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THEOLOGY AND THE COMMUNITY: THE ARMENIAN MINORITY, TRADITION, AND
SECULARISM IN TURKEY

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Acknowledgements and Dedication

I only half-jokingly say that all my research questions derive from a single question I asked myself as a child growing up: “Why do we drive for a half hour past so many churches to go to *that* church?” As a young man going to church in Yetem, CA—the only Armenian language place-name in the United States—I served on the altar, eventually being ordained a deacon of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Much of this dissertation grew out of this upbringing at the St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church, the Western Diocese Church Camp, and the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. I owe those places and everyone associated with them many thanks.

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One of the joys of the past decade has been the opportunity to fulfill a promise I made as a seventeen-year-old, when I spent the 2011-2012 academic year at the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. Father Daniel Findikyan, to whom I made the promise, has been a guiding mentor throughout my life. Between his guidance and the incredibly generous academic work and friendship of Dr. Roberta Ervine, I learned so much that year. The pages of this dissertation are suffused with what you have taught me. Though he has been a friend for much longer than our

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Note on Transliteration

Throughout the dissertation, I transliterate Armenian words according to the Library of Congress transliteration system. Since the Western Armenian dialect is spoken in Istanbul, I employ the transliteration for the Western Armenian pronunciation, except when transliterating from Classical Armenian sources. In that case, I transliterate according to the Eastern/Classical pronunciation as described by the Library of Congress. Some words associated with the Liturgy, and hence with Classical Armenian, are nonetheless transliterated according to the Western Armenian pronunciation because they are in common use in Istanbul and reflect the ethnographic rather than textual encounter with them.

In some cases, the text deviates from the Library of Congress system. This occurs when I am following a published source, in which case I use the transliteration already published. In the case of Armenian proper names that appear in Turkish language sources, I use the Turkish extended Latin alphabet. This extended Latin alphabet, in use in the Republic of Turkey since 1928, adds ç, ş, ğ, ı, ö, ü, and omits q, x, and w.

Abstract

Studying Armenians in the Republic of Turkey ethnographically offers a singular lens into the seemingly intractable secular problem of religious minority political participation and the viability of minority religious traditions. This dissertation articulates a mode of embodied, affective, urban minority belonging available to a minority subject cultivated in a minority tradition. Based on two years of ethnographic fieldwork among the Armenians of Istanbul at Armenian Apostolic churches, newspapers, and the Hrant Dink Foundation, I explore the institutional, material, and representational bases for collective minority action in Turkey today. I suggest that “modern secular representation” has come to dominate the political imagination, and interrogate other possible groundings for collective action.

After a genealogical and historical tracing of the legacy of the millet system of the Ottoman Empire and its continued influence on Armenians in Turkey (Chapter One), the dissertation moves to an ethnographic exploration of *vakıfs*, a form of charitable endowment or foundation and the Armenian language newspapers of Turkey. Using the Miaphysite Christology and other aspects of the theology of the Armenian Apostolic Church, I articulate a mode of “presence-making” that is central to collective Armenian minority action, and which differs from the political modes of “modern secular representation.” In the final chapters, the dissertation continues to rely on Armenian theological categories, offering a textured and sensorial account of Armenian hymn singing and choir practices. Through this engagement with the Armenian theological tradition, I demonstrate how a thoroughly embedded “liturgical subject” cultivated within the Armenian liturgical and theological tradition engages with the city of Istanbul as an alternative mode of belonging and collective action.

Introduction: ***Ecclesiology and Community***

Armenian in the City

Anatolia is full of old Armenian things. Abandoned churches, cracked, half-standing, converted to barns. Gravestones carved in the distinctive Armenian alphabet scattered among Greek and Latin inscriptions. Vast tracks of empty land between dusty villages, wind echoing between mountains. At first glance, Armenian life in Turkey is experienced only as a trace, an absent presence, a ghost.

Istanbul, on the other hand, is lively, loud, frenetic. With over fourteen million people, the city teems. Though ancient mosques and Byzantine churches characterize the distinctive skyline, it is the bustle and the energy that define the experience of the city. On my first trip to Istanbul, I sat between the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sofia reading Salman Rushdie's *East, West*. I reveled in the pace of the megalopolis that straddles continents, played at flaneur, and ate everything in sight. The city was distinct from the purpose of my trip: to visit Western Armenia, to see old Armenian things, to let the dirt from my great-grandfather's village slip between my fingers as the life lost to Genocide.

Despite knowing that in Istanbul there was still an important Patriarchal see of the Armenian Apostolic Church, I expected Istanbul to be Turkey and Anatolia to be Armenia. In this, I was perhaps not unlike the millions of other Armenians scattered around the world in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Yes, the annual commemoration of the Genocide on April 24 memorializes the night when two hundred intellectuals in Istanbul were rounded up to be killed. But the real Armenian life was in the provinces. After all, my own ancestors had

named the little town in the middle of California nestled against the Sierra Nevada mountains Yetttem, “Eden” in Armenian, because of how similar it looked to their village of Chomaklou.

I had arrived in the last days of the Lenten season of 2008. An ordained deacon in the Armenian Apostolic Church, I planned to celebrate Easter at one of the Armenian churches in the city. Close to the hostel where I first stayed, off the “Fish Market” street that winds towards a renowned drinking location, hidden behind massive metal doors, is the *Holy Trinity* Armenian Church. I scouted the location on Saturday, the day before Easter, when there is a palpable stillness. In the liturgical timeline, following the Biblical one, Jesus is entombed after his crucifixion and the good news of the resurrection is yet to be proclaimed...

Easter Morning is much different. I arrived, prepared to find a few altar servers. Instead, the cavernous, basilica-like sanctuary was full to the brim. The altar, larger than anything I had seen outside of the cathedrals in the Republic of Armenia, was crowded with young men in the distinctive robes of acolytes and deacons. Just to the side of the altar, I recognized the bold purple garments of a bishop. After the liturgy, swirling with the metaphorical possibilities of resurrection and new life, I called home to announce that Istanbul was not just Turkey, that Armenian life in Turkey is more than a mere trace, that not only were there abandoned churches, but there was, in fact, an *Armenian community* in Istanbul.

To many Armenians in the far-flung Diaspora or in the small post-Soviet Republic of Armenia, the possibility of a flourishing collective Armenian existence in Turkey is a taken-for-granted impossibility. First, they question why any Armenian would stay in the Republic of Turkey, the successor state to the government that perpetrated the Armenian Genocide during the First World War. If it is accepted that they might see it as home, then it is assumed that they live

in constant fear, in total oppression. That Armenians could not only survive in Turkey, but potentially thrive, is a virtual affront to the legacy of those killed during the Genocide.

Despite the specific legacy of Genocide, this line of thinking mimics a broader discourse about Christian minorities in the Middle East—such as is at the heart of current interventionist claims in America and Europe—and about minorities in general. On the surface a simple quantitative concept, a minority is really much more: an affective category, a group that *feels* exclusion (Asad 2003, 174). At best, a state *tolerates* minority populations. At worst, there is serious oppression, denial of rights, or even genocidal policies. The reverse aspect of this assumption is that minority attachment to political institutions and the majoritarian state must always be at best partial, contingent, and tenuous.

Armenian existence in Istanbul often bears this out. Armenians rarely speak Armenian on the streets. In fact, even a child born to two Armenian-speaking parents will often be raised speaking Turkish, only learning Armenian at one of the *özel* (“special”) Armenian schools which dot the city. Buildings and land are expropriated. And only a decade ago, Hrant Dink, the outspoken and thoughtful editor of the Turkish-Armenian weekly newspaper *Agos* was shot dead in the street outside his office in the middle of the day. The routinized violence of the state and its acquiescence in the face of violence against Armenians has led at times to a seeming crisis of legitimacy of the Turkish state for Armenians.

Yet Hrant Dink, for one, always insisted that he was a Turkish citizen, that he and other Armenians belonged to the country of Turkey and that Turkey and the Turkish state also belonged to them. In fact, he asserted, a robust engagement with the past and its minority population would invigorate the Turkish Republic, making it more democratic. The fight for a

central place for Armenian and other marginalized minority existence in the Republic of Turkey then also becomes a fight for the recognition of the *constitutive* belonging of Armenians to Turkey, and especially to the daily life of Istanbul.

This dissertation explores the possibilities for such a constitutive belonging, particularly the *collective* belonging of Armenians to Turkey. The Armenian *community* of Turkey is its provisional object, in that community itself presupposes certain forms of collective organization. While the constitutive individual citizen-subject posited by Hrant Dink and others grounds many projects for Armenian collective existence in Turkey, the Armenian Apostolic Church and its rich liturgical life also articulates and organizes an idea of the Armenian community, one that gives pride of place to the Patriarchate in the neighborhood of Kumkapı, a major patriarchal see of the Church. Though these are often conflicting visions of the Armenian community, I argue that all attempts to ground an Armenian collective life in Turkey are shaped by the conjunction of the Armenian Christian tradition, the Ottoman legal legacy, and the contemporary secular Republic of Turkey.

In this conjunction, I pay particular attention to the Armenian Christian tradition and its rather unique theology, grounded in the liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Findikyan 2008). As an ordained deacon of the Armenian Apostolic Church, I immersed myself in the liturgical life of the Church, singing with choirs around the city and learning the theologically rich hymns sung by those choirs. Training the ear while learning to sing the hymns in the context of the liturgy, the Armenian liturgical subject becomes attuned to the city of Istanbul. This attunement, grounded in the minority tradition, is a mode of engagement with the city itself.

In this, the Armenian theological tradition and the Armenians of Istanbul offer a clear example of what a different, affective and embodied form of urban minority belonging and attachment, grounded in the practices and concepts of a tradition, might look like.

Theological and Religious Minorities

Over the course of the dissertation, I trace the crucial material, institutional, legal, and discursive elements which frame this encounter between the Armenian religious tradition and the contemporary Turkish state and which open up the possibility for a sensorial minority engagement with the city of Istanbul. The Republic of Turkey, established in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne after Ottoman defeat in World War I and a successful War of Independence led by Kemal Mustafa (later) Atatürk (Lewis 2002; Mango 2002), was founded on explicitly secular legal principles (Berkes 1998). These legal principles, in concert with an Ottoman legal legacy, create the condition such that Armenians in Turkey encounter the state precisely as *religious minorities*.

As I argue in Chapter One, the organization of non-Muslims into *millets*, or administrative and legal tax-groups during the Ottoman Empire was initially based on theological and ecclesial lines. The two major Christian groups of the Empire were divided along the Christological difference between the Chalcedonian formula of Jesus Christ as “two natures united in one person” and the Miaphysite conception of “one nature, God and man, without confusion or mixing” and administered by two of the largest ecclesial hierarchies. Over the course of the nineteenth century, a profound secularization occurred wherein this theological and ecclesial division instead came to be understood as a difference between religions. With the differentiation of *millet* along religious lines and the concretization of the *millet* divisions in the

legal apparatus of the Republic of Turkey through the Treaty of Lausanne, Armenians came to be legally circumscribed by religion in the nascent Republic.

Crucially, religion has become an abstract category that assumes an equivalence across previously distinct sets of institutions and discourses. “What is distinctive about ‘secularism’ is that it presupposes new concepts of ‘religion,’ ‘ethics,’ and ‘politics,’ and new imperatives associated with them (Asad 2003, 1–2). That is, religion as an identifiable, distinct concept, is itself a product of the reorganization of our actionable categories of life wrought by secularism as a political doctrine and the secular as a new epistemic category. “From being a concrete set of practical rules attached to specific processes of power and knowledge, religion has come to be abstracted and universalized” (Asad 1993, 42). As “religions,” Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism are all seen to share certain essential, fundamental, characteristics. Many of the essential characteristics for the universal definition of religion actually derive from Christianity—and, I would add, a very specific *Western* Christian history in its encounter with other sets of discourses and practices that came to be seen as religions (Masuzawa 2005). One of the central characteristics derived from Western Christianity is an emphasis on belief: “It is preeminently the Christian church that has occupied itself with identifying, cultivating, and testing belief as a verbalizable inner condition of true religion” (Asad 1993, 48). This, then, is the basic outline of what I will mean throughout the dissertation when I describe religion as an abstract, historical, category with certain essential characteristics.

Much of what has been written about secularism in Turkey emphasizes the emergence of ethno-national identity *from* religion (Barkey 2010; Berkes 1998; Cagaptay 2006; Çinar 2005; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Özyürek 2006; Yavuz 2009). This conceptualization, though, holds

religion as a historically stable category, focusing on the circumscription of religion by the secular and the confinement of religion to the private sphere (Casanova 1994; Taylor 2007), missing the historical sedimentation of the concept of religion and the constitutive relation of a secular episteme to this abstract category of religion (Asad 1993, 2003). Recent work on secularism in Turkey takes account of these insights (Özgül 2014; Tambar 2014), recognizing that religion becomes a salient category for organizing difference and non-Muslim populations rather than always being such.

By emphasizing the process by which religion becomes a salient category of difference for Armenians in the Republic of Turkey, I highlight that being circumscribed religiously entails possibilities for action grounded in the position of the Armenian as a religious minority. Doing so also evades two problematic ways that secularism in Turkey has been discussed previously, either as one “mode” of secularism among many “multiple secularisms”¹ or an “incompletely or “partially” secularized. Following Hussein Agrama’s discussion of Egypt and his refinement of our understanding of political secularism (Agrama 2010b, 2011), we should consider the secularism of the Republic of Turkey (and secularism in general) less as a *doctrine* or *norm* about the line between the secular and the religious (usually articulated in practice as a

¹ The first debate about secularism in Turkey follows a broader debate over “multiple secularisms,” often taking Charles Taylor’s distinctions in “Modes of Secularism” as the starting point. Briefly, it distinguishes between American secularism as providing an equal playing field for diverse religions in the public sphere and French secularism as strict state control over religion (Taylor 1998). The Turkish term for secularism, *laiklik*, is clearly derived from French *laïcité*, leading authors describing the Turkish case to emphasize this distinction and the debt to French laicism (Yavuz 2009, 145; Parla and Davison 2008, 60). While there is value in determining the distinctiveness of Turkish secularism, it tends to see ontologically different secularisms, whereas I would follow Asad in seeing the differences as “family differences” (2003, 208). As Mahmood puts it, “secularism entails a form of national-political structuration organized around the problem of religious difference, a problem whose resolution takes strikingly similar forms across geographic contexts” (2016, 10).

distinction between religion and politics) than as “problem-space”² (Agrama 2012, 28). That is, he urges us to see “secularism as a set of processes and structures of power wherein the *question* of where to draw a line between religion and politics continually arises and acquires a *distinctive salience*” (Agrama 2012, 27). Whenever a state is embroiled in the question of religion and politics, of where and how to distinguish between them, then that state is fundamentally operating with the premises of political secularism. From this perspective, Turkey is a paradigmatically secular state, filled with the anxiety that often accompanies this question (Agrama 2012, 105–6) and operating with what Agrama calls “the ‘active principle’ of secular power—the state’s authority to decide what counts as essentially religious and what scope it should have in social life” (Agrama 2012, 30).

If Armenians are circumscribed religiously, then forms of collective action are delimited by the state’s authority to decide on the scope religion should have in social life. Yet Armenians are legally circumscribed not only as religious citizen-subjects, but specifically as religious *minorities*. As Saba Mahmood has argued eloquently, the entrenchment of religion as a salient marker of difference occurs “not simply as a result of specific policies that various regimes have pursued, but in terms of the enshrinement of religious inequality within the structure of the modern state and its operational logic” (Mahmood 2016, 87). That is, both the distillation of religion as an operative abstract category and the legal position of a minority are crucial to the power and sovereignty of the modern secular state.

The history of the concept of minority is deeply entwined with the history of the emergence of religion as a salient category of difference. This history begins with the Peace of

² Following David Scott (2004, 3–6).

Westphalia as the establishment of a different spatial organization at the basis of a new international law marked by Hugo Grotius. An emergent understanding of minority, albeit one quite different from our current conception, begins precisely with a religiously defined minority:

international agreements from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveal an early political formulation of minority rights as religious freedoms bestowed upon certain Christian communities by the sovereign. Religion, rather than some other defining characteristic such as language or culture, was the focus of minority rights during this period, because religious affiliation was the most important dividing line between different communities in Europe at this time (Preece 1997, 76–77).

From this emergent religious conception of minority, the category develops in tandem with the “transformation of international society from an association of princes to one of nation-states” and marks the appearance of a “new legitimizing principle [...] in the relations between states: nationalism and its corollary, the nation-state” with the Congress of Vienna in 1815” (Preece 1997, 78). As the sovereignty of the state began to be associated with the people rather than the prince, minorities presented a different and perhaps more irreconcilable challenge to the legitimacy of the nation-state.

Following World War I, the League of Nations model which was the basis for the 1919 Treaty of Paris as well as the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne made the protection of minorities part of capitulation agreements. Due to the way in which nation-states were beginning to be legitimated, under this model “the category of minority rights was expanded to include language rights and a minimal degree of cultural autonomy” (Preece 1997, 83). It was precisely this notion the nation-state's legitimacy which led to claims for independent states and fomented calls for self-

determination by minority groups living in many states. This category of minority is exactly the one that emerges from the *millet* concept to be enshrined legally in the Republic of Turkey³.

Armenians in Turkey today, legally codified as religious minorities, experience the tensions plaguing all attempts to secure minority rights. Minority rights under the model of the League of Nations are precisely *group* rights, and this is how the Treaty of Lausanne enumerates “the rights of non-Moslems”: collectively, through institutions and organizations of the group. With the end of World War II and the founding of the United Nations, however, international agreement in the form of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights left behind the idea of minority rights in favor of human rights. From that moment, claims to rights were grounded in a conception of the human as an individual, and were no longer connected to rights based in minorities as communities. Any rights-based claim passed through the individual *qua* human. When minority rights were reintroduced after the end of the Cold War, they would still have to be refracted through the human and individual, such that paradoxically a minority status which must be grounded in a community of some kind nonetheless “dwells” in the individual. A movement back towards minority rights began with the UN 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. The recuperation of minority rights culminates when United Nations finally ratified the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities in 1992.

“Ultimately, what matters is not size but belonging: minorities are those who are denied or prevented from enjoying the full rights of membership within a political community because their religion, race, language or ethnicity differs from that of the official public identity” (Preece

³ This emergence and the transformation of the concept of *millet* is the focus of the following chapter.

2005, 10). If the legitimation of minority rights passes through the individual, in this formulation, it rests on a principle of freedom: the freedom of the individual to express certain aspects of individuality which are understood as being held in relation to a group. However, if the legitimation rests upon a collective basis, then minority rights are those rights of a community to dictate what it means for the individual to belong to the group. From this perspective on the problem of minorities, the tension between the recognition of collective and individual minority rights cuts to the heart of modern liberal political theories.

As religious minorities, Armenians in Turkey are ensnared in the double-bind of having their rights bounded collectively, but having them curtailed because of the secular sovereign ability to define the extent to which religion may enter the public (political) realm. This assignation of “religious minority” dominates many of the debates about Armenian collective action. We will see in Chapter Two, on the *vakıfs*, a form of charitable endowment grouped around a registered foundation, that the kinds of political activity launched from these crucial sites of material support develop from the conundrums and possibilities established by collective rights delimited as a non-Muslim religious minority.

Though the category of “religion” organizes the way we think about and legally circumscribes Armenians in Turkey, throughout the dissertation I appeal to the theological and the ecclesial as alternative categories to consider the collectivity bounded by the legacy of the *millet* concept. If “religion” presupposes a conception of the subject with a specific sense of interiority related to the primacy of belief, an ecclesial understanding emphasizes the hierarchy of the church and the role of the practice of liturgy. Using the theological places questions of belief and creed not in the interior of an individual subject, but embeds them in legal and

institutional differences. Though both the theological and the ecclesial are caught up in the modern category of religion, disentangling them highlights different possibilities for circumscribing the collective, and ultimately for detailing collective action.

Liturgical Tradition, Liturgical Subject

Liturgy is the primary site of activity for the Armenian Apostolic Church, delimited theologically and ecclesiastically. In fact, it is *the* fundamental activity of the Armenian Apostolic Church (Findikyan 2008). In the social scientific literature, liturgy has largely been eclipsed by the notion of ritual, one of cultural anthropology's central categories (Asad 1993, 55–79). Yet much of this literature “assume[s] that ritual's primary purpose is the social production of meaning through a culturally conditioned system symbols” (N. D. Mitchell 1999, 32). In order to avoid the emphasis on meaning at the expense of the disciplined and embodied practices cultivated in liturgy, and likewise to use the operative category for the Armenian Apostolic Church, I focus instead on liturgy, a corporate and traditional act of *anamnesis*, a “sacred, corporate recalling of the mighty acts of God” (Findikyan 2008, 9).

