided to deal with the Assyrians of their territory. First, they launched an attack to the seat of the Assyrian Patriarch Mar Shimun Benjamin. The way for the Turks to exterminate the Assyrians of the Hakkari Mountain was not to deport them but to starve them out. Through starvation, it was easy to commit genocide against one of the oldest Christian population. The Hakkari mountain range is a region located in the southeastern part of Turkey. Hakkari was denominated as a vilayet and consisted of 11 counties, ten of which were populated by Assyrians: Julamerg, Albaq, Gavar, Shamsdinan, Mahmudi, Norduz, Chal, Beit ul- Shabab, Oramar, Amadiya. Half of the population of the Hakkari vilayet was made up of Assyrians.

So, in May 1915 the Turks after having committed genocide against the Christians of Urmia plateau, they turned against the Assyrians and targeted the Nestorian mountainous tribes, the oldest inhabitants of Turkish territory. In the theater of the genocide in Hakkari which lasted for months the Kurds took part by playing the role of the puppets of Turks. Turks provided Kurds with weaponry which was received by Imperial Germany. After almost 73 years from the first massacres of 1842, Tiari and Khoma experienced again a complete destruction and a further genocide. As a result in August 1915, some 35,000 Assyrians survived and fled to Salamas. Nevertheless, neither was the situation in Salamas better. There was not enough housing accommodation as the majority of the houses had been destroyed during the last winter of 1915. Some people of the large amounts of refugees who found shelter in Salamas, Persia, were living

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66 Travis 2006, 331 n59.
67 Yonan 1996 84.
outside, on the bare ground without extra clothing and covering. The situation was merely indescribable.

In October 1915, the Patriarch Mar Shimun Benjamin had written the following letter to a visitor:

“[…] When the constitution was introduced in Turkey, we believed in the government’s promise guaranteeing us safety, and sold a large portion of our weapons. They led us to believe that the Kurds had also been disarmed. In this manner, our people became defenseless. After declaring Jihad (“holy war”), the Turks decided to wipe us out like the Armenians, and let us be attacked by their troops and by the Kurds among whom we live. […] At the end of May, the Turkish troops from Mosul marched into our area. This is when the official massacres and devastations in our villages began. Our people left their grazing areas and withdrew to the high mountains of Betashin, where they are now surrounded. Their food is in imminent danger of running out, and there are epidemics. The only hope is to break through and flee over the Persian border”.


Some people managed to survive genocide thanks to some relief organizations such as the “Persian War Relief Committee”, the “American Commission for Armenian and Syrian Relief”, and the Friends of Armenia, the Rockefeller Foundation and Russian organizations as well. Their first goal and major contribution was to gather food, money and clothing. There was an urgent need because the epidemics had exhausted many survivors and the unhealthy conditions were spreading out. Especially the Armenians as larger community and more energetic showed a remarkable solidarity and generosity towards Assyrians who suffered the same tragic fate of genocide and took care of them as well. Both victims developed the necessary relationship in order to survive and overcome such a crime against Humanity.

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The Young Turk's genocide of Tur Abdin (southeastern Turkey)

In Turkey itself, alongside with the Armenians the Assyrians had been targeted as well without any differentiation and suffered under the same genocidal campaign. The well-organized and systematic nature of the genocide affected in particularly the Christians of the provinces of Diyarbekir, Seert and Van. The largest parishes of Chaldeans and Jacobites totally disappeared from northern Mesopotamia. Unlike those parishes, Christian communities in other cities such as Constantinople, Aleppo and Mosul had not been affected to the same extent. Nonetheless, Turkish militia drove the murderous campaign of genocide towards the northern part of Mosul province where the one quarter of the population was consisted of Assyrians. Those massacres obtained genocidal dimensions because of the systematic plan, the scope, the timing, and the well-constructed methodology. From the Black Sea to Northern Mesopotamia neither Christian presence nor any Christian name could be found after the genocide.

Large cities such as Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbekir, Midyat had been historically marked and characterized by the Christian presence since many centuries before. By 1915 Armenians, Assyrians and Kurds formed part of the majority of the population. With the outburst of the World War I, the Turks found the opportunity to settle once and for all the matter with the “enemies”, and consequently after the genocide the Turks represented the majority in any province of Turkey. On the culmination of the genocide in the winter of 1915, Lepsious had already traveled to the Ottoman Empire and Persia, founding mission stations and an orphanage for Assyrian girls in Urmia named “Dilgusha”. The equivalent mission center of Urmia in the Ottoman territory was placed in Urfa. In particular, in Urfa it had been founded an orphanage, a hospital, a clinic and a pharmacy.

The genocide reached its climax in the southeastern provinces of Turkey when the first barbaric and genocidal deeds took place: churches such as for example of Saint Ephraim were vandalized, non-Turkish languages were prohibited in some institutions and books written in non-Ottoman languages, especially in Armenian or French were burnt publicly. There were early warning signs that rung the alarming bells of the culmination of the genocide. Especially,
during the winter of 1915, the government started to invade Christian homes and search for hidden arms and weapons. During these violent searches the inhabitants were accused of treason and espionage. A few months later, the same violent arm searches took place in the villages of Kabiye, Qarabash and Qatarbel, all situated in Diyarbekir province. After the search, the village men were subjected to inhuman tortures and were led to prisons.

The Assyrian Christians in Diyarbekir formed a high proportion among other Christian parishes and the Assyrian Christians were divided into two strong parishes: that of Chaldeans and the Jacobites. In Diyarbekir city a proclamation was issued for the surrender of all weapons on 1 of April 1915. By 15 of April many Armenians in particular had been arrested and tortured to death. Others had to endure murderous suffering such as bastinado, burn with hot irons etc. After having put to jail almost all the intellectuals and notables, Turkish militia turned to religious leaders. Bishops and priests were the next target. All the Chaldean Churches were pillaged and destroyed.