For Armenian Christians, the Divine Liturgy, or *Badarak*, the Mass of the Armenian Apostolic Church, is the central activity of worship. Though there are certainly private acts of worship or praise of God, liturgy, and the Divine Liturgy in particular is by definition “a corporate enterprise” (Findikyan 2008, 17). In Istanbul, *Badarak* is offered somewhere in the city nearly every single day. Chapter Four follows the church choirs around the city from neighborhood to neighborhood through the weekly liturgical circuit: different churches and priests conduct the Divine Liturgy on specific days. By collectively worshipping daily in different parts of the city, liturgy connected Armenians and stitched the city together. As an

ordained deacon of the Armenian Apostolic Church, moving through Istanbul on this liturgical circuit, serving on the altar or singing in the choir, was my primary ethnographic activity.

My role as a deacon of the Church placed me not only in my fieldsite, in the city, and among the Armenians of Turkey, but it also placed me within the Armenian Christian tradition that was common to both my “informants” and myself. Armenian Christianity traces its roots to two of the apostles of Jesus, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, hence the usual designation of the Armenian Church as the “Armenian Apostolic Church.” This autocephalous church was *the* Armenian Church for well over a millennium, despite internal schismatic movements and conversions to Byzantine Orthodox and later Catholic Christianity. As we will see in Chapter One, the emergence of officially recognized Armenian Catholic and Armenian Protestant Christian denominations within the Ottoman Empire was crucial to the emergent idea of an Armenian nation. Today, in Turkey, the Armenian Apostolic Church is the largest of the Armenian Christian Churches, with thirty-six active churches in Istanbul alone, plus six churches in Anatolia. By comparison, there are twelve Armenian Catholic and two Armenian Protestant Churches. In addition to the larger number of churches and parishioners, there is a liturgical priority to the Armenian Apostolic Church in that the Armenian Catholic Church is what is known as an “Eastern Rite Church,” one of several churches in communion with the Church of Rome that nonetheless retain the liturgy of their “parent” churches. Hence, liturgically, the Armenian Apostolic and Armenian Catholic churches are nearly identical. We can thus speak of a common liturgical tradition shared between the vast majority of churchgoing Armenians in Istanbul. As a deacon, I engaged my fieldwork through this liturgical tradition.

Not only was I a practitioner of this liturgical tradition, but a highly visible and even exemplary practitioner. In the Armenian Apostolic Church, there are distinct ranks of service within the church, from the *tbir* charged with holding candles and sweeping the church to the Patriarch in Istanbul or the Catholicos of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin. The deacon, from the Greek *diakanos*, servant, is simultaneously the highest of the “lower orders” and the lowest rank of clergy. Now largely a liturgical role, singing specific parts and assisting the priest during the Divine Liturgy, the first deacons described in the Biblical Book of Acts fulfilled the daily needs of the early Christians, freeing the apostles to preach and teach. As a deacon, I was afforded access and opportunity that would have been difficult for many other ethnographers.

Simultaneously, this position within the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Armenian Christian tradition emplaced me within a set of discourses and practices that often put me at odds with my ethnographic goals. Pages of my fieldnotes are full of the minutiae of liturgical differences: melodies slightly different than the ones I had learned in Central California or as a student at the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York, the insistence that I wear white socks if was to act as the head deacon, the placement of icons or styles of paintings. An even larger point of conflict had to do with my weekly schedule. I tried to devote at least two days a week to the Hrant Dink Foundation or to work with the newspapers. Yet, given the daily liturgical services offered, there was always a different church to visit, a funeral, or a feast day. According to many of my friends and ethnographic interlocuters in Istanbul, as a deacon and mutual practitioner of the Armenian Apostolic Christian tradition, not only was I welcome at each and every liturgical service, but I should be there. The knowledges and practices cultivated

in this liturgical tradition differed and were often at odds with the knowledges and practices I needed to cultivate as an anthropologist.

Primarily associated with the activity of liturgy itself, the idea of a liturgical tradition both points to the cultivation of a particular kind of liturgical subject and helps to bound a group around the church itself. The celebrated Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemman, in his piece “Liturgy and Tradition,” insists that “the liturgy has to be explained once again as the *leitourgia* of the Church” (Schmemann 1990, 20), which necessarily resembles what he calls the patristic type of engagement with the liturgy, but which requires much more prior work for the theologian. Thus,

liturgical tradition is not an 'authority' or a locus theologicus; it is the ontological condition of theology, the proper understanding of kerygma, of the Word of god, because it is in the Church, of which the *leitourgia* is the expression and the life, that the sources of theology are functioning as precisely “sources” (Schmemann 1990, 18).

With this formulation, we begin to see the relationship to the community, the Church, and the liturgy as tradition. In this, we move towards the conception of theology as ecclesiology, where liturgy as *enacted* tradition is part of the emic vision of group boundary-making.

For the Armenian Apostolic Church, this connection between liturgy and church is explicit:

Liturgy concerns, and belongs to all the people of God; all those who are beneficiaries of God's gracious activity; all those who are party to the 'new covenant.'

This means that the liturgy does not belong only to the living, but to all who rest 'in the shadow of the church.' The body of Christ extends beyond time and space, and certainly embraces those who have lived their lives before us (Findikyan 2008, 17).

This liturgical understanding of tradition as a form of practice and action that holds the *ecclesia* together is thus part and parcel of an emic vision of the group as an alternative to community.

Central to this conception of an *ecclesia*, a church as “the body of Christ” held together liturgically, as a vibrant tradition, is a radically different conception of temporality from the one offered by the “modernist” idea of tradition. Note, in Findikyan’s description that “the body of Christ extends beyond time and space.” Recall also, that on the Saturday before Easter in 2008, when I first went to an Armenian church in Istanbul, that liturgical time followed a Biblical narrative. This liturgical and Biblical time arranged the present such that there was a stillness on Saturday. In the hymn on Easter Sunday, the Armenian Church proclaims “*Today*, Christ is risen.” We will have the opportunity, in our exploration of choirs and hymns in the later chapters in the dissertation to explore this liturgical time as a vital component of the Armenian experience of the city. It is this participation in the temporality of the liturgy (conceived as a tradition) which supports the *ecclesia* as a form of bounding the group, and is central to the cultivation of a liturgical subject.

Liturgical tradition, as I use it here, does two primary things. First, corporate participation in liturgy and its temporality is exactly what enacts the *ecclesia*, the church, as a particular form of bounded group. In Armenian, the word for church, *yegeghets’i*, is a calque of the Greek *ecclesia*, which, since at least Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History*, has meant more than a single assembly or gathering to mean the church universal, the “whole body of Christ.” In Chapter One, we will see how this form of bounded organization relates to other conceptions of the Armenian community. Here, I point out that liturgy, conceived as a liturgical tradition, is the crucial activity of the *yegeghets’i*, the church, such that liturgy enacts specific spatial and temporal possibilities for collective boundedness and collective action.

Second, a liturgical tradition is exactly the locus of cultivation of a particular type of liturgical subject. In the practices of singing hymns, in the unique hermeneutic practices of the Armenian Apostolic Church, in the Miaphysite Christology that conceives of the relation of the human and divine and forms of presence-making differently than Western Christianity, the liturgical tradition trains and cultivates the Armenian liturgical subject. Such a subject will have an attuned ear, experience the temporality of the weekly liturgical rotation (and the temporality of the liturgy itself), and practice forms of reading and interpretation through daily Scripture reading and theologically rich hymns. In many ways, this liturgical subject is a monastic subject, given that the robust liturgical life described here is in fact quite rare. Yet Istanbul, in the daily services around the city, offers one of the few places where the Armenian liturgy remains so central. This dissertation explores exactly the extent to which such a liturgical subject, cultivated in the richness of the Armenian theological and liturgical tradition, is an actionable possibility today. After all, Alexander Schmemmann, in a different piece, once called secularism “the negation of man as a worshipping being, as *homo adorans*: the one for whom worship is the essential act which both ‘posits’ his humanity and fulfills it” (Schmemmann 1973, 118). In the pages that follow, we explore the possible grounding of forms of collective action in the liturgical tradition through a liturgical subject.

It should be clear that this use of liturgical *tradition*, while inspired by several trends in the social scientific literature on tradition, differ substantially from them. Tradition has a long and uneven legacy in the social sciences, often viewed as an inflexible intrusion of the past bursting through to the present, a source of uncritical authority, timeless, usually in direct opposition to modernity. This most “pejorative” sense of tradition is associated with mid-

twentieth century modernization theory, though it is also related to popular uses of the term: “in contemporary European usage, tradition implies procedures handed down from the past, not amenable to conscious modification, and resistant to 'modernity'” (Eickelman and Piscatori 2004, 25). Subsequent attempts to grapple with tradition, such as the influential volume by Hobsbawm and Ranger tried to move beyond the “pejorative” sense, but often ended up insisting that traditions were merely “invented.” In other words, “‘Traditions' which appear or claim to be old are quite often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 1). This, though, assumes that there is some “authentic” relation to the past, that there do exist “true” traditions out there somewhere (Hirschkind 2001). Moreover, such not only is such a tradition “timeless,” but the only appeal to authority within a tradition is appeal to past authority—or, more properly, the past *as* authority (Agrama 2010a, 2012, 14).

More useful to developing this conception of liturgical tradition are two important interventions. The first, by the anthropologist Justin Richland, through a study of Hopi law courts, subsumes “questions of what tradition ‘is’ under the more general questions of what tradition ‘does’ and ‘means’ for the tribal actors who engage each other in these legal contexts” (Richland 2008, 23). While the injunction to attend to what tradition “does” has helped shape the inquiries into the forms of subject cultivation made possible by a liturgical tradition, I attend less to the ways in which Armenians in Turkey wield the *concept* of tradition. Following the second major intervention, of Alasdair MacIntyre’s influential study *After Virtue* (2007), I focus on what tradition does through the practices⁴ and forms of cultivation enabled by the liturgical

⁴ MacIntyre’s concept of tradition is robust and detailed, relying heavily on a highly developed conception of practice (which differs in important respects from Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and what has become known as “practice theory” (Ortner 1984). He defines a practice as “any coherent and complex form of

tradition. The dissertation interrogates the forms of possible collective action available to the liturgical subject cultivated in the Armenian liturgical tradition.

Collective Action, Forms of Belonging, and Modes of Presence-Making

The legal circumscription of Armenians as a “religious minority” entails collective action that is oriented toward the Turkish state. We will see, over the course of the dissertation, that many of the same conceptual categories that bolster the religious minority as modern citizen also make possible the cultivation of the liturgical subject. While the primary locus of the liturgical subject is in fact the liturgy, and the *ecclesia* as the concomitant form of collectivity, the legacy of the *millet* and the existence of the church building itself as a legally registered *vakıf* are also part of the edifice that sustains the liturgical tradition and the liturgical subject. It is a major premise of the dissertation that though there is an obliging character to modern categories of action, the same legal edifice can support different kinds of projects, forms of belonging, and collective action.

As a “religious minority” addressing and addressed by the state, Armenians are bound as a group exactly through their political representation. One of the main reasons why a post-World War II human rights regime finds minority rights so problematic is because the bearer of rights for human rights is the individual. Minority rights necessarily refer to the individual’s inclusion in a group beyond that of the citizenry of the state of which they are members. In particular, this tension is often felt as a problem of the ability to *represent* minorities *qua* minority. Talal Asad

socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended (MacIntyre 2007, 187) and unfolds his idea of tradition from this conception of practice. Thus he defines A vital, living tradition, then, can be defined as “an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition” (MacIntyre 2007, 222).

describes the tension with reference to the assertion that Muslims in Europe cannot be represented as Muslims, saying that “in theory the citizens who constitute a democratic state belong to a class that is defined only by what is common to all its members and its members only. What is common is the abstract equality of all individual citizens to one another, so that each counts as one.” He continues, “in this conception representative government is assimilated to the notion of an outcome that is statistically representative of ‘the whole body’ of citizens” (Asad 2003, 173). This tension points us to the fact that the minority concept as it is integrated into the legal regime of the modern liberal state seems inevitably to raise the question of representation.

It is this holding together of the obligation to be politically represented with the demand that this political representation be statistically representative⁵ that I characterize in Chapter One as “modern secular representation.” Crucially, the collective body, here “the Armenian minority community,” is held together *only* through its representation to the state. This is why there is such an anxiety over the need for a statistical or “proper” representation of the community, a kind of “image” of the community, which can then be adequately represented politically. John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan have articulated a useful distinction between what we might call the semiotic and political aspects of representation by tracing Marx’s famous assertion about the peasantry in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, “they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented” (Marx 1972, 608). According to Kelly and

⁵ A similar statistical conception of representation undergirds contemporary legal reflection on the jury as “representative cross-section of the population.” This demonstrates the extent to which a very specific (statistical and proportional) articulation of representation pervades the sense of fairness and justice at the heart of liberal politics. Moreover, this “representative cross-section that is the modern jury” actually *implies* certain “conceptions of community and law” (Constable 1994, 30). We will explore the connection between a mode of representation and a concomitant articulation of community throughout the dissertation, in particular in the following chapter.

Kaplan, “Marx, far more than Said, was inquiring into concrete social relationships and institutional vehicles for effective collective assertion, especially group action out to control or influence the state, including but not limited to mechanisms for electing representatives” (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 86). “For Said,” on the other hand, “‘represent’ refers primarily to the process of constituting a sign or image capable of standing for someone or something, the constitution of representations in discourse that will not only refer to but also characterize their referent” (Kelly and Kaplan 2001, 85–86). Yet this anxiety over representation and in particular the seemingly dual modes of representation actually appears as though “the tensions between visual and verbal representations are inseparable from struggles in cultural politics and political culture” (W. J. T. Mitchell 1994, 3). It is exactly this particular mode of representation, whereby the semiotic and political aspects implicate each other, that I designate “modern secular representation.”

Of course, the relationship at the heart of representation, that is that one thing “stand for, that is, to be in such a relation to another that for certain purposes it is treated by some mind as if it were that other” (Peirce 1932, 2:155), need not recognize the separation between these two modes. The idea of a relation of something standing for another⁶ slides between an image and a mode of politics, though I want to suggest that the anxiety about their slippage is due in part to the contingent way in which they have been held together as “modern secular representation.” In

⁶ This is, crucially, exactly how Peirce defines as sign: “A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (Peirce 1932, 2:135). Given this definition, it would seem that “representation” is coterminous with “semiotic.” The recent interest in “qualia,” the first sign in the first “trichotomy” of signs, signals the recognition that this quality of “firstness” is a particularly compelling and productive aspect of Peirce’s trichotomies (Gal 2013). His definition, that a “*qualisign* is a quality which is a Sign. *It cannot actually act as a sign until it is embodied*; but the embodiment has nothing to do with its character as a sign” (Peirce 1932, 2:142, emphasis mine) suggests to me a point of divergence between semiotic and representational. I hope to explore this further in what follows, in particular in relation to Armenian Christological reflection on Jesus Christ as the Word of God, a starting point for reflection on the *Logos* from a very different tradition than the Western (Christian) philosophical legacy in which Peirce finds himself.

essence, we can consider the question of representation as a mode presence-making. For representation as a mode of presence-making, the collective is called into being, is made present, precisely through the representative standing in for the assumed and abstract collective. The minority community, as anything more than an unbounded aggregate of individuals, is an abstract conceptual entity instantiated—made present—only through the moment of representation as a mode of presence-making.

In and through this modern secular representation as a mode of making present, religious minorities are bound to concomitant forms of collective organization and action. Most of these we recognize as explicitly political. In Turkey today, much of Armenian collective action is oriented around the question of representation and the representative status of institutions such as the *vakıfs*. Many organizations are pushing at the limits of the kinds of political activity possible, but modern secular representation as a mode of making a group present to itself and before the state has an almost intractable hold on the modern political imagination. Not only does the demand to be (adequately and accurately) represented entail certain recognizably political forms of collective action, the mode of belonging also works through this same style of representation. Political belonging, in this sense, is precisely the feeling of adequate access to state resources through adequate representation. The goal of the dissertation is to seek forms of belonging and attachment *other* than those of these explicitly political ones entailed by modern secular representation.

I argue that the liturgical subject in Istanbul, trained and cultivated within the liturgical tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church, offers one such possibility for an alternative belonging. There are two key aspects to this form of belonging. First, it requires a certain level of

immersion or embeddedness within the liturgical tradition. Second, it is a sensorial and embodied mode of attachment, whereby the cultivated sensorium of the liturgical subject is able to attune itself to the urban cityscape. Though the specifics of this mode of engagement work through categories of Armenian theology, the broader point about minority attachment to urban spaces is that, in modified form, these two strictures must stand. That is, a minority subject must be cultivated in her (minority) tradition and this cultivation will entail an affective, sensory, embodied mode of engagement.

In the case of the Armenian liturgical subject of the dissertation, I suggest that the possibility of being attuned to the city arises in part because of different conceptions of presence-making found within the Armenian theological tradition. In Chapter Three, I articulate the Miaphysite Christology of the Armenian Church, whereby Jesus Christ is understood as one person, God and man, mystically united with no mixing or confusion, as an alternative conception of presence-making. If the Incarnational moment of Christian theology (God-become-man) is always one of making present God on earth, then the specific conception of *who Jesus is* will entail different conceptions of how that presence-making works. While I unfold this possibility of presence-making in Chapter Three, I suggest in the Conclusion that this Miaphysite Christology and its forms of presence-making might resonate throughout the Armenian liturgical tradition to such an extent that a Miaphysite semiotic mode undergirds the hermeneutics of the Armenian theological tradition. In this, the dissertation explores not only the role of theology and liturgy in the bounding of an Armenian collective and setting parameters for forms of intelligible collective action, but it also explores the potential for the Armenian theological tradition to help explain that very role.

Ecclesiology and Social Theory

Being an Armenian in Istanbul today, then, is to be placed within the legal regime of the Turkish state while also being heir to the Armenian theological tradition. As I will demonstrate, this is true whether or not one is an active member of the Armenian Apostolic Church. If that is the case, then, it may be that Armenian theological categories and the Armenian liturgical tradition not only bound the Armenian collective, but can help us do so. It is my *argument* that understanding forms of action for Armenians in Turkey today—and by extension, minorities in general—requires us to attend to the categories of the minority tradition *in their encounter* with legal categories of the modern state and conceptual categories of the modern secular episteme and it is my *hope* that some of the Armenian conceptual categories will be useful for the theoretical enterprise of anthropology.

John Milbank has famously declared “theology as itself a social science,” specifically an ecclesiology, that is “only an account of other human societies to the extent that the Church defines itself, in its practice, as in continuity and discontinuity with these societies” (Milbank 1990, 380). He restricts himself to “real historical churches” in order to see that since “the Church is *already*, necessarily, by virtue of its institution, a ‘reading’ of other human societies, it becomes possible to consider ecclesiology as also a ‘sociology’” (Milbank 1990, 380). In this ecclesiology-cum-sociology as a “reading” of other human societies⁷, theology is to offer the only route out of the impasse out of social theories that all in the end allow violence a “real ontological purchase” (Milbank 1990, 432). Though Milbank insists that this form of Christian

⁷ Though this is quite confusing given his insistence that there is no ontological foundation for a “society,” that in fact, the social is an invention of sociology a partially secularized and fully heretical form of theology. How, then, does ecclesiology as sociology address and bound these other societies? Surely *not* as an *ecclesia*, as the same form of organization as the church.

ecclesiology is not apologetics, I fail to see how it avoids all evangelizing. Though he is clear that there can be no rational decision or argument for the adoption of Christianity or theology, the reading of *other* societies through the lens of the Christian *ecclesia*, and, moreover the *appeal* of the priority of Christianity as offering a non-violent ontology cannot avoid apologetics. If apologetics depends upon rational argument, then Milbank is correct. But the evangelical appeal of the theology makes this seem like splitting hairs.

In contrast, it is my goal to use Armenian theology as ecclesiology precisely to bound *the Armenian* collective. While I will at times suggest the *usefulness* of the model of Armenian theology for understanding other groups or traditions, the point is not to offer Armenian theology as a model for all social scientific theorizing or methodology—let alone as the only possible non-violent ontological basis for theorizing human existence and distinction on this planet. Rather, Armenian theology helps to articulate the conceptual life-world and the forms of action available to people influenced by the Armenian theological tradition, and even to recognize the importance of the Armenian theological tradition in the cultivation of the liturgical subject. This is a fundamentally theology as *reflexive* social theory, an ecclesiology (that is, a theological discourse about the boundaries of the group) that is inherently limited in its application.

A rather cryptic medieval Armenian manuscript, *The Book of Questions* by Vanakan Vardapet, is described by Dr. Roberta Ervine as student notes to one of the great monastic teacher's classes⁸. Not just any class, though. Intended for nearly the most advanced students at

⁸ Discussion of this (and other) Armenian texts is based on a class on "Armenian Exegesis" given by Dr. Roberta Ervine at St. Nersess Seminary in the Fall of 2015 and a class on "Liturgical Commentaries" given by Father Daniel Findikyan in the Spring of 2012. The unpublished translation of the pertinent portion of *The Book of Questions* prepared by Dr. Ervine is given as Appendix 1. Many thanks to both of these incredible teachers.

the monastery Khoranashat he had founded in the Tavush region of Armenia, the class was both a seminar on exegesis and instruction in the art of teaching. Both versions of the manuscript are sparse. In one version of the manuscript, the first question concerns the verse Matthew 24:41, “Two grind at the mill; one will be taken, and the other left.”

Given that these are advanced students, there are whole bodies of knowledge shared by both *vardapet*, the learned Armenian celibate priest-teacher, and student. Much goes unwritten in the notes, in the same way that quick student notes in an advanced seminar on, say, political theory, would not spell out all the details of Plato’s *Republic*. The class began on the Tuesday of Holy Week—liturgically, the exact day I first arrived in Istanbul in 2008—and the liturgical context frames the first day of class. Through this context, the text at hand, and multiple interrogations into the possible meaning of Matthew 24:41, Vanakan Vardapet models the kinds of exegetical work which he will explicitly teach in the rest of class. Moreover, he models to these advanced students how to teach the material, how to present the material to a variety of audiences. Ultimately, he models how to animate the text and tradition so that it is useful for the varied audience of the future teachers and preachers he addresses.

We could, say, in fact, that Vanakan Vardapet provides a reflexive engagement with the Armenian theological tradition. He grapples with texts, practices, and their interpretations. He models practices and inculcates embodied responses. He stresses one of the primary injunctions of the Armenian exegetical tradition: usefulness for the listener on their spiritual journey. Over the course of the dissertation, it is my goal to animate portions of this Armenian theological tradition as a useful mode of social scientific theorizing about Armenians themselves in order to

help us grasp in its fullness the mode of affective urban belonging available to the liturgical subject cultivated within the liturgical tradition and attuned to the city.

Outline of the Dissertation

I begin by discussing the place of Armenians in Turkey today and the conceptual and legal legacies which shape the possibilities for collective action. Chapter One, “Armenians in Turkey: *Millet, Cemaat, Toplum*,” interrogates operative terms and debates about how to bound Armenians as a group, about the Armenian community as such, and about the role of what I call “modern secular representation” in the constitution of the Armenian community. I trace the development of the concept of the *millet* during the nineteenth century through to the Republican Era, demonstrating that the proliferation of Armenian *millet*s along religious lines coincided with a secularization of Armenian society wherein the separation of religion and ethnicity first became possible. This concept of *millet*, and other terms associated with it, forms the conceptual and legal background to collective action among Armenians today.

Chapter Two, “*Vakıfs* and the Material Basis of the Minority Community in Istanbul” argues for the centrality of the *vakıfs* (often translated as “religious foundations”) for collective Armenian existence in Turkey today and for the kinds of collective action undertaken and made possible by the legacy of the *millet* concept. After giving a brief history of the *vakıf* and the minority foundations in the Ottoman Empire, the chapter follows the kinds of public, collective, and political action launched from the *vakıfs* as a site of organization. It details two foundations, the *Surp Pırgıç* Armenian hospital, and St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church on the Asian side of the city, in order to demonstrate how different actors think about and use the *vakıfs* for different kinds of projects. At the end of the chapter, we see the attempt by some progressive

parts of the Armenian population to reshape the foundations more in line with European-style NGOs in order to launch a different kind of action and politics from the foundations.

These forms of collective action launched from the *vakıfs* depend upon both the representation of the community and other “modes of presence-making” in the Armenian tradition. Chapter Three, “The Armenian Press and Forms of Presence-Making” takes up the possibility that the theological categories of the Armenian Apostolic Church, specifically Miaphysite Christology as reflection on Jesus Christ as the Word of God, offer modes of participation and presence-making that still resonate with the Armenian newspapers in Istanbul. The chapter gives an overview of the history of Armenian periodicals and the place of Istanbul in the Armenian literary tradition. The chapter suggests that “participation” and “presence-making” are the dominant modes of engagement with the Armenian press.

Chapter Four, “Choirs and the Community,” is an ethnographic engagement with one of the most central practices and institutions of Armenian Istanbul: the church choirs. It is built around two choirmasters, each of whom teaches the hymns in different ways, runs their respective choirs differently, and who have different ideas about the importance of the choirs for the Armenian community. This chapter articulates the specific form of participation in the liturgical tradition, with attendant modes of presence-making, that is central to the cultivation of a liturgical subject within the Armenian liturgical tradition. It argues that pedagogy anchored in the liturgy itself is a measure of the embeddedness within a tradition, suggesting that the choirs are an institution that allows for the cultivation of a liturgical subject embedded in a tradition.

Chapter Five, “Affective Urban Engagement and Minority Belonging,” returns to hymns, the *sharagans* we first encountered in the previous chapter, in order to argue for an affective, sensory, minority engagement with the city through their own religious tradition. The chapter unfolds the way well-trained singers of the hymns can hear the musical modes of the Armenian *sharagan* system in the strains of the Islamic call to prayer. The individual who can hear in such a way is precisely the kind of embedded liturgical subject described in the previous chapter. For such a cultivated liturgical subject, I argue, there is an embodied, affective attunement to the city through the sensorium that is a form of minority urban belonging.

In the Conclusion, I extend the insight and example of the cultivated liturgical subject as an example of the potential tradition-internal, embodied, sensorial, forms of engagement open to the minority subject embedded in her minority tradition. In addition to this extension, I offer the possibility that the Armenian theological tradition in its Miaphysite articulation is a semiotic mode that suffuses the tradition. I end with the potential for Armenian hermeneutic practices to help attune us to the modes of belonging explored throughout the dissertation.

Chapter One

Armenians in Turkey: Cemaat, Millet, Toplum

Shortly after I arrived in Turkey to begin fieldwork in earnest in September of 2012, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church in New York had organized a pilgrimage to Istanbul and many of the Armenian sites in Anatolia. Among those making the pilgrimage was Deacon Allan Jendian, a deacon from Fresno, California who often served at the altar of my home parish in Yetttem, California. Through my parents, we exchanged numbers, and he called me from his hotel when he arrived in Istanbul. During the first two days of their trip in Istanbul, I joined the group, including clergy and some other people whom I had met before, and I went with them to the Blue Mosque and the Hagia Sofia. When they left for the interior of the country, I stayed behind to start settling in to a weekly liturgical rotation of church services around the city and to time at the Hrant Dink Foundation near my apartment.

Deacon Allan decided to extend his stay in Istanbul instead of flying back with the group. For a few days, I joined him in wandering around the city, including serving on the altar of the St. Gregory church on the island of Kinalıada, off the coast. It was, in fact, through Allan that I first met some of the most important clergymen in the city. Before the liturgical service, the Mass (Armenian *Badarak*) on Sunday, though, he and I were given a tour of “Armenian Istanbul,” by a knowledgeable deacon of the Armenian Apostolic Church who worked at the Patriarchate, Vagharshag Seropyan. Deacon Vagharshag took me and Allan around the city, to

some of the oldest Armenian churches. But in addition to a tour of the museum at the Patriarchate and churches, he also took us to the famous Gentrnagan Armenian School and the Şişli Armenian Cemetery (where we saw the graves of both poets and patriarchs). Though we were taken to many kinds of iconic sites of collective Armenian life, this tour of Armenian Istanbul clearly emphasized the Church.

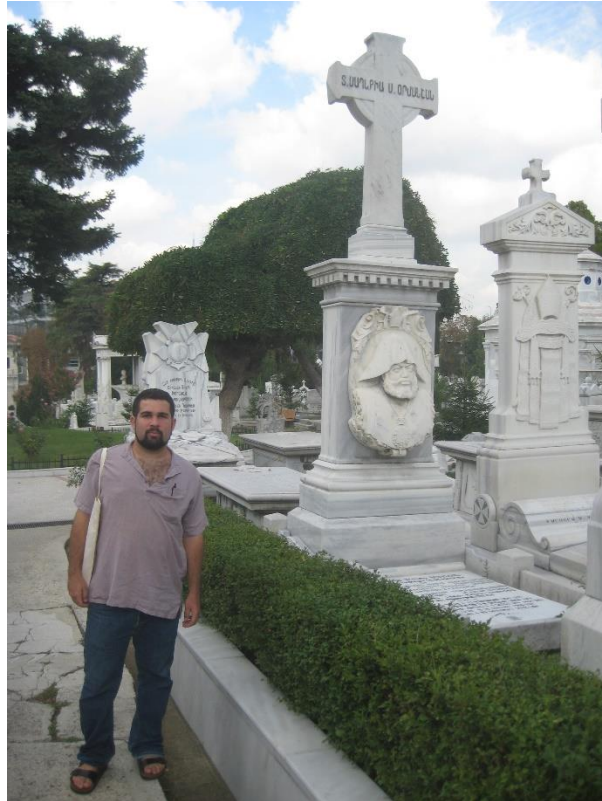


Figure 1. At the Şişli Armenian Cemetery with the Grave of the Famous Patriarch Malachia Ormanian. Photograph Credit: Allan Jendian.

This first chapter places the Armenian Apostolic Church within debates about the basis for Armenian collective action and debates about the “Armenian community” today. In addition to introducing the two major poles of my ethnographic fieldwork, several of the thirty-six Armenian Apostolic churches administered by the Armenian Patriarchate in the neighborhood of Kumkapı, and the Hrant Dink Foundation together the newspaper *Agos*, the chapter provides the

legal and conceptual background to debates about the basis for the Armenian community today. It does so in three parts. Part I, “Armenians, Ecclesiastically and Legally,” offers an overview of the Armenian population in Turkey today, articulating the main terms and institutions for collective Armenian life. Part II, “*Millet* from Theological/Ecclesial to Religious/National,” traces historical transformations in the concept of *millet*, an Ottoman-era grouping of the non-Muslim population, and argues for the continued salience of the late nineteenth century conception of the *millet* for understandings of the Armenian community today. Finally, in Part III, “Modern Secular Representation,” I detail the emergence of a specific mode of representation that continues to influence the collective projects of Armenians in Turkey today.

Part I: Armenians, Ecclesiastically and Legally

In Armenian, the word for church, *yegeghets' i*, is a calque of the Greek *ecclesia*. *Ecclesia*, at least in the wake of the fourth-century Christian historian Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, is more than an individual church or congregation. Rather, it is “the whole body of Christ,” *the Church*, with Christ at its head and bishops, monastics, priests, and congregants composing the eyes, the feet, the heart. Unity for the *ecclesia* is achieved through hierarchical, organizational, theological, and liturgical aspects of this body.

During the era of the Ottoman Empire, the precursor state to the modern Republic of Turkey, the central institution for Armenians was the *ecclesia*, specifically the Armenian Apostolic Church. Known in Armenian as simply the *Hay Yegeghets' i* (The Armenian Church) or *Hayotz Yegeghets' i* (The Church of the Armenians) (Ormanian 1955, 168), there were monasteries and parishes, bishops and priests, spread throughout the empire. Though there were elite and merchant connections between Ottoman cities and towns—as well as merchant

networks that spanned the globe¹—much of the regular movement was by priests and monastics. Additionally, regional pilgrimages by laypeople helped constitute an *ecclesia* that was larger than a single parish. The former priest of my own parish in Yetem, California, Father Garabed Kalfayan, writes of a trip in the late nineteenth century to the Monastery of St. John near present-day Kayseri with his mother: “And it was an unforgettable morning when with my mother, we joined the caravan of those going on pilgrimage from our village,” ascending the hill atop which the monastery sat by donkey, approaching the magnificent doors of the monastery on bended knee. Perhaps, while ascending the mountain, members of the caravan sang portions of the *Hampartz* hymn, a variable hymn of the Evening Service that begins with the Psalm, “I lift up my eyes to the Lord...” There was certainly singing and rejoicing, as Father Garabed notes that “from every corner of the world, Armenians gathered there, under the shade of the Sosyatz Forest—they were singing, dancing, and rejoicing” (Kalfayan 1962, 68). Here, writing of a childhood memory, Father Garabed emphasizes the collective gathering of Armenians around the church and as a church.

Today in Istanbul, the Armenian Church still holds incredible sway in the collective life of Armenians. Yet there are new institutions, new places of gathering, and ultimately, new ways of conceiving of the collective basis of Armenian life. This basis is contested, with different and competing visions of how to ground the Armenian community. Yet in all of these contemporary formulations, the question of religion, the place of church, and the role of the Patriarchate are

¹ See Sebouh Aslanian’s excellent study of the New Julfa Armenians, a group of Armenian merchants in Persia and India. Aslanian explores the mobilities and connectivity of Armenian merchants in the “early modern” period (Aslanian 2011).

central. The ubiquity of the church as institution partially explains the continued debate around it, but there is an important legal legacy that continues to shape conceptions of community.

This is the legacy of the so-called “*millet* system,” an imperial Ottoman mode of organizing and taxing the non-Muslims of the empire. *Millet*, today translated from Turkish as “nation,” during the Ottoman Empire referred at times to the Muslims of the empire, and later, to the non-Muslim populations organized into tax-groups. In this chapter, I argue that the possibilities for collective action among Armenians, and the forms of collective organization imaginable today are shaped by the continued salience of the *millet* concept in the contemporary Republic of Turkey. Though, as we will see, the conception of *millet* has changed through time, much of the conceptual apparatus of the *millet* system passed into the Republican-era legal regime for minorities in Turkey. This chapter alternates between genealogical and historical modes to trace the salient organizing concepts for collective action and basic terms of debate over the constitution of the Armenian community in Turkey.

At the same time, the chapter makes an argument about the concept of *millet* and the nature of legal categories transformed in their encounter with secular law. The church, the *yegeghets* ‘i, was the basis of the *millet* before the nineteenth century. Though the church was the basis, the abstract conceptual category of religion was *not* originally how this church and the *millet* was understood to be constituted. Organized at first along *ecclesial* and *theological* lines, *millet*, by the birth of the Turkish Republic, was organized instead along *religious* and *ethno-national* lines. *Millet*, and the nineteenth century proliferation of recognized *millets* along explicitly religious lines, is exactly a secularization in that for the first time in the Ottoman

Empire it was possible to conceive an ethnic “nation”² separately from confessional lines. Nationalization and secularization, then, are intimately linked. The fate of the concept of *millet* not only makes this explicit, but it is also a case study in the traction of a concept against secular law. Like *sharia*, in the encounter with secular law, *millet*, when referring to non-Muslims, is simultaneously imbued with a religious essence and relegated to a special legal sphere. Similar to the transformation of *sharia* as family law and its concomitant relegation to the private sphere, we see minority *millets* relegated in ways that results in anxiety over their political potential (Agrama 2012, 98–101; Mahmood 2016, 111–48).

Through an interrogation of the *millet* concept and its relation to the terms *cemaat* and *toplum*, we will simultaneously encounter the contours of the present possibilities for collective action and see how these have been shaped by the encounter between Ottoman concepts and the new, secular, legal regime of the Republic of Turkey. I begin from the present legal status and the basics of the debate about the Armenian community, genealogically tracing the *millet* concept through its transformations. Then, I argue historically to demonstrate how this transformation is precisely a simultaneous nationalization/secularization, lingering over the instantiation of the non-Muslim *millets* explicitly as minorities. Returning to the present, the chapter ends by emphasizing the two poles of my ethnographic research, the Hrant Dink Foundation and the Armenian Church (in the institution of the Patriarchate), and their roles in the debate over the constitution of the Armenian community. This will set the stage for the later chapters, which all deal with institutions, practices, and discourses which variously vie in the constitution and representation of Armenian life and its collective existence in Turkey.

² The most common contemporary translation from Turkish for *millet*.

Armenians in Turkey Today

Today, Armenians are a small portion of the Turkish population, numbering between 60-70,000 out of almost 75 million, mostly concentrated in Istanbul, a city with over 14 million people (Hoffman 2002; Melkonyan 2010). In addition to Armenians living in Istanbul, there are a handful of Armenians living in Diyarbakır, the Hatay province in southeast of the country, and a few families scattered in other cities and towns. This miniscule population are of course those who remained after the Armenian Genocide of 1915, many moving from the decimated provinces to the city of Istanbul. Due to governmental measures throughout the twentieth century (some of which are discussed in the following chapter), even the initial post-Genocide population of Armenians has dwindled.

In addition to this core group of Armenians, there are two other groups of Armenians who largely fall outside the scope of this dissertation. First are the so-called *gizli* (“hidden”) or “Islamized” Armenians, who converted to Islam in the aftermath of the Genocide (Yılmaz 2015). Estimates to their number vary widely, but it is certainly over 100,000 (Haber Merkezi (News Desk) 2013). Many of these people lived as Kurds in the southeast of Turkey, though recently many have “reconverted” to Christianity, and in a way, to their “Armenian-ness” (Özgül 2013, 2014). These Armenians have been crucial to the revitalization of the St. Giragos Armenian Church in Diyarbakır, and I discuss them in regard to the administration of schools and later in this chapter in the context of the authority of the Patriarchate and the centrality of the Armenian Church.

There is also a more recent, and sizeable, population of migrants from the Republic of Armenia currently living in Istanbul. Many of them are women who work as housekeepers or caregivers, sometimes for Turkish-Armenian families. Given their undocumented status, it is

difficult to determine their exact number, though it might push the total population of Armenians in Istanbul over 100,000. While these Armenians are embroiled in debates over access to the Armenian schools, and while I have met many at churches throughout the city, for the most part the issues raised by their presence in the city and their possible inclusion in the elusive Armenian community of Turkey is outside the intellectual scope of this dissertation.

We take then, as the population under consideration in this dissertation, Turkish citizens who are legally categorized as Armenians. As we will see, this legal categorization is itself problematic, and in part relies upon the dual legal framework of the *millet* system and the Treaty of Lausanne. The two gatekeepers of this categorization are the churches themselves and the state. Churches, through baptismal records and access to the Armenian schools, adjudicate one legal sense of Armenian, with consequences explored throughout the dissertation. As for the state, in addition to the identification by religion on identity cards³, a controversial, recently unearthed hidden practice of “coding” religious minorities also identified members of the Armenian community (Hürriyet Daily News 2013). This is the loosely, problematically, though legally defined group of Armenians discussed in this dissertation⁴.

Within this group, there are several divisions. I will not here attempt a categorization or division into ideal types of say, practicing Armenian Christians, Armenians who have attended the special Armenian schools, etc. Many of these sociological divisions will become apparent through the dissertation. For me, the salience of such categories is merely heuristic unless they are active categories that drive social life. Hence, in the chapter on the Armenian press, we will

³ This problematic practice is currently being dismantled (Beylunioğlu 2010).

⁴ That is, the “provisional object” of “the Armenian community” of the Introduction.

see that the division between Armenian-speaking and non-Armenian-speaking individuals inculcates forms of action—among other things, the establishment of a newspaper, *Agos*, that reimagines participation in the Armenian community by purposefully publishing in Turkish.

Rather, the division here is between the three recognized Christian denominations of the Armenian population. These are the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, and a recognized Armenian Protestant Church. The largest, the Armenian Apostolic Church, is sometimes called the Gregorian Church after the “Illuminator of Armenia,” St. Gregory. An autocephalous church that claims an apostolic lineage to two of Christ’s disciples, the worldwide Armenian Apostolic Church is headquartered in Etchmiadzin, Armenia, where the head of the church, called the Catholicos, resides. A second, partially schismatic see of the Apostolic Church with another Catholicos is in Lebanon. After these two major church centers, Jerusalem and Istanbul have been designated Patriarchates, the head of the churches there elevated beyond the standard archbishopric of a diocese to Patriarch. Though at times throughout the Ottoman era a technically higher-ranking Catholicos resided within the Sultan’s domains, the Patriarch of Istanbul was seen by the Sublime Porte as the head of the Armenian Church. Today, the seat of the Patriarch of Istanbul belongs to Mesrob II Mutafyan, though because of severe illness he has been unable to perform his duties for a decade. The controversy over the “Vicar General” Aram Ateşyan, and the possibility of electing a new Patriarch⁵, is a central debate among Armenians in Turkey today, and one that will recur throughout the dissertation.

⁵ As of July 2017, Aram Ateşyan has been replaced as “vicar general” by Archbishop Karekin Bekçiyen. The controversy over an election for a new Patriarch continues, with possible elections in December of 2017.