At the same time, the Turkish plan was to paralyze and “deactivate” any political power possessed by the Armenians and other Christians and as a consequence they proceeded to mass firing of all Armenian staff. The goal of this methodology was one: to disarm the men and eliminate the male elite. Then, the rest of the defenseless women and old people were offered the possibility to live in exchange for conversion to Islam. When the victims refused, the reign of terror continued with massacres using swords, axes and daggers. The women were raped or sold as sex-slaves and soon after that, the first order for deportation was issued referring to those who had remained alive, chiefly the women, the elderly and the children. The neighborhoods usually were divided into Armenian and Chaldean; the homes were combed and the rest had to get prepared to be deported.

The city of Diyarbekir was used as a deportation hub and station where deportees from northern cities were concentrated there. Some of the deportees continued their way southwards though the majority ended up dying there due to starvation, dehydration, and exhaustion. When the officer of German duty, Rafael

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69 Uğur 2005,38.
70 Yonan 1996,45.
de Nogales Mendez visited Diyarbekir on June corroborated Resid’s fury and obedience to Talaat to destroy anything non-Turkish. Overall, the genocide in Diyarbekir city lasted four months and its Christian population declined dramatically.

The violent scenario of genocide was no restricted to the city of Diyarbekir but extended also to nearby cities and villages. Some days later in 24 of May 1915, Resid, the paranoid governor of Diyarbekir who took command on 25 March 1915 in the province, ordered further arm searches in Mardin. The inhabitants of Mardin encountered the same insane and brutal behavior on the part of Turks who once again blamed Christians for collaborating with Russians and being infidels. In the beginning they incarcerated all the Christian notables of Mardin and later more Christians followed the same fate. The persecutions also repeated in other parts of province of Diyarbekir. In Mardin, the district governor named Hilmi was trying since the beginning of the World War I to appease the conflict and maintain a relative stability in the city. However, a fanatic Muslim name Zeki triggered the hatred of Muslims against any Christian and provoked them to take up arms against the infidels. Hilmi expelled him out of the city and in general resisted anti-Christian persecutions but in the end he could not avert further crack-down on Mardin notables. Like in Diyarbekir, the genocide concept repeated in Mardin as well. First the Turks arrested the men and tortured them with the aim to make them confess their treason. In the meantime, Turks were planning to wipe out all the Christians of Mardin and the remaining were to be sent off to their death marches. No sooner than 10 of June they deported to first convoy while the second convoy of Mardin Christians left the city on 14 June. On 2 July, a group of men was driven outside the cities and was massacred. Now, it was the turn of their families to be eliminated and on 10 August a third convoy began its death route. Within a month or two, the Christian people of Mardin city had drastically been reduced.

The wider district of Mardin consisted of several Christian villages; the largest between them were the Q’sor and Tell Ermen. Tell Ermen and its inhabitants faced the cruelest fate a human being can experience. It was not before

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1 of July when the Kurdish along with Turkish militia invaded the village and the worst incidents of genocide took place. The villagers found shelter in the Church but even the Church had been attacked and all Christians within the Church met the same violence despite his/her denomination or race. On the entrance of the militia in the Church an indiscriminate massacre took place. The ‘genocidaires’ could not distinguish among the frightened people and decapitated many of them. Also, they did not hesitate to rape women within the Church before killing them with swords. The victims had been chopped off in pieces before they were burnt. The next day the village of Q’sor which was a Jacobite agricultural center, was invaded. Children were thrown from roofs\textsuperscript{72} and brutally were maimed. The population was put to death.

Another mayor similar to Hilmi of Mardin who was reluctant to obey and let the genocidal violence to penetrate into his city was the mayor of Midyat. Resid wanted to get rid of Nuri, the mayor, because of his protective attitude towards Armenians and Assyrians. Furthermore, Resid was furious to replace Nuri by a criminal judge of Mardin and embarked on his destructive plans of extermination of all Christians. When Resid could not typically blame Nuri and remove him, Resid opted for more violent solutions and Nuri was founded assassinated. Consequently, the way to commit the genocide without any further disturbance and resistance had been opened. The hatred inflicted Midyat and every Christian found in the city was brutally killed. Many children were abducted by Muslims and all the houses had been plundered.

Further massacres and murderous violence spread out into the rest of the Diyarbekir province. In the city of Maden, the men quickly were selected and forced to join caravanserai. Then the deportation convoy began with destination to Urfa and southwards. The genocide proliferated towards Lice where the resistance of the mayor to execute Resid’s order of annihilation of the Christians was the main reason of his assassination. By such change, there was no one to break the animosity of Resid and as there was no obstacle, the Christians of Lice were at the mercy of the upcoming genocide. Some Christian families escaped the genocidal persecution through conversion to Islam and after years managed to flee to other

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 68.
cities in Turkey and elsewhere in Europe. The villages adjacent to Lice were surrounded by the Turkish militia who were ready to attack. In a village named Henne all the men within a day disappeared and no one escaped the crime of genocide as the women were raped and were abandoned to die in hunger. The same occurred in the Derik village where the mayor once again was assassinated due to his opposition to follow the orders to commit genocide against the Christians of his district. As a result, no one survived “Seyfo”. Another center of genocide was the district of Palu. Like in other villages, the men were gathered and either were driven to the river where they were butchered and thrown into the river, or were stabbed. The women and the young girls were used as sex-slaves or for personal use and the babies were thrown into the river. The atrocities engulfed the village and the devastated convoy was deported to the south.

During August, the two villages that were targeted and basically were consisted of Armenians, Chaldeans and Jacobites were Nusaybin and Cizre. In Nusaybin, as usual, the men were all incarcerated; Armenians, Chaldean, Jacobites, Protestants. Within the same night the militia butchered them one by one and within two days the population of Nusaybin had dropped from 2000 to 1200, as 800 Christians were destroyed. The Jews were left unharmed. The village of Cizre also faced the crime of genocide as Cizre men were all arrested and tortured till death. Their dead corpses were thrown into Tigris river and caused such pollution that Mosul inhabitants were not allowed to drink water from it. As in Nusaybin, a large population of Christians was wiped out: 4750 Armenians, 250 Chaldeans, and 100 Jacobites.