Armenian contact with the Roman Catholic church has been intermittent throughout the centuries, with theological dialogue beginning in earnest during the eleventh century. However, it was with the rise of the Mkhitarist Armenian Catholic monastic order in the seventeenth century that a sizeable subset of Armenians converted to Armenian Catholicism (K. Bardakjian 1976). Armenian Catholics are one of the “Eastern Rite” churches of the Catholic Church. These are churches who have come under the authority of the Church of Rome but which retain their liturgical practices. Thus, with a few minor modifications, the Divine Liturgy or Mass of the Armenian Apostolic and the Armenian Catholic Churches are the same. The head of the Armenian Catholic Church is called a Patriarch and sometimes Catholicos or Patriarch-Catholicos, and the current Catholicos Krikor Bedros XX Ghabroyan resides in Beirut. Historically, there has been a Catholic Patriarch of Istanbul, but the Armenian Catholic Church in Turkey is now recognized as a diocese under the direction of Archbishop Boghos Levon Zekiyan.

Finally, there is a small but important group of Armenian Protestant Christians, with two active churches in Istanbul. Armenian Protestantism first emerged in the nineteenth century during the strong British and American missionary presence in Anatolia (Yetkiner 2010; Arpee 1909). A distinct Armenian Protestant Church developed in Turkey, and there are Armenian Protestant congregations around the world. In Istanbul today, the Gedikpaşa Church in particular remains important due to an orphanage and school that has produced a number of notable Armenian intellectuals, including Hrant Dink.

These three Christian denominations together form the group of Armenians under consideration here. Moreover, this circumscription, the question of legal recognition or

categorization, and the division into these three groups are also the starting point for the genealogical inquiry that makes up the next section of the chapter. Why is it that these three groups are legally circumscribed, such that an atheist Armenian remains a very tenuous legal possibility in Turkey? Which institutions support these three groups? What, exactly, is the form of legal categorization and recognition available to them?

As I will argue in this chapter, transformations in the concept of *millet*, most acutely in the sedimentation of this Ottoman category through the Treaty of Lausanne, led to the present situation where it is these three groups which have legal standing *qua* Armenians in the Republic of Turkey today. Others may appeal to a broader ethno-national group—myself included—for recognition as an Armenian. Armenians from the Republic of Armenia are thus recognized by Turkish Armenians as Armenian. “Hidden Armenians” are much more problematic, and have not been fully welcomed into the collective life of Armenians in Turkey. Yet neither of these groups—nor, again, myself—had legal recognition as Armenian both in terms of access to Armenian institutions and from the perspective of the state.

This relatively small group of Turkish Armenians are all from families who have had Turkish citizenship since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. While there are some old Istanbul Armenian families, sometimes descendants of the wealthy Ottoman *amiras*, or notables who had some connection to the court, many Armenians living in Istanbul today were born in the provinces or can trace their family to the provinces. In the immediate aftermath of the Genocide, Armenians could still be found throughout the country. Sivas, Kayseri, Diyarbakır, Malatya, and several villages all retained a sizeable Armenian population. Over the course of the twentieth century, most of the Armenians living outside Istanbul either moved to the city or left

the country completely. Yet it is important to note that whether “old Istanbul⁶” or born in the provinces, all of these Armenians are Turkish citizens.

Part II: Millet from Theological/Ecclesial to Religious/Ethno-National

This is important when we consider the text of the Treaty of Lausanne, the foundational document of the Republic of Turkey. In the aftermath of the First World War, the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) partitioned the defeated Ottoman Empire among members of the Allied Powers. Istanbul was under Allied occupation, but a group of former Committee of Union and Progress⁷ members, led by Mustafa Kemal, took up arms in Anatolia and waged what is known in Turkish history as the “War of Independence.” After a successful campaign, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923 establishing the current Republic of Turkey and abrogating the terms and borders of the Treaty of Sèvres (Lewis 2002; Der Matossian 2014). In line with international thinking about minority rights at the time, the protection of minorities—specifically “non-Moslem” minorities—was crucial to the Allied acceptance of the terms of Treaty of Lausanne.

Defined in the treaty as minorities through international legal pressure, the basic state orientation toward the non-Muslim population has been a cautious recognition of the rights enumerated in Section III: Protection of Minorities. Despite several legal actions subsequent to the treaty and a change in attitude (if not law) on the part of the Justice and Development Party during the EU ascension process, the place of Armenians in Turkey today still stems from Articles 37-44 of Treaty of Lausanne. We will explore some of the legal changes of the twentieth

⁶ *İstanbul* is the Turkish term for “Istanbul native” or “Istanbulite”. The Armenian term, *Bolsets’i* is used on occasion through the dissertation to describe the Armenians of Istanbul.

⁷ The main political power in Turkey during the First World War, it first came to power in 1908 during the “Young Turk Revolution” which ushered in the “Second Constitutional Period.” After a brief counter-coup in 1909, the CUP remained in power through the end of the war, although under the increasingly consolidated power of the “Triumvirate” of Talat, Cemal, and Enver Pashas (Lewis 2002; Der Matossian 2014).

century, many of which have been in reference to property, in the following chapter on *vakıfs*, a complex and crucial institution and legal category of property. Here, though, I want to demonstrate that the Treaty of Lausanne enumerated rights for a specific subset of potential Armenians in Turkey, explicitly excluding any Muslim Armenians or foreign nationals.

Despite common misconceptions often repeated about the Treaty of Lausanne, the text identifies only “non-Moslem” minorities rather than specific groups (Oran 2016). This is important on two counts. On the one hand, both Muslim religious minorities like the Alevi and Muslim ethnic minorities like the Kurds have been excluded from minority status and any potential rights regime associated with that designation⁸. On the other hand, the special treatment suggested for non-Muslims has been a double-edged sword that has fomented resentment as much as protection. Moreover, blatant disregard for the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne, a restrictive reading of it, or an emphasis on the “reciprocity” principle implied in Article 45⁹ all further reduced the rights and protections enumerated by the treaty (Kurban and Kezban 2009, 10–13).

Let us pause briefly over the language of the Treaty of Lausanne¹⁰. First, as mentioned above, the provisions are articulated to protect “Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities.” We have already seen the exclusion of other potential minority groups enacted

⁸ While the pernicious moniker “Mountain Turks” for Kurds has not been in use for decades, it conveys the desire to keep at bay the centripetal forces of minority identification in the country. The legal recognition of Kurds as an ethnic minority and the Alevi as a religious minority deserves much more treatment than is given here. The literature on the Kurds in Turkey is quite extensive and there are a number of recent pieces concerning the Alevi (Dressler 2013; Tambar 2014). See in particular Jeremy Walton’s dissertation for a discussion of their official non-recognition as minorities (Walton 2009, 46–50).

⁹ Namely, that the rights and privileges afforded to people of Turkish descent and other Muslims in Greece would mirror those given to people of Greek descent in Turkey.

¹⁰ The full text of the relevant portions of the Treaty of Lausanne (Section III) is reproduced as Appendix 2.

through this phrase. At the same time, it is explicit that the groups under protection are Turkish nationals. This phrasing is perhaps most relevant in the case of Greece and Greeks, where the population transfer between the two countries ensured that many Greeks formerly residing in Ottoman lands would become Greek citizens, as opposed to citizens of the new Republic of Turkey, i.e. “Turkish nationals.” It is also relevant in the Armenian case, because a significant number of Armenians who had fled Anatolia and Turkey during the Genocide were denied the ability to return, sometimes to the country at all, and sometimes to the interior provinces (Kurt 2016, 44–46). Armenians who had been forced out of the country living in neighboring countries (like the nascent Republic of Armenia) or further afield (like my ancestors in America) were explicitly denied the ability to become “Turkish nationals.”

Hence my choice of restricting the population of Armenians under analysis in this text is justified through the legal categorization of non-Muslims as minority citizens in the Treaty of Lausanne. Islamized Armenians, even if they actively claimed an Armenian ethnicity (most did not), would not qualify as minorities since they fell outside the designation of “non-Moslem minorities.” The collective rights listed in Articles 40 and 41¹¹ concerning institutions, schools, and linguistic rights could not be claimed by these Islamized Armenians simply *qua* Armenian. Likewise, both Diasporan Armenians like myself and Armenians from the Republic of

¹¹ Article 40 reads: Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

Armenia—even if descended from families hailing from Turkey—are explicitly beyond the legal reach of the collective institutions of Armenians in Turkey, even if they benefit from them¹².

Finally, we need to note here the practical application of the Treaty of Lausanne. Though all “Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities” are listed as the beneficiaries of the minority rights regime imposed on Turkey, in practice this has not been the case. Instead, the benefits have been more restrictively applied to Armenians, Greeks, and Jews (Kurban and Kezban 2009, 12). In recent years, Syriac and Assyrian Christians have benefited from changes to the laws of foundations, but their ability to organize collectively and access resources remains limited. In practice, then, the legal moniker minority in Turkey has been restricted to non-Muslim religious minorities, with a further emphasis only on Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. To understand why these three groups have been afforded a “privileged” status as minorities, we have to move from the nascent days of the Republic of Turkey to the Ottoman Empire and its so-called *millet* system.

The Millet System and its Transformations in the Ottoman Empire

Many scholars trace the beginnings of the *millet* system through the concept of *dhimmi* (*zimmi* in Turkish), the protected non-Muslims who have submitted to Islamic rule (explicitly monotheist, but in practice often Zoroastrians, Hindus and other groups). The *dhimmi* concept comes from the “Constitution of Medina,” which organized the relationship between Jews and Muslims at Medina. Within the Quran it is found in the *sūrat al-barā'a*:

Fight against those who disbelieve in God and the Last Day, who do not account forbidden what God and His Messenger have forbidden, and who do not follow the

¹² For instance, as a deacon in the Armenian Apostolic Church, I was eventually able to serve on the altar of Armenian churches throughout Istanbul. Likewise, I attended events and ate food provided by the churches and foundations. Yet there is no explicitly legal way for me to participate in these aspects of collective Armenian life in Turkey.

religion of truth, from amongst those who have been given the Book, until they pay the *jizya* in exchange for a benefaction granted to them, being in a humiliated position (cited in (Bosworth 1982, 41)).

In exchange for the “acceptance of subordinate status” non-Muslims were offered “a sort of contract promising protection, *dhimma*, perpetually renewed with the Muslim state” (Bosworth 1982, 41). This becomes the Quranic justification for the development of what scholars called in the case of the Ottoman Empire, the *millet* system.

While *millet* was used most often to refer to the Jewish community in the first Islamic empires, in the Ottoman Empire before the period of reform in the nineteenth century, it “denotes the community of Muslims in contradistinction to *dhimmi*” (Braude 1982, 70). Initially, then, in the Ottoman Empire, *millet* as Muslim and *dhimmi* as subjugated and recognized non-Muslim were complementary rather than similar concepts. This remained the case well into the nineteenth century and the reforming decrees of Mahmud II and Abdülmejid. Only through a transformation and redefinition did the term “enter the Ottoman institutional vocabulary” as what scholarship describes as the “*millet* system” for organizing non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire (Braude 1982, 73).

Eventually, by the middle of the nineteenth century, we can document the existence of a rather explicit administrative regime for the governance of non-Muslims, loosely grouped as Jewish, Greek Orthodox Christian, and Armenian Apostolic Christian *millets*. Often, this nineteenth century *millet* is projected backward in time, as a way of emphasizing the legal pluralism of the Ottoman Empire and the relatively autonomous authority of the non-Muslim populations administered through ecclesial groups. Such backward projection of a coherent *system* or mode of governance for non-Muslims is due in large part to the “foundation myths”

that each of the three major groups, the Greeks, Armenians, and Jews developed for the establishment of their respective *millets* (Braude 1982, 74–77). These “mythical origins” begin with the 1453 conquest of Constantinople by Sultan Mehmed II (Mehmed the Conqueror, Fatih Mehmed). Of these foundation myths, the Greek histories of the installation of George Scholarius in 1454 as Orthodox Patriarch served as a model for the imagination of the other *millets*. The Armenian patriarchate was established in 1461 and a Jewish *millet* was founded later (Karpat 1982, 145). With the Orthodox Patriarch, the existing church hierarchy of the Byzantine Empire was subsumed under Ottoman dominion. Similarly, the Armenian Apostolic Church had an existing hierarchy, and the elevation of an archbishop to “Patriarch” altered the hierarchal balance but not the essence of church administration (K. B. Bardakjian 1982). In the Jewish case, a Grand Rabbi was created by the Ottoman administration¹³. I take the existence of these Patriarchates as administrative centers for the church hierarchy as given. It seems doubtful, though, that they were at the head of a bounded *millet* in the same form as historians have found in the nineteenth century.

¹³ The Jewish case is actually quite complicated, largely “because there is no hierarchy in Judaism” (Braude and Lewis 1982, 104). Within the pages of the classic collection *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, different authors disagree over whether the term Grand Rabbi is even appropriate. Epstein says that “it is reported that judicial matters dealing with Jews were sometimes referred to the chief rabbi. On the other hand, the exaggerated claims regarding his power, his role, and the assertion that he occupied a place in the divan and even had precedence over the *Şeyh ül-İslâm* must be viewed with extreme caution, and probably rejected. What does emerge, however, is a picture of a respected functionary” (Braude and Lewis 1982, 103–4). Hacker is less equivocal: “There is no need to argue at length that the chief rabbi was neither a permanent nor even a temporary member of the *Divan-i Hümayun*, sitting at Mehmed’s right, nor the chief Jewish tax collector.” He adds, speaking about the earliest days after the conquest of Constantinople regarding the question of a senior rabbi, “furthermore, although it is cited in modern historiography as a well-established fact that the Jews in the Ottoman Empire had a chief rabbi, I failed to find any trace of this fact in contemporary sources” (Braude and Lewis 1982, 119).

As with the other *millets*, and as we will see below, the nineteenth century was a period of marked reform in the Jewish *millet*. During the nineteenth century, there is more explicit mention of a chief rabbi amid the centralizing tendencies of the empire (Levy 1994).

What turns a powerful ecclesial see into the seat of a vast administrative system designed to oversee all of the Armenians (or Greeks, or Jews) in the entire Ottoman Empire is in part the centralizing tendencies of the reforming Ottoman state in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The reform era, known generally as the *Tanzimat*, begins with the Edict of Gülhane in 1839, and is marked by a second reform edict dealing in detail with non-Muslims in 1856 and a major revision to legal approaches to land in the Land Code of 1858 (Shaw and Shaw 1977). Revisions to the collection of taxes had begun earlier, but the attempts with the Land Code of 1858 to bring even more land and administration of the Ottoman Empire directly under the control of the Sublime Porte is crucial to the reification of ecclesial hierarchies of non-Muslims into an administrative *millet* system.

It is this centralized, reform-era, reified state of affairs that we will identify with “the *millet* system.” In order to avoid an anachronistic rendering of *millet* system as concerned with administration of “ethno-religious minorities,” I describe the *millet* system as “an administrative system along confessional lines using ecclesial hierarchies for tax-collecting purposes.” This definition emphasizes salient aspects of the *millet* system that avoids three major pitfalls in the literature, which I will deal with in turn. First, the “three recognized” *millets*, often rendered as Greek, Armenian, and Jewish, were not organized along “ethno-religious lines.” Second, the descriptions of the “legal pluralism” of the Ottoman Empire, whereby the non-Muslim populations were governed by their own laws and organizations often creates a vision of the *millets* as too tightly bounded. Finally, the scholarship surrounding the idea of “Ottoman cosmopolitanism” has at times overemphasized the tolerant character of the Ottoman Empire.

The eminent Ottoman historian Kemal Karpat describes the *millet*s as a “socio-cultural and communal framework based, firstly, on religion, and, secondly, on ethnicity which in turn often reflected linguistic differences” (1982, 142). What this elides, however, is the multiple groups bounded within a single *millet*. Rather than religious, I would call the primary classification of *millet*s *theological*.

Many authors refer not to the Greek or Rum (Anatolian Greek) *millet*, but the Orthodox *millet* (Braude and Lewis 1982). This is more correct because the principle of organization was not, *pace* Karpat, ethnic, though there were strong ethnic and linguistic associations, but theological. The Orthodox *millet*, which was headed by the Greek (now known as the Ecumenical) Patriarch in Istanbul, included Balkan and Slavic Orthodox populations, all of which were part of the Orthodox church hierarchy. The other Christian *millet*, known colloquially (and colloquially in much of the literature) as the Armenian *millet*, was more properly the non-Orthodox Christian *millet*. Non-Orthodox in this case refers to a Christological division¹⁴.

One of the main divisions in Christendom developed well before the more famous “Great Schism” of 1054 that permanently sundered the Papacy in Rome from the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople (Chadwick 2003). The first years of developing Christian orthodoxy¹⁵ were occupied with Trinitarian questions about the relation of

¹⁴ Artinian, while accepting some of the “foundation myths” of the *millet* system, is nonetheless clear that the “division of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire into two broad groups was based not on race or nationality but a confession of faith,” continuing on to describe the Christological positions I detail (Artinian 1988, 11–12).

¹⁵ Arguably, the question of orthodox doctrine only emerges in force in the imperial context of the Byzantine Empire after Constantine’s conversion to Christianity in 312 AD. While there were certain hard edges around the *ecclesia*, a *unified*, orthodox Christian doctrine encompassing the whole Christian world did not emerge until Constantine needed both theological and administrative unity of the church as an appendage of the imperial apparatus. Hence the first “Ecumenical Council” of Nicea takes place in 325 AD.

the three persons of the Christian Godhead, and then more specifically with Christological questions about the nature of Jesus Christ as both God and living human being (Behr 2001). The Council of Chalcedon¹⁶, the Fourth Ecumenical Council held outside of Constantinople in 451 AD gave the definitive Western Christian answer: Jesus Christ is one Person with two distinct natures, God and man (Meyendorff 1989). Western Christianity here includes both the Roman Catholic Church and (perhaps, confusingly) what has become known as the “Eastern Orthodox Church.” More accurately than a geographic descriptor, we can call these churches Chalcedonian.

Non-Chalcedonian churches, those who rejected the Chalcedonian formula, are sometimes derogatorily called Monophysites, insinuating that they deny one of the two natures (usually the divinity) of Christ. Miaphysite is a more appropriate term for the churches which recognize the first three ecumenical councils, but not the Council of Chalcedon. These churches include the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Syriac Church, the Coptic Church, the Indian-Malankara Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and the Eritrean Church. The basic Christological formula hints at a mystical trend in the theology of these churches: Jesus Christ has only one nature, God and man. In addition to the Miaphysite churches, two other forms of non-Chalcedonian Christianity, the Nestorian Church of the East and the Assyrian Church, only accept the first two ecumenical councils (Hastings 1999).

These seemingly esoteric theological formulas were often the cause—or at least the excuse—for serious arguments and even physical violence. The novel *Azazel* dramatizes the period of the Christological controversies and the emergence of what would become the Coptic

¹⁶ The modern neighborhood of Kadıköy, incorporated as a municipality into the greater municipality of Istanbul.

Orthodox Church¹⁷. Hypa, the main character, is a young monk, who encounters many of the prominent historical figures of his time, witnessing the infamous killing of the prominent female philosopher Hypatia by Christian partisans of the Bishop Cyril in Alexandria. Cyril, revered in the Miaphysite Churches for his Christological position, presided over what is often called the “Robber Council” of Ephesus, when he began the council before his opponents could arrive.

Hypa, in Ephesus just before these events, writes,

I am lost in the wastelands of the self and I am not optimistic about the coup Bishop Cyril is expected to pull off in Ephesus. It will be horrific. Cyril is the head of the church of St. Mark in Alexandria and the word of Mark means, among other things, the heavy hammer which in our country we call the mirzabba, the iron rod (Ziedan 2012, 288).

We see in this literary recreation the intrigue and violence that surrounded the early Christological controversies. Throughout the Byzantine era, the Imperial Church (the Chalcedonian Orthodox Church) often tried to suppress or convert the Miaphysite populations living in and near the empire. Even today, there are monasteries and churches where “Monophysite” remains a derogatory epithet.

It is this divisive Christological issue that is at the heart of the *millet* division in the Ottoman Empire. Immediately after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and in the years following, the Orthodox Church had the largest population and the dominant hierarchy. This hierarchy and the ecclesial body of the Orthodox Church under the Ecumenical Patriarch administered the Orthodox *millet*. The so-called Armenian *millet* was administered by the largest ecclesial non-Chalcedonian body, the Armenian Apostolic Church, but it included not only the

¹⁷ Saba Mahmood’s final chapter of her recent book *Religious Difference in a Secular Age* uses not only *Azazeel*, but the controversies surrounding it to suggest “the inordinate weight secular conceptions of history and temporality command in religious narratives today” (Mahmood 2016, 196–97). My goal here is much more modest, using the book to animate the vitriol that has often accompanied the Christological debates.

other Miaphysite churches with which the Armenian Church is in practical theological agreement (communion)¹⁸, but also the Assyrian Church, considered heretical by the other Miaphysite churches. I want to stress, therefore, that the principle of division organizing the *millet* system in the early years of the reform was not simply confessional, but *theological*, and specifically Christological. The *millet* division is essentially between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian churches.