As can easily be inferred, by autumn 1915 the Christian population of the entirely Diyarbekir province had been put under a genocide program and had been completely vanished due to systematic and methodical killing and deportations. As a final result, the villages had been evacuated.

Besides the province of Diyarbekir, the genocide in the southeastern corner of Turkey took place also in Seert, Bitlis, Van and Urfa. In the city of Seert the Christians were believers of the Chaldean Church. They met their end during

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73 Ibid., 75 n448.
74 Ibid., 76 n454.
the severe massacres which lasted more than a month. The invasion of the militias in the city occurred in May 1915; the Kurds engaged with the Christians of the surrounding villages. Either simultaneously or shortly after the massacre of the local Armenians, Assyrian communities were eliminated in the same way. The Chaldeans who shared the same fate of the Armenians reached 8,000 victims in the village of Seert. In July 1915 the Chaldean women and children were deported. The final blow to the victims was the decimation and they launched attacks to the deportees. Three days later of the genocide in Seert, Bitlis was next. The “butcher battalions” known as “Kassab tabouri” committed the genocide of the men of Bitlis and afterwards the deportation began.

According to the “Blue Book” the governor of Van led his Christian population into genocide. Additional document reports than many Chaldean villages of Van province met their death and extinction under the first genocide of the 20th century. The Chaldean bishop managed to run away from Van and go to Russia alongside with other Chaldean families. Armenian and Nestorian women and children were deported from the villages of Bashkala and Julamerg to Mosul.

In the city of Urfa, the historically known as the center of Assyrian Christianity and culture, among the 5,000 Assyrians there was a small Chaldean community. During the raids on August 19, there was no discrimination policy of genocide between the Christians. The Kurds ravaged the adjacent villages near Urfa while courageous Assyrians fled to Aleppo. The indescribable bloodbaths in Urfa were followed by the 15,000 Armenian women and children deportees. The tragedy of the genocide resulted in the extinction of any Assyrian presence through communities and parishes in Urfa. Last but not least, northeast of Urfa is situated the city of Kharput, entirely on the Euphrates river. When the genocide broke out in Kharput, the Christian neighborhoods were evacuated and all the Christians indiscriminately were captured and then killed by the barbarian Turks and Kurds. In nearby villages, the priests had been tortured brutally before massacred and their bodies had been discarded into the river along with other

75 http://www.hist.net/kieser/aghet/Essays/EssayKaiser.html
76 Travis 2006, 333 n88.
77 Yonan 1996, 34.
dead corpses of Christians. Finally, no Christian presence could be traced after the genocide in the district of Kharpoot as well.

**The genocide during 1916-1923**

Whereas the genocidal persecutions against the Christians of the southeastern region of Turkey were taking place and large convoys made up of Chaldeans, Jacobites, Nestorians, Armenians etc. were ready to be forcefully deported in spring of 1915, non-Kurdish and non-Turkish Muslims from Bosnia, Bulgaria and Albania had already embarked on their way of deportation to that corner of Turkey. The CUP was also engaged in the deportation of Kurds within Turkey. While Armenians and Assyrians were to be deported southwards, the Kurds of southeastern Turkey were deported westwards. Personally Talaat took the responsibility to organize the deportation of Kurds in January 1916 within the framework of the Turkification project. On 2\textsuperscript{nd} of May, Talaat issued the following order:

- It is absolutely not allowable to send the Kurdish refugees to southern regions such as Urfa or Zor. Because they would either Arabize or preserve their nationality there and remain a useless and harmful element, the intended objective would not be achieved and therefore the deportation and settlement of these refugees needs to be carried out as follows.
- Turkish refugees and the Turkified city dwellers need to be deported to the Urfa, Maraş, and Anteb regions and settled there.
- To preclude that the Kurdish refugees continue their tribal life and their nationality wherever they have been deported, the chieftains need to be separated from the common people by all means, and all influential personalities and leaders need to be sent separately to the provinces of Konya and Kastamonu, and to the districts of Niğde and Kayseri.
- The sick, the elderly, lonely and poor women and children who are unable to travel will be settled and supported in Maden town and Ergani and Behremaz counties, to be dispersed in Turkish villages and among Turks. [...] 
- Correspondence will be conducted with the final destinies of the deportations, whereas the method of dispersion, how many deportees have been sent where and when, and settlement measures will all be reported to the Ministry\textsuperscript{78}.

\textsuperscript{78} Uğur 2005, 85.
A few days later, the deportation of Kurds began directed to villages where Turks lived and as a consequence the Kurds could easily and quickly be adapted to a purely Turkish way of life, speaking Turkish etc. In addition, another group of Turks from Bitlis and Van along with the Muslims of Balkans were sent off to resettle in the eastern provinces. Such a policy intensified the Turkification process.

**Kemal regime’s genocide**

As the genocide was proceeding, more villages were destroyed and the number of the Christian victims was increasing dramatically, Assyrians deposited their hope on the Russian protection. If it had not been for the Russian revolution in 1917 and the dissolution of the monarchy which gave ground to the Bolsheviks to command Russia and recall all the armies from the fronts, maybe the genocide would have taken a different turn. So, the Assyrians trying to find their way out of this genocidal hell, on their exodus from Urmia during the summer of 1918, they found in Hamadan the British who provided emergency care\(^79\). When at least the Assyrians encountered British they were transported to a camp near Bakuba, about 33 miles north-east of Baghdad\(^80\) that was established in order to mitigate Assyrians’ misfortunes. In the camp hundreds of Assyrians and Armenians died out of the strain of the hardship and the physical decay. The total number of the Assyrians still in the camp on October 1, 1919, was 25,579, with 14,612 Armenians\(^81\).