What we find, at the beginning of the *Tanzimat* era, then, is a set of administrative boundaries mapped loosely onto ecclesial and theological divisions between and within non-Muslim populations. The other part of my definition above that I would like to emphasize is that the *millet* system, to the extent it existed, was concerned with generating tax revenue. Without getting into the details of the pseudo-feudal *timar* land system or the subsequent tax-farming system where rural notables known as *ayans* were used to generate income for the central government (McGowan 1997), a crucial part of the *millet* system in the nineteenth century was its ability to use the administrative networks of the ecclesial hierarchy to collect and generate funds.

I stress this aspect of the *millet* system for two reasons. First, as Foucault has famously argued, imperial forms of governmental power were less interested in the fine-tuning and management of daily life that comes to dominate modern forms of power (Foucault 1995, 1991). Hence, I would go far to suggest that we could see the *raison d'être* of the *millet* system to be the

¹⁸ Significantly, this is less a doctrinal agreement than a liturgical one. While the theological doctrines are deemed similar enough to allow members of each church to receive communion (an embodied experience of being one *ecclesia*), throughout most of the history of these churches that doctrine and the exact points of agreement were not spelled out. Rather, it was precisely the liturgical action of communion as an expression of a unified *ecclesia* that marked the theological agreement.

collection of taxes, which in turn is the basis for any real Ottoman interest in *systematically* dealing with the non-Muslim population at the level of the empire. While external European pressure was part of the reform of the treatment of minorities, the re-centralizing tendency of the nineteenth century Ottoman state after the failure of the *ayan*-based tax-farming system (McGowan 1997, 663) and the need to explore alternative methods of revenue-generation are equally important. Second, I emphasize a tax-centric view of the *millet* in order to counterbalance a tendency in the literature to overstate the bounded, autonomous nature of the *millets*.

This tendency, the second pitfall in the literature on *millet* which I hope my definition avoids, follows from the well-documented legal pluralism of the Ottoman Empire (Barkey 2013). Karen Barkey, an influential contemporary Ottoman historian, defines the contours of this legal pluralism as the Ottoman government allowing non-Muslim populations “practical legal autonomy to maintain their own religious tribunals with jurisdiction over personal law” (Barkey 2013, 87). Non-Muslim ecclesial institutions and confessional practices were clearly equipped to adjudicate within such a jurisdiction.¹⁹ Armenians had in the *Lawcode of Mxit'ar Goš* a developed legal framework derived from earlier councils and canons systematized in the twelfth century (Goš 1994). Used and recognized by groups of Armenians as far-flung as Poland, the *Lawcode* would have been the basic legal framework for the monasteries and dioceses of the Ottoman Empire given that this text is considered the culmination of the tradition of Armenian

¹⁹ Though I question Barkey’s ahistorical use of “personal law.” In a way, seeing non-Muslims as having “jurisdiction over personal law” within a legal regime dominated by *sharia* and Ottoman imperial (*qanun*) laws mirrors the view of *sharia* as “family law” within modern secular legal frameworks throughout the Middle East. A number of scholars have explored the sequestering of *sharia* as family law, and how the association with private, family law has been crucial to lasting association of *sharia* as inherently religious in nature (Asad 2003, 205–56; Agrama 2012, 98–101; Mahmood 2016, 111–48)

canon law²⁰. Barkey, then, suggests that each *millet* had substantial legal autonomy and could follow the *Lawcode* or comparable legal systems.

While evidence of legal and jurisdictional autonomy exists, I want to complicate the basic picture of Ottoman legal pluralism on a few counts. First, if legal autonomy operates at the level of *millet*, then what sort of legal recourse did Syriac Christians, for instance, have? Though in theological communion, the Armenian and Syriac churches have distinct, autocephalous ecclesial hierarchies. Would a Syriac Christian in Mardin appeal to the Armenian Bishop of the city on a matter of divorce?²¹ So, in principle, I accept the basic premise of legal pluralism in the Ottoman Empire, but I question whether this legal pluralism was coterminous with the *millet*. Thus, one of the central questions about the *millet* system, one that to my knowledge has not been adequately answered, is the extent to which the “Armenian *millet*” was successful in collecting taxes and performing other administrative duties vis-à-vis churches with independent ecclesial organizations and hierarchies. This, more than anything, calls the unity of the *millet* system into question.

Second, I would emphasize the fluidity of legal appeals across these jurisdictions (Greene 2005). Barkey recognizes this, saying

It was long assumed that members of each religious community in the empire visited and used their own religious courts and that they led, in effect, parallel and unconnected lives. Studies of court records, however, have shown otherwise. They have exposed the degree to which the *shari'a* court was an important hub for Muslim and non-Muslim communities alike, and demonstrated that legal pluralism did not, in actual practice,

²⁰ Essentially, in addition to collecting and interpreting earlier canonical statements from Armenian Church councils, the *Lawcode* offers principles for legal interpretation that renders superfluous new canons (as opposed to application of previous strictures). Of course, this has precluded neither additional legal thinking nor additional canons.

²¹ This is, I recognize, a historical question, to which some historical research could presumably give a fairly definitive answer (or at least, several examples). As far as I am aware, however, the primary source research needed to answer this question has not been conducted.

reflect a simple and clean differentiation of groups along religious lines, but was in fact much more complex, multilayered, and therefore, consequential for relations among communities within the empire (Barkey 2013, 85).

Yet, as the quote demonstrates, most of the movement between jurisdictions and legal systems was by non-Muslims who went to see a *qadi* at the *sharia* courts. Many of these appeals were actually to bypass more stringent requirements in the legal regime of a given church²². This fact leads to two characterizations of legal pluralism in the Ottoman Empire worth questioning.

One line of thinking sees the movement of Christians from their ecclesial legal system to the broader *sharia* court as evidence that Christian society in the Middle East was somehow more repressive than its Islamic counterpart. Mostly, this argument is encountered in nationalist or Islamist articles in Turkey (and presumably other countries as well). I highlight it here also as a reminder that the “Oriental backwardness” of Eastern Christians also has a long history in Christian missionary work and thinking (Mahmood 2016, 44–48). The second characterization is the tendency to see the ability of Christians to “choose” the *sharia* court as part of broader “Ottoman cosmopolitanism” wherein, despite the basic inequality of *dhimmi* status, the Ottoman Empire was actually a more open or tolerant society, incorporating more difference, than many of its European Christian contemporaries²³. Though Barkey, like most academics, recognizes the fundamental inequality, she still insists that “the particular legal order of the Ottoman Empire

²² A similar phenomenon is found in contemporary Egypt, where Coptic Christians, subject to the “family law” of the Church, convert to Islam for purposes of divorce (Mahmood 2016, 135–41).

²³ This version of Ottoman cosmopolitanism is a bit of a caricature, as most scholars recognize the fundamental inequalities structuring Ottoman life. A more historically nuanced idea of cosmopolitanism in the Ottoman Empire emphasizes and interrogates the multi-confessional, multi-ethnic aspects and features of life in various parts of the Empire. It recognizes that an Armenian craftsman in the Arab provinces (Lessersohn 2015) and the hordes of Western diplomats in the Pera neighborhood of Istanbul were each, though distinctly, “cosmopolitan.” See the efforts of the collaborative research group on Ottoman Cosmopolitanism, <https://ottomancosmopolitanism.wordpress.com/>.

powerfully contributed to a political culture of diversity and toleration in that it provided communities and actors with choices even though, in the end, they were choosing the hegemonic court” (Barkey 2013, 85). Much of the impetus for this conceptualization of the Ottoman Empire as intrinsically tolerant comes from the “neo-Ottoman” aspirations of the current AKP government in Turkey. For both historical and political reasons, I am wary of this current tendency to shore up the tolerant character of a fundamentally unequal imperial system that ended in the flames of Genocide.

Though this legal pluralism afforded non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire might not have created a tolerant paradise, it did demarcate a contested jurisdiction where ecclesial leaders had significant authority within their own hierarchy. Jurisdiction then becomes a crucial category for understanding the constitution of the *millet* in the early part of the nineteenth century. It is relevant in three ways. First, the Patriarch has imperial legal jurisdiction over the church of which he is the head. Second, the Patriarchs of the two Christian *millets* had some jurisdiction over the other ecclesial hierarchies. Finally, the Armenian Apostolic Church and other church hierarchies had internal jurisdictional debates.

The first aspect of jurisdiction, the legal authority of the Patriarch over the church granted to him by the Sultan, is exactly the well-known legal pluralism of the Ottoman Empire discussed above. Crucially, before the nineteenth century reform of the *millets*, this jurisdiction was ecclesial rather than national, ethnic, or even religious. The Armenian Apostolic Patriarch in Istanbul did not have jurisdiction over “the Armenians of the Empire,” but rather over the *millet*, organized along theological-ecclesial lines as we have been describing.

Second, it would appear that the Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchs were each given jurisdiction over ecclesial bodies other than their own churches. I want to repeat and reiterate here that this is the least understood aspect of the entire *millet* system. For instance, some commentators have gone so far as to mention “Mar Shim‘un, head of the Nestorian millet,” suggesting the existence of a separate Nestorian *millet* (Abu Jaber 1967, 215). The existence of a Nestorian *millet* would seriously undermine the integrity of the *millet* system as has been described in this chapter. Instead, we should distinguish between *millet* (used prior to the nineteenth century, but not with the same systematicity it would develop) and *ta’ifa*, translated as “group” or “party” (Masters 2001, 61). At least in the Arab provinces, individuals were registered to a *ta’ifa*, and the Jacobites (Syriacs) were registered as a *ta’ifa*. This distinction between *ta’ifa* and *millet* slowly disappeared. An incident involving the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul and a Maronite Christian in Aleppo in 1757 suggests the emerging difference between *millet* and *ta’ifa*, and the difficulty of discerning the jurisdictional reach of the Armenian Patriarchate:

the order reflects the existence of an Armenian *millet* with a patriarch resident in Istanbul able to effect some measure of political control over his flock in distant Aleppo. But it also explicitly acknowledged that the Jacobites and Maronites were independent communities, confusingly called *millets* in the order and not subsumed into the Armenian *millet* as they would be by the end of the century (Masters 2001, 65).

Here, I simply note that there is much more work to be done in order to understand fully the shifting (throughout time) relations between the different Christian churches and the extent to which administrative jurisdiction by the Orthodox and Armenian Patriarchs extended to other ecclesial hierarchies.

Finally, jurisdiction is relevant as an ecclesial category internal to the Armenian Apostolic Church (as well as for the Orthodox Christians and other ecclesial bodies). Above, we briefly described the multiple Catholicoses and Patriarchs spread throughout regions Armenians lived. Within the Armenian Church, each bishop is relatively autonomous within his diocese. Hence, in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church's pyramidal organization, we can describe the Armenian Apostolic Church as an isosceles trapezoid—a pyramid without a head. While the authority of the "Catholicos of all Armenians" residing in Etchmiadzin is recognized as supreme²⁴, he is considered "first among equals" rather than the undisputed authority—there is no equivalent of papal infallibility in the Armenian Apostolic Church. There are many areas of doctrine and practice which the Catholicos cannot unilaterally impose on a bishop in his own diocese. This is a form of internal ecclesiastic jurisdiction.

Ecclesiastic jurisdiction, however, took on a new relevance in the Ottoman Empire. This is due precisely to the increasing power of the Patriarch of Istanbul and the proximity to the Sublime Porte. Artinian, who offers what is still the most concise history of the so-called "Armenian Constitution," notes that the "Armenian patriarchate's sphere of jurisdiction increased proportionately to the extension of the Ottoman empire" until "by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century the Armenian patriarch exercised jurisdiction over fifty dioceses throughout the Ottoman empire which were governed through the agency of subordinate ecclesiastics" (1988, 17). This elides the struggle between Armenian hierarchs

²⁴ Indeed, today, though the Catholicosate of Sis (actually situated in Antelias, Lebanon) has strained relations with the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin, to the extent that rival churches can be found in the same cities in America (sometimes only blocks away), even Catholicos Aram I recognizes Catholicos Kareken II as "Catholicos of all Armenians."

within and beyond Ottoman domains. During much of the Ottoman era, both the hierarch at Sis and on the island of Aktamar were “Catholicoses” who technically outranked the Patriarch in Istanbul. Various forms of jurisdictional sharing occurred, but the Patriarch in Istanbul gradually usurped these jurisdictions or the control the other hierarchs had within the Ottoman Empire. For instance, Patriarch Golod used the election in 1726 of a new Catholicos in Etchmiadzin to “petition for his investiture in the name of the patriarchate” such that Etchmiadzin “had thereafter to deal with the Porte through the patriarchate.” Similarly, the Patriarch played off the rivalry between the sees of Sis and Etchmiadzin (K. B. Bardakjian 1982, 96). When Etchmiadzin fell under control of the Russian Empire in 1828, the relationship between the Catholicos of all Armenians in Etchmiadzin and the Patriarch of Constantinople was codified and the patriarch became “the ‘permanent nuncio’ and representative of the Supreme Catholicos of all Armenians” throughout the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, “within the Ottoman Empire the Catholicosates of Sis and Aktamar and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem retained their local jurisdiction and autonomy but official business with the Porte was conducted via Constantinople” (K. B. Bardakjian 1982, 96). Ecclesiastic jurisdiction within the Armenian Apostolic Church is thus the third way in which jurisdiction is relevant for describing the role of the Patriarch vis-à-vis the *millet*.

Hence, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, *millet* demarcates administrative jurisdictions of ecclesial hierarchies over the non-Muslim populations of the Ottoman Empire. From the Ottoman perspective, the purpose of these administrative groupings is financial—the church hierarchies are tasked with collecting taxes. They are divided, first, theologically, as Jews and Christians, and then between Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian. Within those broad theological groupings, specific ecclesial hierarchies are given (often contested) jurisdiction.

Millet, then, before the Era of Reform in the Ottoman Empire, is a theological and ecclesial category.

The Era of Reform and the Proliferation of Millets Along Religious Lines

During the Reform Era inaugurated with the Edict of Gülhane in 1839 the various confessional groups were first subsumed under the category of *millet* and the *millet* system *qua* system emerged. Quite quickly, however, the theological and ecclesial problems of dividing the non-Muslims of the Empire into three broad groups, with only the most general criterion for separating the Christians, led to cracks in the “big three” *millets* of Jewish, Orthodox (Rum/Greek) and non-Chalcedonian (Armenian) Christians. These fissures, particularly in the Armenian *millet*, occurred along confessional and ecclesial lines. In fact, I will argue, for the first time we can legitimately say that the existing *millets* proliferated along *religious* lines. Seemingly paradoxically, this fissuring along religious lines was simultaneous with a change in the meaning of the term *millet*. If, in the earliest years of the Ottoman Empire (and before) *millet* was used to describe the Muslim population or the Jewish population, and if, in the early years of the reform era as the *millet* system was constituted as such, it referred to the distinct non-Muslim populations, by the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, *millet* meant nation. In this section, I argue that the seemingly paradoxical proliferation of *millets* along religious lines while *millet* simultaneously comes to mean nation is the result of a profound secularization of law and concepts during the late Ottoman period. Indeed, the ability to distinguish “religion” from “nation” or “ethnicity” at all is a byproduct of the emergence in the Ottoman Empire of the “variety of concepts, practices, and sensibilities that have come together to form ‘the secular’” (Asad 2003, 16).

I make this argument through consideration of the Armenian *millet* during the nineteenth century. We will take the period under consideration to begin with the Edict of Gülhane in 1839, that is, the beginning of the *Tanzimat* era of reform. As discussed in previous sections, the idea of a *millet* system before the reform period is fluid at best, though I have spoken of the emergence of the basic contours of such a system by 1839. As we will see, some of the systematization continues during the reform period, such that the “classical” model of the *millet* system perhaps only existed for a few brief years in the 1850s. Throughout, I use “early reform,” “reform-era,” and “early nineteenth century” as equivalent qualifiers for the moment when the *millet* system is recognizable as such. In this section, we begin with 1839 and trace the convulsions of the Armenian *millet* through to the foundation of the Republic.

What, then, were the contours of the Armenian *millet* at the inauguration of the reform era? First, the more inclusive term *ta'ife*, which included guilds and other “groups” had more or less been dropped in favor of the term *millet* (Konortas 1999). More importantly, we have moved from groups isomorphic to an ecclesial hierarchy and organization to the broader theological grouping into Orthodox and non-Chalcedonian. In particular, the Syriac and Nestorian churches had been subsumed under the Armenian *millet* by end of the eighteenth century (Masters 2001, 65). The Assyrian (i.e Nestorian) church fell under the control of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, when “on 6 August, 1783, on their own request, the ‘nation of the Assyrians fell under our [the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople] authority” (K. B. Bardakjian 1982, 99). So, the Armenian *millet* has become, by 1839, quite properly the non-Chalcedonian *millet*, organized along confessional, even Christological lines. The expansion of the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarchate is complete, with the codification of the relationship between the

Patriarchate and the Catholicos in Etchmiadzin in 1828. Finally, we are in the throes of the tax-farming era of the Ottoman Empire²⁵, with the parallel role of the Patriarch as “tax-farming” for the *millet*. Thus, on the eve of the *Tanzimat* Era, the Armenian *millet* (named as *millet*) remained an ecclesial organization, though the jurisdiction of the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople now officially included the entirety of the Ottoman Empire as well as the other non-Chalcedonian churches, and this jurisdiction included the authority to collect taxes on behalf of the Ottoman state.

However, the fragmentation of the Armenian *millet* had begun even before the Edict of Gülhane in 1839²⁶. The first group of people which broke from the Armenian Apostolic *millet* were Armenian Catholics. A full history of Armenian Catholicism is beyond the scope of this chapter. Briefly, we can say that the Armenian Apostolic Church, through its participation in Ecumenical Councils and through correspondence has always prized its inclusion in the universal Christian Church. More direct contact with the Papacy in Rome, however, begins later. The Catholicosate of Sis, located on the coast of southern Anatolia, was first established during the heyday of the Armenian presence in Cilicia (1080-1375) (Hovannisian and Payaslian 2008). This territory flourished during the Crusades, eventually becoming a Crusader principality with aristocratic connections to the Kingdoms of Jerusalem and Antioch (Ghazarian 2000; MacEvitt

²⁵ A major impetus for the *Tanzimat* reform in general, described as an era of centralization in the Ottoman Empire, was to gain greater control over revenue through the abolition of the tax-farming system (Heper 1980; Barkey 2008, 270–77).

²⁶ There is, in fact, an interesting debate in Ottoman history about the role of the non-Muslims in the reform of the Ottoman Empire. Artinian suggests that the so-called “Armenian Constitution” (discussed below) influenced the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. At the very least, the emergent nationalism of several groups within the Empire, marked by the establishment of the independent Kingdom of Greece in 1832 after a revolutionary war and by the Armenian Revolutionary Parties founded during the nineteenth century (Nalbandian 1963), led to intellectual and political experiments in holding the empire together.

2008). This was the first major and continuous point of contact between the Church of Rome and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Attempts to convert Armenians and to subsume the Armenian Church under the Church of Rome began in earnest with “the foundation of the *Congregatio de Propoganda Fide* (1622) by Pope Gregory XV,” after which “the Latin missions among the Armenians received a new impetus” (Artinian 1988, 32). In particular, the Catholic missions found fertile ground with aristocratic urban Armenians, due in large part to internal Armenian politics around the authority of the Patriarchate. “In 1742 Pope Benedict XIV Lambertini established the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Lebanon with jurisdiction over Syria and Cilicia, and in 1758 appointed the first Armenian Pontifical Vicar at Istanbul” (Artinian 1988, 32). With this, an alternate church hierarchy serving former members of the Armenian Apostolic Church was established.