After World War I the genocidal triumvirate of Talaat, Cemal and Enver left into panic Turkey just before they had destroyed suitcases full of documents. The CUP insiders then in order to prevent any Armenian and Greek territorial claim propelled Mustafa Kemal to complete their plan of a purified Turkey; “of a Turkey for the Turks”. After the defeat of Turkey in the WWI, they Turks worried about the territorial integrity within the state. So, Kemal kept working on the genocidal plan to get rid of all the “obstacles” that could interfere and assert for

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\(^{79}\) Winkler 2000,139.

\(^{80}\) Vine 1937, 198.

\(^{81}\) Stafford 1935, 28.
their rights. As a result, he murdered the remaining Assyrians and answered upon a question on the Armenians like that:

“We cannot prohibit individuals to enter the country. Apart from the Armenians, the Chaldeans and Assyrians want this land too. If we have to provide all of them a homeland there won’t be any left for us. That’s how much land they are demanding”\(^{82}\).

Kemal advanced further northward targeting the Christian Greek population, namely the Greeks of Pontus, in the coastline of Black Sea. On 19 May 1919, Kemal arrived in the port city of Samsun\(^{83}\). The Sèvres Treaty of 1920 defined a vast Armenia which included the regions of Trabzon, Erzerum, Erzincan. This fact mobilized the Kemalist regime, for, it was a necessity to prevent any loss of the eastern provinces. The Sèvres Treaty was an obstacle for Turkey to have adjacent frontiers with their brother nation state of Azerbaijan. In order to impede the realization of such Armenia the Kemalist regime had to carry out systematic, total, physical extermination of the Armenian population by all means. The genocide against the Christians, Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks, was completed when the Republic of Turkey was proclaimed. As Kemal explained in 1923:

“Armenians have no rights at all in this prosperous country. The land is yours; the land belongs to the Turks. In history this land was Turkish, therefore, it is Turkish and will remain Turkish forever. The land has finally been returned to its rightful owners. The Armenians and the others have no rights here at all. These blessed regions are the native lands of the true Turks”\(^{84}\).

In conclusion, about 2,500,000 Christians had to suffer the Turkish genocide and despite the precise number of the victims, the only thing sure is: the Turks achieved through their genocidal goal to eliminate any Christian presence from the coastline of the Black Sea to the Northern Mesopotamia.

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\(^{82}\) Uğur 2005, 103 n657.

\(^{83}\) Fotiadis 2010, 190.

\(^{84}\) Appelbaum 2013, 11 n.25.
Chapter 3: The strategy for recognition of the Genocide of the Assyrians

Strategic steps on the recognition

Looking at the numbers of the survivors from the genocide of the Armenians, Greeks of Pontus and Assyrians, it is easy to conclude that the Ottoman and Turkish regimes showed more efficiency regarding the Assyrian population. The genocide against the Assyrians was more “complete” judging from the records provided by the U.S State Department, according to which there were 60,000 Armenians, but only 4,000 Greeks but 20,000 Assyrians in Turkey\textsuperscript{85} while in Persia 190,000 Armenians but only 20,000 Assyrians in 1956, even though the Assyrians outnumbered Armenians during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century\textsuperscript{86}. In addition, we should not forget that that the Assyrians today lack an official country, recognized by the United Nation, with a national government to the contrary with the Armenians and the Greeks who apart from their considerable diaspora, they have their own states.

By that, it becomes clear why a struggle for international recognition of the genocide of the Assyrians is vital to be carried out by each individual regardless of his/her nationality. The fact that few Assyrians have survived the genocide, comparatively to the Armenians for instance renders necessary to stand by them to their fight against chiefly the ignorance, secondly the indifference and worst of all the denial of the existence of the genocide. Definitely the Assyrians have not launched a lobbying campaign in favor of the recognition of genocide to the same extend as the Armenians did. On the other hand, this practice followed until now does not mean that the international community does not know how to protect both victims and survivors from the genocide of memory.

The characteristic feature of the Ottoman Christian Genocide indeed was the double failure of the Allies to prevent and punish the perpetrators. As a result, the impunity of the nineteenth-Century massacres emboldened the Young Turks

\textsuperscript{85} Travis 2011,10 n50.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. n51.
to continue the genocide and even then, in 1918, the Allies did not proceed to occupy and control Turkey but left it *de facto* and *de jure* with its sovereign rights; on the contrary they actually avoided any involvement in the Turkish Courts Martial prosecutions.\(^{87}\) Especially when Mustafa Kemal took the reins of Turkey any pursuit for justice was abandoned as long as his nationalist movement aborted any procedures to prosecute Turkish military and government officials. Despite this, however, the current results on the marathon for the recognition are more than satisfactory.

The recognitions that Armenia has so far achieved constitute the spearhead of the genocides that have not yet been recognized by the perpetrator himself\(^{88}\). Armenia and its diaspora have accomplished several international recognitions by Western governments such as Uruguay, Argentina, Greece, and Cyprus, France etc., by the European Parliament, United Nations, and Catholic Church and so on. In the same context and even more strategically we have to move on; further explanation is below provided.

There are many who albeit familiar with the history of the Assyrians, they do not know how exactly to contribute to the struggle for the recognition of the genocide. Prominent scholars, historians, sociologists, lawyers have provided the sufficient documentary evidence that prove that the genocide of the Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians occurred in the same framework. Despite those who support that the genocide of the Armenians was discontinuous from the misfortunes of the other victims, the resolutions of the European Parliament in 2006, of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, (IAGS) in 2007\(^{89}\) and of Sweden in 2010 present the three genocides as parts of a single genocide. Actually, they are a trinity of genocide\(^{90}\) that was executed by the present Turkish state of denial.

In the same vein, Australia has accomplished partial recognitions. The New South Wales local government of Australia and the South Australia State Parliament have proceeded to official recognitions as regards the genocide of the

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\(^{87}\) Dadrian 1995, 312.


\(^{90}\) [http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=9480&l=en](http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=9480&l=en)
Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks, taking into consideration the strategy of unity. It is only in this way that the struggle for the recognition becomes more efficient and coherent. This methodology equips the fighters of Humanity with the most powerful weapon in the recognition struggle.

The struggle of the refugee associations

Especially in the case of Greece where the genocide of the Greeks of Pontus has been recognized in 1994 and the one of the Armenians since 1996 it is necessary for the Greek parliament to move on to the recognition of the third part of the triple genocide, the one of the Assyrians. Otherwise, it does not make sense to invoke the rights of Humanity. How could one claim that one fights for the recognition of his own people when actually one’s only concern is one’s own? The Greek government and each government that cares about the prevention of future genocides should promote those cases of genocide into a coalition framework because it is only united like three fingers we can exert the necessary pressure. Each state can be based upon and follow the paradigm of Sweden, Australia and European Union. For, Assyrians constitute our victims alongside with Armenian and Greek victims, as we support the concept of a triple genocide. They are our victims and it remains a “hole” either by law or structurally when we delay to officially recognize the genocide of the Assyrians and consequently we leave a gap in Turkey to justify further denial.

The only way to fight effectively against barbarity is to follow a certain strategy primarily based on the humanness. Usually the scholars tend to study the strategy of the perpetrators of the genocides, such as Kemal and Hitler by examining the methodology, the scope, the means etc., and rarely do they attract attention on the strategy which the victims and the survivors follow after the genocide in order to be protected; because the most important issue is to protect the survivors and Humanity and avert the genocide of memory.

Nevertheless, as far as the struggle for the recognition on the genocide of the Assyrians is concerned, in Greece there are already resolutions issued on the recognition from various Greek Pontic associations. Many Armenian and Greek refugee associations worldwide can play a role in this struggle. The fact that both
genocides of Armenians and Greeks have been recognized in Greece does not mean that the struggle is over. On the contrary, the decision on the part of the European Parliament to recognize this triple entity as one crime against Humanity in 2006 upgraded the issue of the recognition in the international agenda and gave a specific direction on the strategy that should be followed. Besides, on international level, the concept of recognition is not the final goal of the struggle, but only the first stage of the reparation process according to the human rights. The genocide of the Armenians is directly connected with the genocide of the Assyrians and of the Greeks and it is historically proven. The target of the perpetrators was the Christian element without paying considerable attention to the religious denomination. The amount and the scope of victims in the Ottoman Empire and in its frontiers with Persia attest that Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks were the victims of the same strategy. The international scientific community on the matter of genocide since 2006 has adopted a quite distinct approach, as there was not one strategy resulting to three genocides but rather one strategy resulting in a triple genocide.

So, the refugee associations can take the initiative to publish a resolution on the genocide of the Assyrians and as more resolutions are issued, the sooner the political regimes will realize that there is a human initiative for the matter which will mobilize the necessary process for the creation of the Law of recognition of the genocide. In Greece, there are already 17 resolutions that push towards this direction and in practice support the notion of the unity of the victims. In that way, each association claims and demands the recognition by written statements declaring that officially recognizes the genocide of the Assyrians and encourages other associations to take a position on the matter themselves.
The contribution of Art and Translations for the struggle on the recognition

Nevertheless, the strategy of the recognition for genocide of the Assyrians should not only be restricted to the resolutions by the refugee associations but should include also initiatives on the grounds of Arts. Cinema, theatre, painting, fairytales for kids, sound recordings are very powerful tools as long as they have the incredible ability to draw someone’s attention on the genocide field through an unexpected way. Moreover, those alternative means of education encourage the viewers or the auditors to be part of the historical events because in the end they would eye-witness the tragic events, too. In our case, i.e. on the issue of the recognition, movies and theatre plays, just like books and paintings are created by people about victims and survivors, for the born and the unborn people; because, it is only by studying the past, you create the future.

The most widespread and recognized genocide after Holocaust is the one of the Armenians. The famous and well-known movie of Ararat definitely has contributed to the rapidly diffusion of the knowledge of genocide. Through a movie like Ararat thousands of people became familiar with the Armenian history and the genocidal events that took place during the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. Ararat, directed by the Armenian-Canadian Atom Egoyan, came out in 2002 and was ambiguously accepted by the public91. The scenario and the central idea of the movie were based on the denial of the genocide rather than the genocide itself. This approach, of course, does not surprise us when Turkey until today denies the crime which committed against Humanity.

Unfortunately, almost all of us today cannot remember, realize or understand the triple genocide of the past in any direct way. The inaccessibility impedes us from a personal investigation of the genocide and most of the time as we lack the adequate means to respond, we remain passive. By creating genocide films such as Ararat we fortify the work of memory and commemoration. Especially for the genocide of the Assyrians which remains hitherto

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91 Bagramyan 2006, 41.
unrecognizable by the majority of the states, similar movies narrating the historical true constitute a key-role. Through the genocide filmography the collective memory of the crime is supported and by enhancing understanding of the atrocities, one starts searching for political responses in wider discussions among the viewers. *Thea Halo*, the writer of the book “*Not even my name*”, of Greek-Assyrian origin, has expressed publicly her desire to have her book made into a feature film and she continued revealing that “a project like that will really get the world's attention if it is done properly”\(^92\).

Her book which was first released in 2000 recounts the story of a ten-year Greek girl from Pontus in the Black Sea who forcefully along with her family and other Greek population found herself deported to death marches. This story told to *Thea* by her surviving mother constitutes a rare first-hand account of the triple genocide and could potentially be used as a script to cinema. In the same vein it is written the book “*The strings of time*”, or under the Greek title “*Οι χορδές του χρόνου*” by the strategic advisor Nikos Lygeros which is not only a mere theatrical play or a cinema scenario; it is a reference to the Pontic memory. In this play, the people represent the strings and even though no one can experience the genocide anymore, they are those who can die for the struggle of the recognition\(^93\).