Overall, “the reaction of the Armenian patriarchate to the Latin missionary was, from the beginning, antagonistic and suppressive, since they attempted to undermine the authority of the Armenian church. Moreover, it was to the interest of the *millet*’s central administration to prevent any schism which may reduce the number of tax-paying members from its communion” (Artinian 1988, 33). As members of the Armenian Apostolic Church converted to Catholicism, they found themselves in legal limbo within the Ottoman Empire. Though there were Ottoman injunctions on belonging to a recognized confessional group, the legal limbo derives less from the loss of a status adhering to the individual²⁷ and more to the place of the individual vis-à-vis

²⁷ In other words, though the legal pluralism of the Ottoman Empire operated on the individual, being “personal rather than territorial” such that a “Christian, Jew, and Muslim, living in the same house, were subject to separate laws, each according to his millet” (Abu Jaber 1967, 213–14), the law was administered collectively (“each according to his millet”). That is, a concept like citizenship, where the legal status *adheres* to the person—rather than being defined through the group—was not present.

the recognized authority of the ecclesial hierarchy or *millet*. “The government officials left it to the Christians to decide the fair distribution of the tax burden” (Masters 2001, 64). If, as Artinian suggests, the Armenian Patriarch was responsible for the collection of a lump sum of taxes from the entire *millet*, he would have a vested interest in continuing to collect taxes from this group of converted Armenians. Ecclesially, though, Armenian Catholics claimed exception from the authority of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarch.

Where, though, did they fit in the Ottoman legal scheme? At the time, there was not a fully recognized Catholic *millet*. Some Catholics fell under the authority of the Orthodox Patriarch (as fellow Chalcedonians). The vast majority of Catholics residing in the Empire, however, were European foreign subjects. According to the “capitulations” whereby foreign powers extracted various legal concessions from the Ottoman Empire, foreigners within the Ottoman lands came under the law of their home country rather than under the law of the Ottoman Empire—though the reverse was not true (van den Boogert 2005). These Catholics, then, would already be subject to foreign law, and would not need to be placed within a *millet*. Artinian suggests that the Armenian Catholics were answerable to the French law, but this seems unlikely. Later, some non-Muslim individuals were essentially granted European citizenship, but this was never offered wholesale. Instead, these Catholics remained nominally under the authority of the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople. Though there had been previous gaps between *millet* and ecclesial body, as between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Nestorians, for the first time a conscious fissure erupted between *millet* and religion.

Before, the difference was between recognizable ecclesial bodies with strikingly different traditions. That is, Syriac Christians had an ecclesial hierarchy, a recognizable theological

tradition, and a liturgical language all distinct from the Armenian Apostolic Church. Grouping them under the same *millet* was clearly an expedient administrative move that was justified by a similar theology. With Armenian Catholics, the distinction was different: here were people who had been baptized in the same church, speaking the same language, who consciously converted to Catholicism. Crucially, these converts insisted that they were still Armenian. Historically, in the Cilician era, a convert to Catholicism slowly became a “Frank.” The many Byzantine emperors that from our modern vantage point were “ethnically Armenian” were barely thought of as such. They were Orthodox Christian aristocrats from the Byzantine Empire whose grandparents may have spoken Armenian. For the first time, there was a large group of Armenians who were not members of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Exactly in this crack in the *millet*, the wedge between Armenian and the Armenian Apostolic Church is inserted and for the first time I believe we can genuinely talk about religion in the Ottoman Empire. Prior to this there were recognized confessional groupings, there were theological differences, there were liturgical practices varying between ecclesial boundaries, but there was not a generalizable phenomenon of religion with the conceptual characteristics including the emphasis on a personal belief and concomitant conceptions of self, such as a specific idea of interiority, all so masterfully detailed by Talal Asad (1993). With large numbers of Armenians insisting that they retained an essential Armenian-ness while adhering to a different religion, Catholicism, the rift between religion and ethnicity emerges. The sundering of Armenian from Armenian Apostolic was possible because of an emergent national or ethnic group distinguishable from the “religious” characteristics of that group. In other words, both ethnicity and religion are recognizable as distinct attributes *because* they have been sundered.

This sundering is itself a profound secularization: these new concepts, ethnicity and religion, are precisely the kinds of new concepts Asad associates with a secular episteme.

The Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul, however, was not quite ready to accept the new epistemic realm where one could be both an Armenian and a Catholic. Artinian details the rather violent and repressive tactics used by the Patriarchate in order to coerce Armenian Catholics to return to the fold of the church (Artinian 1988, 33–38). At one level the wayward Gregorians were a tax liability for the Patriarch. But the virulence of the response suggests an existential anxiety, an awareness that Armenians who became Catholic but remained Armenian would inaugurate ecclesial, administrative, theological, and conceptual difficulties.

Eventually, the situation became untenable. Armenian Catholics demanded administrative recognition independent of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate. “In the fall of 1827 the papists, led by Yakob Amire Tenkerea, presented Sultan Mahmud II with a petition to constitute them as a separate community” (Artinian 1988, 37). It took foreign pressure at the close of the Russo-Turkish War in 1829 for this to come to fruition²⁸. Sultan Mahmud II officially recognized the Armenian Catholics as a separate *millet* on May 24, 1831. I quote the imperial edict (translated in Artinian) at length in order to highlight certain aspects of it:

Whereas the tax-paying Catholics of the Empire have hitherto been under the jurisdictions of the Greek and Armenian patriarchs, without a bishop of their own, and on account of the Catholic rites being different from the Greek and Armenian liturgies, have been unable to observe their own rites, and compelled to frequent the churches of the

²⁸ In my Masters Thesis, *Secularism, Christian Minorities, and European Legal Standards in Turkey*, I focused more directly on the influence of European and European pressure on the transformations of the *millets* in the nineteenth century. While I consider this influence paramount, this chapter is concerned with the conceptual categories and their “baggage” which shapes Armenian discourse and action on the idea of an “Armenian community” today. I am thus more interested in detailing how the rift between ethnicity and religion *marks* a secularization which continues to shape thinking today, whereas the earlier paper was more concerned with *how* that secularization occurred.

foreigners and to ask them to perform their marriages and other rites, have experienced great distress and suffering.

Therefore, I, on this 21st day of the month of *Rejeb*, in the year 1246, in order that they may refrain from attending the churches of the foreigners and be able to perform their rites in their own churches, have appointed Yakob C'uxurean as *piskopos* over all Catholics living in my imperial City and other parts of my domains (Artinian 1988, 38)

First and foremost, we note that the need for a Catholic *millet* is due to liturgical differences.

Difference of rite and the “distress” caused by not performing the rites appropriate to their church, not belief or abstract “religious rights” is what grounds the need for a separate administrative and legal grouping. We see the emphasis on taxes stressed throughout this chapter. We also see the confessional/ecclesial rather than ethnic basis of the early reform era *millet*, since Catholics had been under the jurisdiction of both Christian patriarchs. The edict considers the creation of the new *millet* as one of rites and jurisdiction, not rights and representation.

One intriguing result of this new administrative unit is that the Armenian Catholic bishop is given authority over *all* Catholics in the Empire, not simply Armenian Catholics. Practically, this results in some jurisdictional confusion over the extent of the capitulations (wherein legal authority over foreign imperial subjects was retained by the imperial power) as opposed to the *millet* system. It also creates a question of ecclesiastic hierarchy that would need to be adjudicated by the Papacy. Crucially, though, it reinforces the assertion that *millets* proliferated along *religious* lines, given that the jurisdiction was not ethnically restricted.

A parallel development occurred a decade later with the establishment of a Protestant *millet* in 1850. Protestant Christianity emerges among Armenians much later than Catholicism (Arpee 1909). “The first American Protestant mission commenced at Istanbul in 1831,” and “by

1845 the Protestant missionary movement had already made some headway throughout the empire” (Artinian 1988, 40). Armenians were more open to Protestant missionary influence than any other group in the Ottoman Empire. “From its inception, the Protestant missionary activities met the opposition of the Armenian patriarchate,” though this did little to stem the tide of conversions (Artinian 1988, 41–42).

As with the Catholics, an imperial edict established a Protestant *millet* on November 27, 1850. Again, I quote it at length to draw out some crucial differences between the language of the two edicts:

Whereas, hitherto those of my Christian subjects who have embraced the Protestant faith, in consequence of the patriarchs and primates of their former sects, which they have renounced, naturally not being able to attend to their affairs, have suffered much inconvenience and distress;

and

Whereas, by reason of their faith, the abovementioned are already a separate community,

Therefore, it is my Royal compassionate will, that... a respectable and trustworthy person, acceptable to and chosen by themselves, from among their own number, be appointed with the title of Agent of the Protestants, who shall be attached to the Prefecture of the Police (Artinian 1988, 42–43).

Crucially, it is faith, not rites, which frames the distress and inconvenience of Protestant Ottoman subjects. Without denying the role of faith in the history of Christianity broadly, the Protestant emphasis on individual faith and belief is central to the conceptual object “religion.” Different bases for ecclesial organization such as rites and liturgies, are not mentioned with regard to the Protestant Christians. Moreover, in 1850, the Sultan emphasizes “sects.” Though sects are not religions, the edict is shaped more by the conception of abstract difference between equal

entities, sects, that underpins the equivalence at the heart of the concept religion. Instead of rites and churches, we have faith and sects.

In these two edicts and the proliferation of *millet*s in the mid-nineteenth century more broadly, we see a shift in the conceptualization of *millet*. There is a move to see *millet* as, if not exactly coterminous with a “religion,” then at least with a sect. However, I would suggest that the proliferation of *millet* is exactly along the lines of religion, in the modern, secular, understanding interrogated by Talal Asad. Religion, as a new conceptual object, asserts equivalence between diverse institutions, practices, and theologies in that they are all equally recognized as “religions.” “Faith,” increasingly, is that principle of equivalence that marks religion. *Millet*s proliferate exactly along the lines of this conceptual object religion, with faith explicitly invoked in the justification for the establishment of a Protestant *millet*.

The seeming paradox, of course, is that it is exactly at this time that *millet* slowly comes to mean “nation” in the Turkish language. Today, for, instance, the Parliament is called the National Assembly, *Millet Meclisi*, and the right-wing Turkish “Nationalist Action Party” is the *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*. Generally, as I have suggested above, the seeming paradox resolves when we recognize that the secularization that produces the conceptual object religion also produces the conceptual object ethnicity. It is precisely the sundering of previous categories and the articulation of ethnicity/nationality *as separable* from religion that breathes life into both concepts. Nationalization is the flip side of the coin of secularization.

From this point forward, the conceptual basis for the organization of the *millet* is no longer theological and ecclesial, but religious and ethno-national. Importantly, whereas before, the pair theological/ecclesial could be held together in the idea of the *millet* with only minimal

contradiction²⁹, for a secular episteme, the religious and the national, now sundered, are in fact normatively to be kept apart. The norms of legal secularism dictate that the religious and the ethnic should be kept apart, yet *millet* now appears as a concept that inextricably holds them together. Hence, the basis for the *millet* as religious *and* national is not sustainable and instead there is a choice of religious *or* national for the conceptual grounding of the *millet*.

The Legacy of the Millet Concept in the Republic of Turkey

It is this bifurcated concept of *millet* which sets the basis for the minority regime in the Republic of Turkey. From the perspective of the secular episteme, *millet* appears as a conflation between religion and nationality. Instead, I want to stress that the conceptual and legal apparatus for collective organization and management has changed. The argument I am making, then, is not one of “incomplete modernization.” It is not that, *pace* many commentators on the *millet* system, the religious basis for *millet* slowly gave way to the ethno-national, and that the continued salience of religious authority for non-Muslim minorities shows that the *millets* were incompletely modernized. On the contrary. *Both* the religious and the ethno-national emerge simultaneously from the earlier theological-ecclesial basis of the *millet*. This double emergence is itself a modern and secular phenomenon.

The *millet* system, in the early years of the nineteenth century, was an administrative and theological grouping of ecclesial bodies wherein the Patriarch administered and led the *millet* on behalf of the Sultan. By the end of the nineteenth century, a *millet* was grounded by an abstract conceptual object—either nation or religion—held together through a new conception of

²⁹ Minimal, because, as we have seen, the Christological category of non-Chalcedonian (including both Miaphysites and Nestorians) encompassed several different ecclesial hierarchies. So, there were tensions within the *millet* category in its theological/ecclesial instantiation. These tensions, however, did not cause the kind of epistemic anxiety that the religious/ethnic basis of *millet* does.

representation which we will explore in full in the following section. The emergence of these two new abstract conceptual bases for collective existence explains the conflation from the secular perspective: as religion and nation should be separate, *millet*, a concept that holds them together can only be a conflation. Conceptually, *millet* has become problematic. Legally, though, it remains the basis for the organization of non-Muslims at the end of the Ottoman Empire.

Now, we are in a position to see why the Treaty of Lausanne only designates “non-Moslems” for protection in a regime of minority rights. Throughout the nineteenth century, constitutional changes in the Ottoman Empire, influence of European powers exerted in part after military defeats and in part through economic pressure, and the transformation of *millet* as described above slowly introduce the minority concept and a minority rights regime into the Ottoman Empire. This minority regime participates fully in the conceptual apparatus of minority described in the Introduction. Previously, Armenians were not “minorities” in the Ottoman Empire, though we may usefully but anachronistically describe them as such. Legally, they were *dhimmis*, protected non-Muslim subjects in the Islamic Ottoman domains who were members of recognized administrative groupings known as *millets*. With the Treaty of Lausanne, non-Muslims explicitly and legally become minorities. That is, the category of *dhimmi*, understood as an individual member of one of the recognized non-Muslim *millets*, is replaced by that of minority.

However, the content of the category “minority” is effectively filled by the concept of *millet*³⁰. The Treaty of Lausanne and the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey enshrine the

³⁰ Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, noting the continuation of the *millet* concept and the *millet* minority into the Republican era, has coined the phrase “secular *dhimmis* of the Republic” in order to describe the way contemporary minorities in Turkey inhabit the *millet* concept (Ekmekçioğlu 2016).

continued relevance of a “defunct” conceptual category, *millet*, into a strikingly different legal regime. Several authors have tried to make sense of the legacy of the *millet* system in the Republic of Turkey. In what follows, I clarify my position on the legacy of the concept of *millet* and its continued salience for Armenians in Turkey in contrast to some of these provocative and useful contributions. Karpat suggests that

the cultural legacy of the old *millets* survived both among Muslims and non-Muslims even after they reorganized themselves into nation-states, at least by appearance. They regarded the nation as though it were a religious community while claiming language as its distinctive national characteristic. Consequently, nationality, despite claims to the contrary, came to be determined first by religious affiliation and then by language (Karpat 1982, 165)

I find Karpat’s description suggestive, but as should be clear from my preceding discussion, he proceeds along fundamentally secular lines. For Karpat, the “old” *millets* were essentially a “religious community,” whereas in my understanding they were confessional and ecclesial, but not explicitly religious. Rather than the preservation of a timeless “religious essence” smuggled into the new national consciousness, I urge us to see the emergence of *both* a distilled religion and nation as a product of the profound shifts of the nineteenth century.

At the same time, Karpat’s suggestion that nationality “came to be determined first by religious affiliation,” helps clarify the relationship between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the emergent idea of the Armenian nation. The religious component of *millet* becomes essential to a nascent national identity that is nonetheless distinct from the explicitly religious. The Armenian Apostolic Church is not the nation, but the Armenian Apostolic Church is a crucial component of the nation. Though the Apostolic Church secures primacy of place in the conceptual understanding of the new entity “the Armenian nation,” in a sense it is the Apostolic Church which is “captured” by the nation, since religion, a bounded conceptual category that

increasingly is identified with the private sphere (Asad 1993), is merely one component of the nation.

Soner Cagaptay extends this logic to the articulation of the Turkish nation in the Republican era, stressing the continued salience of the *millet* system. “Turkey saw nominal Islam (the Muslim identity and culture shared by these groups) as the glue that bonded them to the Turkish nation” (Cagaptay 2006, 123). That is, in the process of nation-building after the successful War of Independence, the Kemalist government constructed a distinctly Turkish nation (as opposed to an Ottoman one), binding Arabic speakers in the south of the country, displaced Muslims from the Balkans, and Kurdish nomads together in part through Islam as a shared religion (conceived as such). While these non-Turkish-speaking Muslim groups may have been seen as problematic, they were at least seen as assimilable. Cagaptay describes this as “nationalization-through-religion” and he points to the “saliency of the millet system and ethno-religious identities in the former Ottoman lands” (2006, 161). “Rather than confronting the Turks' Muslim faith, Christianity stands as a challenge to their nominal Islamic identity” (Cagaptay 2006, 139).

Since the Treaty of Lausanne enshrined non-Muslims as minorities, the grounding of the Turkish nation in “nominal Islam” is doubly problematic for the status of non-Muslims in the Republic of Turkey. At the abstract conceptual level of nation, or “national identity,” non-Muslims are left outside the bounded group. Perhaps more crucially, there is not just an ideological exclusion from the “Turkish nation” but a restriction on the ability of non-Muslims to claim the legal basis for inclusion in the new Turkish state, that is, to have the full benefits of citizenship. In a pair of co-authored papers, Ahmed İçduygu has connected the legacy of the

millet system for the concept of minority precisely to a legal conception of the citizen. In the earlier paper, he and his coauthors suggest that “there is a reflection of that *millet* system in the Turkish Republic” (İçduygu, Çolak, and Soyarık 1999, 195). Due to the grounding of Turkish *citizenship* in a nominal Islam, non-Muslims were hardly accepted as citizens. In another article, he traces the effects of Republican era legislation on the demographics of Turkey, noting that “non-Muslims remained at the periphery of this political definition” (İçduygu, Toktaş, and Soner 2008, 365). Thus, while Cagaptay stresses the exclusion of non-Muslims from the Turkish *nation* due to the legacy of the *millet* system, this pair of papers suggests that the *millets*, rearticulated as religious minorities, were only partially given the full benefits of Turkish *citizenship*³¹.

Though the Treaty of Lausanne insisted on the full inclusion of non-Muslims in the new Turkish polity *qua* citizens, it also facilitated the continued salience of the concept of *millet* by enshrining them as minorities. In practice, the minority concept in the Republic of Turkey applied only to those groups recognized in the earlier legal regime of the *millet* system. Given that the rights of minorities were articulated at the group level³², the collective organization of non-Muslims remained a salient problem in the Republican era.

However, now, after the transformations of the nineteenth century, the non-Muslim populations, enshrined as minorities, are confronted by new demands and new possibilities for

³¹ As I mention in the Introduction, one of the main goals of the dissertation is to articulate modes of belonging available to minority citizens *other* than that of the political belonging associated with modern citizenship. Though citizenship is the pervasive and therefore obliging mode of belonging in the contemporary world of the nation-state, citizenship emerges historically and remains a contingent arrangement among other possible modes of belonging and feeling emplaced. Julie Chu’s work offers incredible insight into the way contemporary migration relates to modes of belonging and the ability “to be emplaced” (Chu 2006, 2010). For a thorough and convincing treatment of the historical emergence of our modern concept of citizenship, see Keechang Kim’s *Aliens in Medieval Law* (Kim 2000).

³² See the discussion in the Introduction regarding minority rights. Minority rights, unlike the later human rights regime, protected not individuals, but groups.

grounding collective life. There are, we have seen, competing (and conceptually exclusive) demands to organize either as a religion or as a nation. Moreover, as we will detail in the following short chapter, a particular mode of political representation has become seemingly inescapable—there is an obliging character to the demand that minorities should be represented to and by the state.

A set of possible demands and anxieties emerges from not only the continued salience of the *millet* concept, but also from the sedimented transformations contained in the concept itself. Although the ecclesial hierarchy delineated along theological lines might be able to continue to organize as a church, the centrality of the Patriarchate for a later conception of the *millet* and for the subsequent bounding along ethnic and religious lines leads to new vistas for collective action. How are Armenians in Turkey to organize and act collectively given this legacy?

The explicitly secular nature of Turkish law confronts the centrality of the ecclesial hierarchy for a broader conception of the Armenian minority. Political organization along religious lines was curtailed in the early years of the Republic, not just for non-Muslims, but generally. The anxiety generated by political secularism over the potential public and political expression of religion allows the government to exert sovereignty by curtailing such public expression. Armenian Catholics, Armenian Protestants, and areligious individuals all oppose the hierarch of one sect as the representative of the entire ethnic group. Likewise, there are many devout Armenian Christians who also feel that the basis for “the Armenian community” and for any collective action should not be the church hierarchy itself.

How, then, should Armenians in Turkey organize collectively? The Treaty of Lausanne and a collective regime of minority rights forces such collective organization. The legacy of the

millet system and inherited institutions and practices hold together ethnic and religious bases for collective organization that the secular episteme wrenches apart. Is it possible to harness the received institutions without addressing the ethnic/religious divide?

Millet and Debates about the “Armenian Community” Today

This is the legal and conceptual landscape in which Armenians in Turkey today find themselves³³. Legally, they are full citizens of the Republic of Turkey. In practice, the continued salience of the *millet* concept grafted onto a collective implementation of a minority rights regime has curtailed inclusion in both the Turkish nation and provided the basis for restrictions on rights as citizens. In the rest of the dissertation, we will follow specific institutions and practices of collective Armenian life in Turkey. I take these to be practical—though not always self-conscious—attempts to live meaningful *collective* lives as Armenians.

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to avoid referring to the “Armenian community,” preferring *collective* life. Community, as discussed in the Introduction, is a notoriously theoretically-laden term. The point of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the *millet* concept has been the overarching principle of Armenian collective existence in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey³⁴. However, precisely because of the conceptual

³³ Though I have skipped over the entirety of the history of the Republic of Turkey, my purpose in this chapter is not provide a comprehensive history of Armenians in Turkey but to outline the conceptual categories for thinking “the Armenian community” operative today. While work on Armenians in post-Genocide Turkey is still sparse, there are a few excellent studies (Ekmekçioğlu 2016; Suciyan 2016). The basic legal and organizational conundrums facing Armenian collective organization in Turkey today are set in the early years of the Republic. Certain legal developments added to material hardships and feelings of exclusion, but the legal fundamentals were unchanged. In the following chapter, we will see details of a specific institutional curtailing of Armenian life and encounter some of the shifts that have occurred during the Republican Era.

³⁴ The other major term, absent from this chapter, is the Armenian term *azk*. Like *millet* in Turkish, in Armenian today it translates readily as “nation.” However, the term can be found in the earliest Armenian texts in the fourth century, where it is best translated simply as “people.” As Professor Stephan Astourian told me long ago, a thorough interrogation into the concept of *azk* should be a preliminary step for any complete discussion of “Armenian nationalism.” This work is still waiting to be written.

and legal baggage of the term *millet*, Armenian leaders in Turkey today are grappling with other ways of organizing and understanding Armenian collective activity. Throughout the rest of the dissertation, we will encounter direct attempts at collective Armenian flourishing given the parameters set by Turkish secular law, the legacy of the *millet* system, and the tradition of Armenian Apostolic Christianity.

Part III: Modern Secular Representation

“Are we able to say that, ‘The Turkish-Armenian community, looking from the outside, appears as a religious community and is represented by the office/authority of the Patriarch, but that much of the community is democratic and the actual leaders of the community are civilians?’” asks Hrant Dink at the beginning of an article called “Concerning Civilianization (2)” (Dink 2009, 159). The article appears in a collection of Dink’s writings in the section “*Cemaat mi. Toplum mu?*” Both of these words can be translated as community, though *cemaat* has a distinctly religious connotation to it. In the quote, Dink uses only the word *toplum*—where I have translated “religious community” above, he adds the modifier *dini*, religious, to *toplum*, rather than using *cemaat*.

Cemaat, “religious community,” also translatable as “congregation,” when used for Christians, unmistakably invokes the church, and a conception of community grounded in the church. It is precisely the kind of ecclesial bounding of the community described throughout this chapter. Dink, through his question and through the framing of *cemaat* or *toplum*, raises the possibility of different forms of collective organization other than the ecclesiastically bounded

In this chapter, though, the emphasis is on not only the conceptual, but the legal apparatus by which Armenian collective existence in Turkey is possible. I am less interested here in “the Armenian nation” than “Armenians of Turkey.”

yegeghets 'i, and highlights the limitations of the conceptual baggage of the idea of *millet*. *Cemaat* (or *toplum dini*) partakes fully in the conceptual world of the *millet* system. Given the more recent association of *millet* with “nation,” I would even go so far as to assert that *cemaat*, today, connotes the kind of “religious community” which the early reform *millet* system marked out. In the Christian context, *cemaat* could very reasonably be the *ecclesia*. *Toplum*, on the other hand, translates “society” as well “community.” Hence, its conceptual world is not the *millet* system, but modern social sciences in the Durkheimian tradition (Özbudun, Şafak, and Altuntek 2005, 122–26). In essence, then question Dink asks is distilled to, “Are Armenians still basically a *millet* of the late nineteenth century with a “religious” essence, or are they a community or society made up of individual citizens who act in concert at times?”

Crucially, Dink also raises a related question about the status and make-up of the community, that of the representative status of the Patriarch. In what he calls the “external view” of the community, the community appears to be represented by the Patriarch, presumably to the Turkish government. That is, the Armenian community, on the model of the *cemaat*, has its unity through its representation by the Patriarch to the state. In the previous sections of this chapter, though, we hardly encountered the question of representation at all. During debates about the so-called Armenian Constitution the possibility arose. Yet for the most part, the conception of collective action articulated through the representational status of the Patriarch was foreign to the *millet* as *ecclesia*.

What I will argue in this section is that the idea that the *millet* was an abstract entity bounded only through its representation by either the Patriarch or another representative body emerges in tandem with the twin secular concepts of religion and nation. Alongside these new

concepts, a novel form of representation became the compelling and obliging mode of constituting the *millet*. I want to emphasize that there were other forms of mediation and representation before this secularization. We will see this in the idea of the Patriarch as the agent (or representative) of the Sultan. Hence, it is not representation tout court that concerns us, but what might be called “modern secular representation.” A particular political technology of representation becomes the obliging mode of constituting a bounded group. In what follows, I trace the emergence of this modern secular representation among Armenians in Turkey while I also characterize its distinctiveness.

Some have suggested that the Patriarchs and Grand Rabbi were always the *representatives* of their respective *millet* groups (Abu Jaber 1967, 214; Levonian 1952, 90). That, in the pre-reform era *millet* system (to the extent that it was systematic) they were recruited to administrative purposes seems clear; that they led large ecclesial structures central to the lives of thousands of imperial subjects is independent of the Ottoman administrative use of those structures. However, the claim that they were representatives of the *millet* smuggles in a set of assumptions about community organization, the idea of community as such, and politics that might obfuscate the actual functioning of the administration and the role of the leading clerics.

In what follows, I elucidate what the claim that, say, the Armenian Patriarch was the representative of the “Armenian *millet*,” entails—that is, what is supposedly being explained by calling the hierarch a representative. Second, in comparison with some of the duties and statements of Patriarchs, I argue that at the beginning of the reform era this idea of representation is misleading. Finally, through the transformations of the *millet* system (and the Armenian *millet*

in particular) described in detail in the previous section, I demonstrate that just such an idea of representation did begin to take hold.

In the statement, “the head of each millet was the representative of that millet at the Ottoman court as though representing a foreign power” (Abu Jaber 1967, 214), the clause “as though representing a foreign power” is suggestive. Perhaps the quote refers to an ambassador as the representative of the sovereign of another state such as “Western European ambassadors sent by monarchs [who] represented the person of their sovereign and were supposed to be treated with the same dignity as the ruler” (Middleton 2015, 1:36). Sovereign authority, embodied in the person of the monarch, could be delegated to the ambassador, the monarch’s representative. In this instance, the representative is guardian of another’s authority, able to speak on behalf the sovereign. This conception of representation is more suggestive of the term “agent,” such as the way Rousseau’s magistrates act on behalf of the monarch (Rousseau 1997). If this is what is meant for the *millet* system in the early years of the nineteenth century then it is dangerously anachronistic. Perhaps the Patriarch did speak on behalf of the Armenian *millet*, but he could not embody an authority delegated to him by a sovereign. For in that case, we would have to posit the nation as sovereign, and this vision of popular sovereignty was not yet current in the Ottoman Empire³⁵.

Rather, the “as though representing a foreign power” could be taken to mean that the Patriarch himself would be the embodied sovereign authority of the Armenian *millet*, not as delegate, but as monarch. This surely fits descriptions of the Patriarch having the power of corporeal punishment over the members of his church (Artinian 1988, 16). Yet as both medieval

³⁵ See (Davison 1968) and the discussion below.

theories of the embodiment of sovereignty (Kantorowicz 2016) and Rousseau’s insistence that despite the fact that monarchy is an administration in which “an individual represents a collective being” (Rousseau 1997, 97) that sovereignty itself is never represented, the idea that the monarch represents sovereign authority—either his own or popular sovereignty—is not quite right.

Here, we can follow Rousseau’s idea of the monarch as an individual who represents a collective being. We are still left with the question of how to characterize this representing, since it is clearly not the “standing in for” of either an ambassador or the monarch as representative of popular sovereign authority. Artinian says that the “Ottoman government recognized the *millet* leaders as the *voice of their people*” (1988, 15, emphasis mine). To the extent that the Patriarch was a representative of the *millet* during the early reform years, then, we should conceive of it in this manner. Namely, the Patriarch was recognized as representing the entirety of the *millet* (an individual who represents a collective being) by being the voice of the entire *millet* to the Sublime Porte. We can emphasize that the effectiveness of this form of representation is determined by the recipient of the representation, that is to say, the Patriarch represents the *millet* to the Sultan, rather than in some abstract form.

If this, then, is what is meant that the Patriarch is the representative of the *millet*, I would offer the idea conditional support. However, the metaphor of representing the *millet* as though a foreign power is misleading on two accounts. First, it smuggles in an idea of popular sovereignty not yet current in the Ottoman Empire. Second, it plays into the description—sometimes adopted by the Empire and even the Turkish Republic—of the *millets* (or internal minorities in the case of the Republic) as essentially foreign nationals. It would seem, then, the idea of the Patriarch as the representative of the *millet* is limited, misleading, or both.

How, then, should we characterize the authority of the Patriarchate and the unity of the *millet* in the early nineteenth century? I offer Artinian's description at length, based on an imperial *berat* (title of privilege) to Patriarch Grigor Pasmacean in 1764:

According to this imperial document the patriarch exercised absolute authority over the Dioceses of the Armenian church in Antaolia and Rumelia. He could appoint, depose, imprison, and exile primates, bishops, priests, and deacons at will. Similarly, he had jurisdiction in matters of personal status, divorce, inheritance, guardianship, and no Ottoman official could interfere in his decision. Also, he had the authority to grant permission for the construction of new churches, monasteries, schools, and printing establishments. Moreover, all the publications were to have his official seal of approval (1988, 16).

Additionally, the Patriarch was involved in tax collection, as mentioned above. Artinian, citing only older Armenian sources, says that the "it was through him that the sultan collected the *millet's* annual tribute of 100,000 *akce* (1988, 17). This suggests that the collective sum of taxes imposed on the entire *millet* had to be raised by the Patriarch himself through whatever means necessary, in exact parallel to the broader tax-farming system current in the Ottoman Empire.

What strikes me about the first set of prerogatives is that they are precisely ecclesial. While the imprisonment or exile of clergymen exceeds the ecclesial, the ability to appoint or depose them, like the authority over dioceses, is simply a reassertion of the Patriarch as the head of a church. In many ways, then, the authority of the Patriarch up to the nineteenth century was precisely the authority of a chief bishop within his jurisdiction as described in Armenian canons—with some perks of Ottoman legal pluralism in addition.

If anything, thinking with the ambassador as paradigm for sovereign representation, rather than the Patriarch being the representative of the *millet* to the Sultan, the Patriarch was the Sultan's representative to the *millet*. He exercised the authority of the Sultan, including exile, corporeal punishment, and the collection of taxes. Members of the church would encounter the

state in large part through the hierarchy of the church. We can then describe the legal pluralism of the Ottoman Empire as the situation whereby the Patriarch was granted legal jurisdiction to exercise imperial authority on behalf of the Sultan over the ecclesial entity where he already had ecclesial authority.

We see, then, that rather than as representative of the *millet*, the Armenian Patriarch until the mid-nineteenth century is better described as a representative of the Sultan *to the millet*, granted imperial legal jurisdiction over an increasing set of ecclesial divisions, both within the Armenian Apostolic Church and between other non-Chalcedonian Christian churches. When we assess what certain authors mean when they suggest that the Patriarch was the representative of the *millet*, the term is either misleading or anachronistic. At the same time, in the notion that the Patriarch “speaks for” or on behalf of the *millet* to the Sultan, we can discern the seeds of a concept of representation more along the lines of “modern secular representation.” Indeed, in the reforms of the *millets* during the nineteenth century we see that the nascent groups become solidified into the recognizable *millets* of the late nineteenth century that are often presented as the timeless instantiations in the earlier literature. This solidification of groups with “fuzzy” edges and competing jurisdictions into bounded *millets* occurs exactly through a robust, modern secular concept of representation.

Briefly, I follow the development of the so-called Armenian Constitution to demonstrate the increasing importance of a concept of nation grounded in the *millet(s)* yet distinguishable from them. It is also, as we will see, in this document that the principle of representation, as an explicit and clear doctrine for the organization of a bounded group emerges. Crucially, then, nation, modern secular representation, and religion all emerge as actionable categories for

thinking about Armenian collective existence at the same time in the mid-nineteenth century. All of them are wrapped up in the administrative system of the *millet*. In part, the continued force of these concepts for Armenians in Turkey is due to the continued salience of the *millet* system.

Artinian gives a more thorough description of the debates and events leading up to the approval of the “Armenian National Constitution” by the National Assembly on May 24, 1860 than is necessary here. He begins with the impetus for reform and the changes in the Armenian Apostolic *millet* after the Edict of Gülhane. The abolition of tax-farming and other changes in taxation in the Ottoman Empire led to a financial crisis at the Patriarchate which Artinian insinuates is the main cause of change within the Apostolic *millet*. The other crucial cause is the insistence of the Ottoman government (Artinian 1988, 52).

Within the Apostolic *millet*, several councils made up of the two major classes of wealthy members of the *millet* came into existence and were dissolved during the years between the Edict of Gülhane in 1839 and the Hatt-i Hümayun on February 18, 1856. Mostly, these were advisory boards, but they were also crucial experiments in the self-government of the *millet*. Many intellectuals on the councils had been educated in Italy or France and had constitutional and democratic inclinations. The individual and arbitrary power of the Patriarch was curtailed. Advisory councils and lay notables made financial decisions for the *millet*. “From 1847-1860 the affairs of the Armenian *millet* were managed by [the Supreme Civil Council and the Spiritual Council], whose elections were held biennially by the general assembly” (Artinian 1988, 74). In the course of a few decades, an explicitly democratic, representative body now exerted significant influence over the affairs of the Armenian *millet*.

Here, in these councils, we begin to see the first glimmerings of a new kind of representative principle in two senses. First, the Armenian intellectuals of the time asserted that the diverse interests of the *millet*³⁶ should be represented in a council that would then make decisions on behalf of the *millet*. Here, representation invokes the ability of a smaller group of people to speak for or on behalf of a larger group, as well as an abrogation of certain responsibilities in favor of the smaller body making decisions on behalf of the larger. Representation is a matter of speaking and making decisions on behalf of. The second sense of representation emphasizes the principle that the smaller body is somehow comparable to the larger body on a small scale. This is often referred to as “proportional representation.”³⁷ In the Armenian case, it translated to different provinces having different number of members in the grand assembly.

Clearly, these councils are a restricted and elite group of people. The grand assembly itself was made up of notables that arguably only represented (spoke on behalf of the interests of) other monied members of a given region as opposed to rural farmers or peasants. Such a body would “not [be] representative of all the people of the empire, but only of the higher civil, religious and military officials in and out of office who might be available in the capital at a given moment” (Davison 1968, 95). In this formulation of the emergence of a principle of representation in the government of the Ottoman Empire, an idea of representation is grounded in “the people.” In the Armenian case, we could say this would mean the entire *millet*. Yet the identification of such a group as “the people” or “the *millet*” depends in large part on the

³⁶ Although, to be fair, we are here still considering a rather restricted population of Armenians. This is comparable to the slow extension of universal suffrage throughout the world.

³⁷ See, for instance, Constable’s discussion of jury constitution (1994).

bounded representation. There is not a modern, secular representative principle at work in earlier conceptions of *millet* because the group is isomorphic to the ecclesial structure. The Patriarch does not represent the church, he is the head of the church³⁸.

Millet is slowly reconceived as something different than an ecclesial body loosely grouped together for administrative purposes. It becomes an abstract bounded group without a recognizable organization, which is to say, it is more than merely the church and the hierarchy of the church. Representation, then, is crucial for the *millet* in two senses. A *millet* as *ecclesia* is a potentially concrete thing. *Millet* as nation or religion instead gains its unity through its representation exactly as bounded entity. This first sense of representation articulates the abstract entity as more than a collection of individuals through the positing of certain essential, identifying characteristics. In the second sense of representation, the unity of the abstract conceptual entity coheres through representatives, those who can speak on behalf of the group. The multiplicity of the group is gathered together in the figure of the representative.

It is this second aspect of representation that is operative in the description of the Patriarch as the representative of the *millet*. This is why it is anachronistic to speak of the Patriarch as the representative of the *millet* until the mid-nineteenth century. *Millet* as *ecclesia* affords no abstract body that must be gathered together in unity. To the extent that it does, the metaphor of the body precludes the gap whereby the Patriarch speaks for/stands for the group as a whole. Only when the isomorphism *millet* and *ecclesia* is wrenched apart is there a need to reimagine the relation of the Patriarch. Tellingly, “the so-called Armenian Constitution,

³⁸ The metaphor of the body, crucial to medieval political theory (Kantorowicz 2016), is also central to the imagery of the church as the body of Christ. St. Paul inaugurates this aspect of Christian ecclesiology in I Corinthians 12.

promulgated in 1863, restricted the patriarch's power within the community but, *for the first time*, it formally recognized him as the sole representative of the entire Armenian population of the empire" (K. B. Bardakjian 1982, 96, emphasis added).

Though we have seen how *millets* proliferated along religious lines, and I have suggested that this requires a concomitant emergence of the concept of ethnicity such that Armenian and Armenian Apostolic can be thought separately, we are left with the question of how the Armenian Apostolic Patriarch became the representative not just of the Apostolic *millet* reconceived as a religion, but of the "the entire Armenian population of the empire." In the debates and the details of the Armenian Constitution of 1863, we see emergent Armenian nationalist intellectuals rearticulating the Apostolic *millet* as the Armenian nation. That is, we have the capture of the concept of nation by the Armenian Apostolic *millet*. The possibility of an Armenian nation depends on an essential characteristic that is wrenched apart from the Armenian Apostolic Church, which occurs through the proliferation of *millets* along religious lines such that there are now Armenian Catholics and Armenian Protestants. Simultaneously, the Apostolic *millet* captured the representation of the nation when the Patriarch was declared the representative of all the Armenian people.

These debates about representation and the role of the Armenian Patriarchate within the representation of the community and nation continue to the present day. In this chapter, I have demonstrated the continued salience of the *millet* concept to conceptions of Armenian collective existence in Istanbul today. In the following chapter, we move to the central material—physical and financial—institution for Armenians in Turkey, the *vakıf*. The debates about representation, the basis for the Armenian community, and the potential forms of collective organization and

action available to the community discussed in this chapter are played out on the stage of the *vakıf*.

Chapter Two: ***Vakıfs and the Material Basis of the Minority Community in Istanbul***

Looking out over the Bosphorus on a pleasant Spring day, I sipped tea with Laki Vingas, who had only just recently decided to leave his position as the Minority Representative on the Foundation Council of the Directorate General of Foundations, the organization that oversees all the foundations in the Republic of Turkey. As long as I looked past the walls or ignored the lingering incense, I could have been anywhere along the *sahil*, the seaside, perhaps further south in the posh neighborhood of Arnavutköy. Patches of green, trees, and the slight breeze all combined to make the meeting pleasant as I concentrated while he explained the legal details of how non-Muslim foundations worked in the Republic of Turkey. The incense, however, reminded me of where it was we were meeting: the Greek Orthodox Cemetery in Yeniköy.

Vingas and I had e-mailed and talked on the phone for a few weeks, and when I finally met him at one of the neighborhood churches, he told me that he had deliberately wanted me to visit that day: in celebration of the Feast of Ascension, there was a delicious dish associated with the Feast. After meeting and talking with a number of people, including a young Greek woman from Greece who was working on a Master's Degree in "Turkish Studies," we drove up the hill away from the Bosphorus and with a young priest to the cemetery. Vingas explained that after the Feast, it was appropriate to pray for all the deceased. I joined Vingas, the priest, and a couple others in the cemetery in front of his family's gravestones. Then we settled in to talk.

As the first representative of the minority foundations ever to be included in the Foundation Council and as a trained lawyer fluent in at least Turkish, Greek, and English, his descriptions of the legal framework for the foundations were invaluable. These “foundations,” a translation of the Turkish word *vakıf* (itself an adaptation of the Arabic *waqf*) include a wide array of institutions. One of the basic ways the Directorate General of Foundations categorizes these institutions is by management type: fused, annex, community, and new. Most relevant for this chapter are the “community” foundations, the non-Muslim foundations established during the Ottoman era. These are the foundations which Vingas represented, and they include the cemetery where we met.