The issue of genocide has inspired a number of artistic materials. In the last decade there is a flourishing production as regards the promotion of the recognition of the genocide. To continue with, only the script

“*Cinq mouvements pour un silence*”

[http://www.lygeros.org/Cameleon/cinqmouvementspourunsilence.htm](http://www.lygeros.org/Cameleon/cinqmouvementspourunsilence.htm)

has been translated into four languages: English, Greek, Spanish and Ukrainian; recorded also and supported by CD audio\(^94\). The Ukrainian translation has been published also into the Greek-Ukrainian book under the title: “*Κάτω από το βάρος ενός σταχυού. Πίδ βαγού κολοσσά*”. Moreover, the one-act play “*Opération


\(^{93}\) [http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=1481&l=gr](http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=1481&l=gr)

\(^{94}\) [http://www.lygeros.org/Cameleon/5mvts-souvenirdragon.htm](http://www.lygeros.org/Cameleon/5mvts-souvenirdragon.htm)
"Némésis", originally written in French\(^{95}\), has also been translated into Russian, English, Greek, and Spanish. The Greek translation has also been recorded and distribution is available on the internet via you tube.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jMMqGGBOns](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jMMqGGBOns)

Regarding the Spanish translations allow me at this point to underline that I have translated them and are accessible here:

“Cinco movimientos para un silencio”


“Operación Némesis”


Last but not least, we should not forget the possibility of the kids to play in the near future a pivotal role as adults if they are taught about the rights of Humanity. A way to educate kids for historical events is through fairytales such as: “Lumineuse et le Dragon”, a story originally written in Greek under the title “Η Φωτεινή και ο Δράκος”\(^{96}\), for gifted children.

However, besides the artistic and literary expression in relation with the genocide, other means to mobilize the conscience of people and activate their potential skills so they participate in the struggle against oblivion and genocide of memory is through scientific conferences, relative publications and even via blogs such as the one, “Humanitas et Tempus” [http://humanitas-tempus.blogspot.gr/](http://humanitas-tempus.blogspot.gr/)

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\(^{95}\) [http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=8926\&l=fr](http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=8926\&l=fr)

\(^{96}\) [http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=3354\&l=gr](http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=3354\&l=gr)
where anyone has direct access to a wide range material about genocide, such as poems, articles, resolutions, dissertations etc. “Humanitas et Tempus” is accessible to any reader who is looking for direct information.

It is needless to mention the high contribution of the scientific conferences which often take place worldwide. The main goal of the associations that organize scientific meetings is to raise awareness regarding the topic and such efforts should be encouraged. The variety of the scientific approach on the matter of genocide is a major contribution to the future. For example, last May 2013 the largest conference which ever took place was dedicated on the triple genocide against Assyrians, Greeks and Armenians. Many prominent scholars around the world through their research promoted the awareness. Once again it was proved that on international level, the genocide of the Assyrians, Greeks and Armenians is presented and examined as one.

The power of the Memorials

Lastly, I left the strategy of erecting monuments for the end. Usually, in the aftermath of genocide, nations have sought ways to keep memory of their victims alive through the preservation of monuments. Over the last years, there was a rapid development of architectural monuments constructed to recall the existence of genocide. The pain of the genocide and the plight of the victimized population resulted in a search for a new language in contemporary architecture which would respond to these events. Monuments devoted to genocides serve to the commemoration of the genocidal events, increase the sense of the collective memory and reminds to any viewer either passenger or visitor not to forget. Monuments can be considered as a counter-attack against oblivion and barbarity itself. Such pieces of Art are so powerful weapons which can be used in parallel as remembrance places and as leverage to recognition.

The beginning of building such valuable monuments is definitely a unique and special moment. As far as the building of Monuments for the genocide of the Assyrians is concerned, the only states that have erased Monuments until now are

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98 Jacobs 2011, 154.
99 Wierzbicka 2011, 51.
France, Armenia, United States, Belgium, Australia and United Kingdom Wales\textsuperscript{100}. The first Monument was erected in Chicago in 2000. Just 7 years later, another Monument was constructed for the victims of the genocide of Assyrians in California. The third Monument was devoted to both Armenian and Assyrian victims and it was unveiled in Wales in 2007. In 2010, Assyrians and many friends attended the unveiling of the genocide Monument in Australia which has been built to commemorate the 750,000 Assyrians who lost their life under the Ottoman and Turkish sword. Armenia also proceeded to the construction of a Monument for the Assyrians which was finally unveiled in 2012 along with France inaugurating a memorial to the Assyrian victims. The last memorial was erected in Belgium last August of 2013 commemorating the Assyrian victims of the Turkish genocide.

However, the building of a Monument is the first step of a strategic approach on the desired recognition but we should not ignore that a Monument needs protection because it remains exposed to deniers and to potential vandalism. In 2006 the state of France was called to handle a Turkish rally against the Monument for the genocide of Armenians in Lyon. About 3,000 Turkish people were gathered to the southeastern city of Lyon demonstrating the denial of the genocide and vandalizing the memorial\textsuperscript{101}. Under the same pretext barbaric deniers painted the Monument in Australia. The perpetrator painted a crescent on the memorial and wrote offending phrases cursing the Assyrians\textsuperscript{102}. As long as there would be no law that would prohibit such destructive actions, the perpetrator will continue to curse, to vandalize, and to deny. The strategy of recognition has to be the first goal of the fighters of the Humanity but not the end. Only penalization of the non-recognition can practically protect the memory of the victims, the survivors and consequently the human rights. Recognitions should be accomplished and though desired and of great importance, they are still symbolic and without any practical after-affects\textsuperscript{103}.

\textsuperscript{100} \url{http://www.aina.org/releases/20130808172829.htm}
\textsuperscript{101} \url{http://asbarez.com/53393/turkish-groups-rally-against-armenian-genocide-memorial-in-france/} and \url{http://lyon.novopress.info/1597/manifestation-des-turcs/}.
\textsuperscript{102} \url{http://www.aina.org/news/20100829191841.htm}
\textsuperscript{103} Written report of colloquium, 2008 152.
Turkey, even now, not only denies the crime which committed against Humanity but denies the victims as well, murdering them a second time. Turkey continues the genocide of memory, by ignoring all states which have simply recognized the genocide. Turkey tries to eradicate the ultimate memory and buys time to redefine the offense. What’s more, Turkey, a nation based on the Armenian, Assyrian and Pontic bones, question the right to anyone else to fight against such denials and pursuit an international recognition of this crime. As the strategic advisor Nikos Lygeros has emphasized:

“The recognition of a crime it is not one goal itself; it belongs to a complex and complicated judicial process of correction. So it is just the first step in a strategy that works in favor of a victim and against the executioner because genocide is a crime against Humanity. […] There may be a law on the recognition of the genocide, but since there is no law of penalization for the offense of non-recognition, the deniers can easily attack people who claim the recognition.

(I have translated it from the original Greek text)"

He continues:

“No matter how significant the recognition may be, it is symbolic and with no practical consequences. […]The deep state of Turkey has no problem with recognition, as long as it is not followed by penalization as long, because it is aware of its symbolic character. […]The actual recognition is institutionally achieved only by penalization. […] Penalization is the only means to practically protect the Human Rights.

(I have translated it from the original Greek text)

The states of Switzerland and Slovakia have already adopted the penalization of non-recognition of the Genocide of the Armenians. In conclusion, it is high time we took action in order to help Humanity and support its rights. There is a specific strategy that can be followed and specific human deeds that irritate the deniers. The main concern of those who deal with genocide matters is the prevention of further genocides. Genocide is not planned to annihilate those alive but their future, since it aims at the unborn who due to

104 http://www.lygeros.org/articles?n=9240&l=en
105 Lygeros 2012, 18-19.
genocide did not have the chance to be born. Usually, we focus on the struggle for the recognition and often fail to realize the absence of those who were never born, because of the death of their ancestors\textsuperscript{108}.

\textsuperscript{108} Written report of colloquium 2008, 148.
Conclusion

This Thesis has analyzed the background of the genocide against the Assyrians. We have tried to understand through a thorough investigation which reasons led the Assyrians to this tragic position. As we have proven, the Assyrians definitely were not the only victims. They had the blessing for some, the curse for others, to have embraced since the beginning of its existence Christianity. They used to speak in Jesus’s language. They used to dwell since time immemorial the land of Mesopotamia. They were an ancient people, exactly like the Armenians.

Armenians just like Assyrians and Greeks were Christians and as ancient people had already adopted non-Ottoman languages. These features of different religion, languages, culture, and customs from the Ottomans paved the way for the Ottoman and Turkish regimes to embark on a genocidal program. The efficient documentary evidence given in the historical background does not leave any doubt that the Ottoman, Turkish and Kemal regimes ordered the extermination of the Christian subjects. Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks were viewed as victims of the same genocide. As a consequence, all the victims are united now exactly by the same way as seen by the perpetrators, and all together they will fight for justice, recognition and prevention of a similar future genocide.

The genocide was planned by the Porte as there was a virus in the Empire bringing an “unpleasant” background on the part of the Assyrians. Indeed, the genocide was ordered by the Ottoman administration; otherwise it would be impossible to execute to such an extend and to such a vast scale so many people. Although when examining cases of genocide we do not pay attention to the number of the victims, according always to the definition of the term “genocide” coined by R. Lemkin which is not determined by numbers, almost 2,500,000 victims cannot have been executed merely by groups of “local Muslims”. In order to wipe out such a huge amount of persons, the perpetrators need specific orders from above which will determine in advance the way of killing: massacres, rapes, orphaning children, burning, and deportation. In order to complete the aim of genocide, “the genociders” need a systematic, well-orchestrated plan. Every city, every village which encountered genocide was destructed in the same way: first
all the men and the intellectual, like priests, were killed, then the rest, women and children, were deported and finally the convoys were decimated.

Even the route of the genocide of Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks was specific and well-organized. In the beginning the horrific events with genocidal dimensions took place in the inaccessible mountain of Hakkari and then little by little the genocide spread towards the Western part of Anatolia and reached the coastline of the Black Sea only after 1919 where the victims could easier find an exit from hell and disseminate the upcoming misfortunes. Consequently, in order to draw such a genocidal route policy, the perpetrators needed organization, militia and especially trained-armed forces instead of some clans of “local Muslims”; let alone the leaders of CUP who were declaring during their conference in 1910 that a project of Turkification would not be achieved by persuasion but rather by uprooting.

There was a plan to uproot a Christian, Aramaic speaking population from the Empire. All the infidels had to empty the villages; the Turkish government simply intensified the procedure. No one else but the government had the political power to create the criminal groups of “Special organization” along with the “butcher battalions”. Talaat was speaking openly for a “national policy”, for a “Turkey for Turks”. Contextualizing the deportations and the massacres, the two-track policy of deportations between Kurds and Muslim from Balkans prove that there was high-leveled organization for destruction and construction in the CUP population policy109.

A key-notion in this dissertation is that Turkey denies the genocide committed by her criminal regimes because she has based all the state upon the bones of the Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks. So, how can she ever admit her intention of committing the genocide almost a century ago? Nonetheless, the Tribunals have recognized that even “in the absence of a confession from the accused, his intent can be inferred from…the perpetration of other culpable acts systematically directed against the same group, whether these acts were

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committed by the same offender or by others. The most important key about genocides is the intention of the perpetrator. Hence, there is no need to wait Turkey’s admittance that she had the intention to clean up all the area from the Christians as long as the intention can be detected from other sources and testimonies. Within the Thesis, it is clearly mentioned that there were signs of cultural destruction such as burning books, looting Churches and violating crosses. Mass harassment of the women and the genetic intervention through rapes constitute a genocidal act. The population policy served to remove Assyrians from their homes and deportations aimed at provoking physical exhaustion and the consequent lack of shelter and proper alimentation resulted in a misery death. Thus, all the above-mentioned Turkish crimes against the Assyrians suffice as evidence to claim genocidal intention.

Moreover, this study has attempted to emphasize on the legal framework of the reparation process of a genocide which includes a few stages. First and foremost, we should understand the power of the word *genocide*. Maybe it is of little importance for someone if the Turks committed genocide, murder, war crime, extermination, pogrom etc. However, we should use the term, which was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1948, *genocide* and avoid using the less forceful terms like massacres, slaughters, atrocities etc.; for, they do not bring about the proper international legal ramifications. It is well-known that 1.500.000 Armenians, 353.000 Greeks from Pontus and 750.000 Assyrians were subjected to genocide by the Ottoman and Turkish regimes. When after the WWII the crime of the intentional extermination of a racial, religious or ethnic group found embodiment in the United Nations Genocide Treaty, historians soon realized that the term genocide perfectly fitted the crime against the Armenians before, during and some years after the WWI. The Genocide of the Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks was recognized by the Sweden Parliament in 2010 and the crime of the Armenians, Assyrians and Greek of Pontus was recognized as a crime against Humanity on September 2006 by the European Parliament. Hence, not using the word genocide for the triple genocide may imply denial or avoidance of the true
character of these events\textsuperscript{112}. Moreover, each time we use the word \textit{genocide of Assyrians} we attribute the full legal implications and seriousness on the matter. Genocide affects the worst way the future of Humanity in the worst way because the world loses future contributions that would have been based on the destroyed group’s genuine traditions, genuine culture etc.\textsuperscript{113} But our struggle should move on further to the next stages beginning with the international recognition. Then we can go further to the stage of penalization of non-recognition which is an indispensable stage, if we truly want to become fighters for Humanity.

Albeit worldwide Assyrians are few, they keep working alongside with other scholars and fighters for recognition. Experts on the matter have already conceived that all victims and survivors together united can produce significant results on the grounds of justice. We should not wait for actions on the part of the others. Turkey until now “call Assyrians as “Syriac”, because it denotes a linguistic group which could be Arab or Turkish, but no an ethno-national group of Assyrians”\textsuperscript{114}. So, it is a critical time to activate all the Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians advocates because everyone has a role to play. Assyrians have a rich history and consequently a strong identity that should be learnt by the world. The genocide has put Assyrians into the peril of cultural assimilation by the Western societies where they live now. As Assyrians didn’t win statehood, they live in diaspora where they face economic marginalization and demographic shrinking. Especially when Assyrians, Armenians and Greeks survivors have to cope with Turkey, which is supposed to be a democratic state, despite the fascist censorship since 1925, and its universal condemnation then it is of paramount importance to prohibit further barbarity.

As my last comment, I would urge all the refugee associations to study about Assyrians and to raise awareness of their members in order to issue resolutions on the recognition of this genocide. Also, I would urge for erecting remembrance monuments in strategic places in the center of the cities because it is not enough to place a monument anywhere but to choose central squares where

\textsuperscript{112} Peterson 2004, 30.  
\textsuperscript{113} Travis n239.  
\textsuperscript{114} Travis 2011, 16 n86.
the memorial would be everyday visible by hundreds of passengers. Last but not least, I would like to highlight the suggestion of incorporating the triple genocide into a script which will result in a cinema movie.

The idea and conclusion presented in this academic paper can be considered as a source for further investigation and intellectual exercise. The purpose of this Thesis is to promote the struggle for the recognition of genocide of the Assyrians and in that context to further elaborate on the strategy for recognition is more than welcome. Let’s take human initiatives to help Humanity.
Appendix 1:

RESOLUTIONS ON RECOGNITION OF THE GENOCIDE OF THE ASSYRIANS

UNION OF PONTIC YOUTH OF ATTICA

Athens, 05/02/2013

Ref.Nr.: 03/13

PANHELLENIC ASSOCIATION OF PONTIC EDUCATORS

Thessaloniki, 20/04/2013

Exact copy

Athens, 15/05/2013

UNION OF GREEK PONTICS OF CYPRUS AND YOUTH CENTRE

"VIRGIN MARY SOUMELA"

Nicosia, 17/05/2013

ASSOCIATION OF ASPROPYRGOS PONTICS "AKRITES OF PONTUS"

Aspropyrgos, 29/05/2013

Ref. Nr.: 446/29/05/2013
ASSOCIATION OF TOWN OF MAGOULA AND BROADER REGION

PONTICS

Magoula, 29/05/2013

Ref.Nr.: 49

Association of Pontic Undergraduates and Students of Thessaloniki

Thessaloniki

26/06/2013

Municipality of Keratsinioy – Drapetsonas

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

Pontic Union of Piraeus - Keratsinioy – Drapetsonas

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

Artistic Musical Association “Poimenikos Aylos”

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013
Cultural Collector Association

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

Company of Arts, Science and Culture of Keratsiniy

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

Cretan Union of Keratsiniy – Drapetsonas “Arkadi"

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

Embellishing Cultural Association “Agios Minas"

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

Acroteiriane Association of Thera

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013
Cultural Association of Thymaitadai

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

The Brotherhood of omnipresence Olympiads of Karpathos "Demetra"

Drapetsona, 20/5/2013

Ref.Nr.: 1100/20-5-2013

Pontian Association of Aetolia-Acarnania

Ag. Kon/nos, 11-9-2013

05/Δ1/88/13
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**Master Thesis**


e-articles


http://genocidetext.net/iags_resolution_supporting_documentation.htm

You, too, are an Assyrian

N. Lygeros  
Translated from the Greek by E. Charitidou

You, too, are an Assyrian  
because by the crime  
against Humanity  
which they have suffered from  
you have been hurt as well  
if, of course, you belong  
to the humans of memory  
and not individuals of oblivion,  
consequently you, too, must  
take a position  
and recognize  
our genocide  
for, it is a wound  
on your face  
and this stigma  
is not going to be erased  
without vindication  
so, you can’t  
be a Greek,  
an Armenian or a Just  
without being you, too  
an Assyrian because of  
your wound  
and your humaneness.