At the same time, the “new” foundations are another crucial category for Armenians and other non-Muslim minorities in the Republic of Turkey. In the immediate aftermath of the foundation of the Republic (1923), it was not possible to establish new *vakıfs*. Instead, the category of *dernek*, or association was created. After a 2008 law (discussed in detail below), it was again possible to found *vakıfs*, and the “new foundations” are just those foundations established during the Republican era and recognized in 2008. The Hrant Dink Foundation, established to further the mission of the slain editor of the newspaper *Agos*, one of my principal ethnographic sites, is registered as a new foundation.

Thus, there are three major legal categories for non-Muslim collective institutions. There are *derkneks*, associations, and there are *vakıfs*, of which the relevant categories for non-Muslims are the “community foundations” and the “new foundations.” The vast majority of collective life for non-Muslims in the Republic of Turkey is mobilized through these three categories of institution. Only the press, described in the following chapter, has a financial and material basis

that is not in some way dependent upon the *vakıfs*—and to a lesser extent, the *derneks*. Though the category of *dernek* organizes gatherings and aspects of public life, financially it is the *vakıfs* which are crucial. As I demonstrate in this chapter, this material support causes the *vakıfs* to be dynamic sites of collective engagement.

By meeting at the cemetery, part of one of the “community foundations” which make up the bulk of the physical and financial support of the foundations and associations, Vingas helped me to see the centrality of the *vakıfs*. Perhaps my role as an ordained deacon of the Armenian Apostolic Church obfuscated my recognition of the *vakıf* as an operative category. By the time I met with Vingas, I had become accustomed to the idea of the cemetery as potential meeting space important for collective life. After all, on my tour of Armenian Istanbul described in the first chapter, the Şişli Armenian Cemetery was a major highlight. Yet I understood the cemetery as something disconnected from churches, in the same way that I was always a little puzzled by the presence of the small chapel on the grounds of the *Surp Pırgiç* Armenian Hospital. For me, as a deacon raised in America, a cemetery was a cemetery, a hospital a hospital, and, most importantly, a church was a church. What could possibly hold all these disparate sites together?

Not only was I disinclined to see the connection between the cemetery and the church as anything other than liturgical, for instance in the Armenian Apostolic Church’s three-part funeral service where the group of mourners and clerics moves from the house to the church to the cemetery, but, as a deacon, I always saw the physical spaces only through the lens of what I took to be the “primary,” usually explicitly “religious” function. That is, whenever I went to a church building, even for a lecture or meeting in one of the other buildings on the grounds, I always thought that I was going to church. My confusion over what seemed like disparate categories of

buildings—the church, the hospital, the school—being held together was related to my insistence on the primacy of the church.

In conversation with Vingas, through his invitation and the location of our interview, I began to conceive of the *vakıf* as a central category that held these things together. He insisted I come all the way up the Bosphorus to Yeniköy—an hour-long bus ride in good traffic—and we only sat down to “get the facts” after he made sure I had spent some time seeing the churches, hearing the prayers, tasting the food, and smelling the incense that were integral to the work he did as a member of the Foundation Council. Though his job often took him to Ankara, Vingas understood that the foundations were fundamentally sites for collective, communal engagement. They were the places where people came together, and the finances behind them funded activities such as meals for feast days.

Over time, I realized that the foundations were not only the churches and cemeteries I frequented as a deacon of the Armenian Apostolic Church. They were complex and often wealthy institutions supporting a number of projects and causes, the management of which was constitutive of the minority communities. Everyone engaged with them in some way, and they were also sites where the Turkish state encountered its minority citizens. As we will see in this chapter, debates over *vakıf* management were also debates about the make-up of the minority communities, the possibility for any form of collective action within the community, and the question of how to engage with the state *qua* minority group.

These debates were sometimes, but not always, about the ability to represent the non-Muslim communities. In this, we see the obliging character of the modern secular representation described in the previous chapter. If collective, communal action occurred through the

foundations, did that make them representatives of the Armenian or other non-Muslim populations? One major argument revolved around the fact that there were almost no women in leadership roles, and one group took up the position that women should be *represented* in the foundations given the *vakıfs*' outsized role in public life. We will also see how the *vakıfs* emerged as a potential alternative to the classic site of communal representation described in the previous chapter, the Patriarchate. Both the representative status of the foundations *vis-à-vis* the minority populations and the ability of the foundations to represent the community to the government apparatus were contentious topics during the course of my fieldwork.

Yet we will see that for many members of the Armenian population, the *vakıfs* were fundamentally unproblematic sites for collective gatherings or were the material support of the more traditional institutions of the church and Patriarchate. For them, the foundations were sites of potential public or collective action, but certainly not spaces for political action or reconceptualizing collective action. Often in this context the question of representation did not arise. Over the course of this chapter, we will chart some of these debates about how to use the foundations and what their mission should be. We will see both debates about representation and ways of framing the foundations where this question was irrelevant.

Ultimately, I demonstrate in the chapter that the *vakıf* provides the material basis for different, often competing, forms of Armenian collective action through the way the category holds together seemingly disparate activities and sites. There is a fundamental split among the Armenian population between those who think the *vakıfs* should be sites from which to launch a form of public politics, and those for whom the foundations are communal supports of a different

kind. Yet both of these groups articulate and enact these divergent ideas of collective action through the *vakıfs*.

Vakıf and Foundation in the Republic of Turkey Today
The *Surp Pırgiç* Armenian Hospital in the old city of Istanbul, a sprawling campus housing some of the best doctors and medical service in the country, is one of the “community foundations,” the *cemaat vakıfları*¹, which Vingas represents. With prominent revenue-generating properties around the city and excellent medical care, the foundation is one of the wealthiest of all the Armenian foundations, and indeed, among all the “community foundations.” Between the entrance in the front and the cafeteria in the back, there is a shaded courtyard filled with benches. On hot summer days, elderly patients, employees on break, and visitors sit scattered under the shade chatting, often speaking Armenian, so rarely heard on the streets outside. From the main courtyard, in addition to the cafeteria and several hospital wings, there is also an entrance to the hospital’s museum, detailing the illustrious history of the institution since its foundation in 1832 by famed notable and friend of the Sultan, Amira Bezciyan. On the other side of the administration building, up a set of stairs, is a second, smaller, courtyard, at the center of which is a beautiful brick chapel. On Mondays, priests, deacons, and laypeople come in and out of the small church, with strains of melodic hymns such as *Aravod Looso*, “O, Morning Light,” coming from inside. Perhaps more than any other *vakıf*, the bustling hospital with the small, brick church, encapsulates the different services and sociabilities held together by the institution of the foundation.

¹ Note that the word here that describes the “community foundations” is *cemaat*, which I translated as “religious community” in the previous chapters.

We will return to the courtyard of the Hospital, as well as the chapel in the smaller courtyard. First, though, we need a sense of this category of institution, the *vakıf*, that brings together doctors and deacons, medicine and museums. A quick glance at the “Organizational Structure” of the Directorate General of Foundations² shows the incredible bureaucratic mechanism undergirding the system of foundations of Turkey, and can serve as a metonym for the complexity of the system itself. The Directorate General of Foundations is one of a number of Turkish governmental institutions given the designation “Directorate General.” These are institutions subsidiary to a Ministry, such as the “Directorate General of Revenues” which falls under the “Ministry of Finance.” In the case of the Directorate General of Foundations, the body falls directly under the purview of the office of the Prime Minister.

The presentation of the organizational structure emphasizes regional jurisdictions and bureaucratic divisions, but Vingas’ unique position is hidden as one of the fifteen “Foundation Council Members.” In other words, the division by management type described above is not present in this organizational structure, obscuring fundamental legal differences not only between “old” and “new” foundations, but eliding entirely the unique category of the euphemistically named “Community Foundations.”

“Foundation,” the official translation by the Ministry of Foundations, is the Turkish word *vakıf*, itself a Turkification of the Arabic *waqf*. The institution of *waqf*³ is also translated as endowment, as seen in the definition of *waqf* as “a privately owned property [that] is endowed

² Accessed online from the English version of the website for the “Directorate General of the Foundations” on 5/2/16. <http://www.vgm.gov.tr/sayfa.aspx?id=81>

³ Throughout, I mostly use the Turkish term *vakıf*. However, especially when dealing with the early history of the institution, or in comparison with instantiations outside the Ottoman Empire or Turkey, I will use the Arabic *waqf*.

for a charitable purpose in perpetuity and the revenue generated is spent for this purpose” (Çizakça 2000, 1). While “endowment” emphasizes the charitable moment of the founding of the *waqf* as well as its existence in perpetuity, “foundation” does a better job of capturing the complex constellation of multiple properties and endowments grouped together around a single institution, itself also generally thought of as *waqf*. For instance, the famous Blue Mosque is designated *vakıf* property, but various other revenue-generating properties that support its upkeep are also part of the *vakıf*. As will become clear, I am more interested in the collective and communal activities that center around *vakıfs* than I am in the question of Islamic injunctions to charity, laws of inheritance, or fungible property. For this reason, I generally retain the description of *vakıf* as foundation.

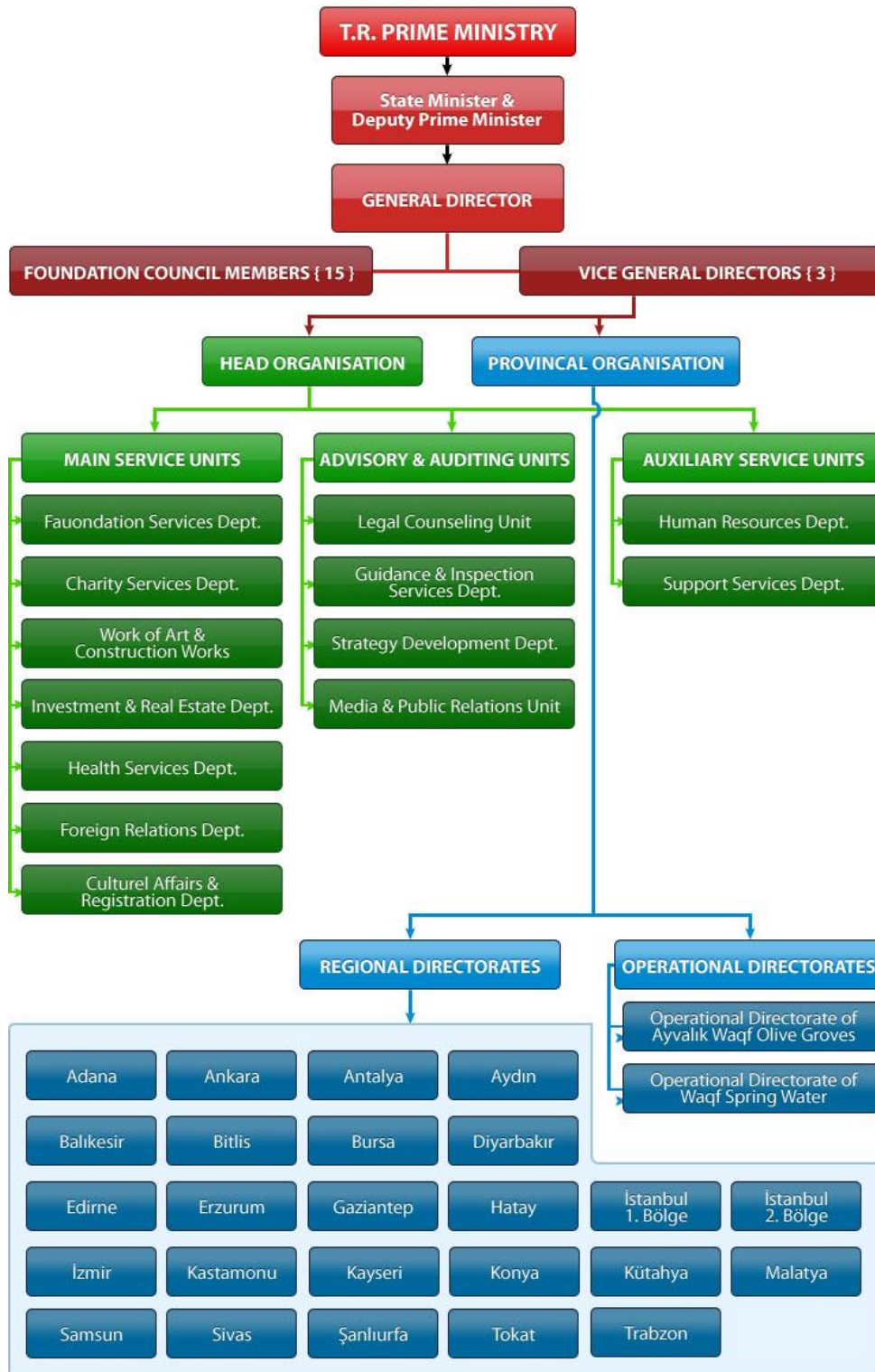


Figure 2.
Organizational Structure of the Ministry of Foundations <http://www.vgm.gov.tr/sayfa.aspx?id=81>

Often, *waqf* gets translated as “religious foundation.” As with the attribution of *millet* as “religious community” which I discuss in Chapter One, I find the added descriptor “religious” problematic. At a purely empirical level, many of the charitable foundations have scant little to do with religion, other than being constituted according to a broadly Islamic notion of charity grounded in the Quran and relying on a category developed through an Islamic legal framework. For instance, we have already seen that the largest Armenian *vakıf* in Istanbul is the *Surp Pırgiç* (Holy Saviors) Hospital. Ascribing an essentially religious character to a hospital seems spurious at best—even if there is an Armenian Apostolic Chapel situated on the grounds⁴.

More theoretically, though, I follow Talal Asad’s argument that “there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constituent elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is itself the historical product of discursive processes” (1993, 29). One of the broader concerns of the dissertation is to demonstrate exactly the limitations and possibilities for considering Armenians (and other non-Muslim minorities in Turkey) as specifically *religious* minorities. In other words, while there are certainly appropriate instances to apply the moniker “religious” to characterize institutions or groups, Asad helps us recognize the assumptions and characteristics that sneak in with such an attribution. “Religion” becomes an explanation without requiring the explanatory work, such that describing something as a “religious foundation” already insinuates forms of action, practice, organization, etc. In the case of many of the *vakıfs* I describe, these assumptions obscure more than they illuminate.

⁴ The more interesting genealogical project would be to trace how exactly these foundations came to be described as *religious* foundations. What core aspects of *waqf* align with the crucial assumptions about what constitutes the religious? Is it simply the association with Islamic law (itself given a problematic religious designation in a way that subtly undermines its claim as law—and hence different from ethical religious injunctions)? Nada Moumtaz, in her dissertation *Modernizing Charity, Remaking Islamic Law* (2012), gives a partial answer to this question by tracking legal attempts to distinguish *religious* forms of charity at the heart of the establishment of a new foundation.

This chapter focuses specifically on non-Muslim *vakıfs*. This legal development took a specific form in the Ottoman Empire, though there are instances of non-Muslim *waqfs* in the Mughal Empire and India⁵. Grounded in Islamic injunctions to charity and articulated through Islamic legal traditions, there is no obvious reason why the category would be extended to the non-Muslim population. Though the administrative utility of *vakıf* as a legal category lies in the ability to maintain large-scale collective-use buildings and projects and to regulate immovable property, there are certainly other possibilities for this regulation and upkeep. Extending a legal category developed within an *Islamic* injunction to charity to non-Muslim subjects and groups opened new legal vistas. As we will see, this affords both possibilities and limitations for the non-Muslim populations in their dealings with each other, with the population at large, and with the state.

In what follows, I first trace the historical development of the *waqf* institution, its instantiation as the Ottoman *vakıf*, and the unique institution of non-Muslim foundations in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, today's "community foundations." While in many ways the "community foundations" continue to afford the same possibilities for action and are platforms for similar debates over administration of resources as during the Ottoman era, the legal landscape of the secular Turkish Republic also transformed the *vakıfs*. In particular, the status of the deed establishing the foundations became relevant in order to enact a difference

⁵ Rashid, in *Waqf Management in India*, states that "Islamic law, however, clearly allows a non-Muslim to create *waqf* subject to certain conditions: *Hanafi* and *Maliki* law requires that the object must be valid both according to Islamic law as well as according to the personal law of the dedicator (*wāqif*); *Shafi'is* and *Hanbalis* require conformity with Islamic law also" (Rashid 2006, 94–95). He is discussing this in the context of the 1995 *Waqf Act* in India which revised a number of laws surrounding foundations in India. He makes explicit the changes with regard to non-Muslims and thus also spells out that previously non-Muslims were allowed to found *waqfs*: "Many *awqāf* were created in India in the past by non-Muslims, and this good tradition should be allowed to continue" (95).

between Muslim and non-Muslim foundation and to sequester the non-Muslim foundations, the community *vakıfs*, in just such a way that debates about the constitution of the community explored in the previous chapters play out in large part on the stage of the *vakıfs*. The continuity of the non-Muslim *vakıf* into the Republican period profoundly shapes the possibilities for minority life in Turkey today, given that the foundations rely on an idea of a religious community that is at odds with the ostensible secular strictures of the Republic. Thus, my argument is that the persistence of the Ottoman-era category through its transformations is what makes possible the debate over the representative potential and the presumptive politics of the *vakıfs* today.

These transformations resulted in a specifically non-Muslim *vakıf* on which two related forms of collective action get played out. By collective action, I mean the ability to act in concert *as or by* “the Armenian community,” or some other corporate entity. This action must also be by or “in the name of” the larger collective, but it is also generally *for* the group as well. There are two central debates about the *vakıf* today that correspond to two types of collective action. First, the *vakıf* properties and organizations are the central playing field for intracommunity action, the chapter charts the divide between those who see the foundations as a site for further political action and those who do not. Second, I consider the way in which the *vakıf* system remains⁶ one

⁶ Arguably, as with the *millet* system described in the previous chapter, it was not until the nineteenth century that the *vakıfs* were used as a form of governance or as such a point of contact between state and subjects. As we will see later, and as Zenirci describes in detail, the centralizing Ottoman state of the nineteenth century made efforts to capture both *vakıf* property and curtail the independence of the foundations (Zenirci 2015). At the same time, studies such as van Leeuwen’s make it clear that in urban centers such as Ottoman Damascus, the *waqf* served functions of governance, at least at the municipal level (van Leeuwen 1999). It is less clear, though, that it was an important point of contact between the *Ottoman* state and its subjects. At the very least, however, what I want to emphasize here is continuity from the late Ottoman period (nineteenth century) to the Republican era in terms of minority governance. We can see a minimal form of this contact between state and minority subject in the fact that most of the non-Muslim *vakıfs* were established by decree from the Sultan in the nineteenth century.

of the central points of encounter between the state and its minority populations. Thus, the rest of the chapter charts the ways in which the historical development of the *wakıfs* shapes present possibilities for minority action either as intracommunity action and or in relation to the state.

The Development of Waqf in the Ottoman Empire

“Defining the institution of waqf is both at the same time simple and extremely difficult” (van Leeuwen 1999, 9). This understatement rings true because there are clear definitions of *waqf* in legal texts, but at the same time the importance of the institution lies outside of the law, as “part of a historical reality” that “touches upon the material and spiritual conditions of societies” (10). So, a definition of the *waqf* as a charitable endowment in perpetuity like the one given above lays out an ideal form, but does less to help see how the institution works in the world beyond the law. Definitions that have focused on the “material and spiritual conditions of society” have tended to emphasize either the Islamic injunctions to charity⁷ or the strategic possibility of evading inheritance law (Dallal 2004, 14). A further confusion in definition arises with regard to the historical emergence of the *waqf*, and the extent to which it stemmed from Byzantine or other legal traditions (Coulson 1964, 28). The hazy origins of the institution and the tendency to see it as essentially a matter of either beneficent charity or sly attempts to avoid inheritance law is a significant source of the confusion over the institution.

In order to avoid these detailed debates, I cite the following definition as an adequate starting point for our discussion specifically of the minority foundations:

Essentially a waqf consisted of an object which was endowed to a specific pious purpose for eternity. The founder (*wāqif*) gave up his property rights and determined the pious purpose and the regulations for the exploitation of the object, which became the ‘property

⁷Çizakça notes that while waqf is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an, “the concept of wealth re-distribution is strongly emphasized in the Qur’an (2:215, 264, 270, 280)” (2000, 6), directing us to specific passages. Dallal asserts that “hadith literature and the Islamic emphasis on charity give the waqf institution validation” (Dallal 2004, 15).

of God'. The object was dissociated with market circulation and any form of alienation (sale, pawning, donation) was strictly forbidden. Waqfs were often founded for the benefit of mosques, which themselves also had the status of waqf. In such a case, agricultural lands were converted into waqf and their revenues destined to build and maintain a specified mosque and its functionaries. Waqfs could thus either be possessions yielding revenues and profit, or objects consuming these revenues and serving as religious or social institutions (van Leeuwen 1999, 11–12).

This description also marks one of the confusions over *vakif* terminology noted earlier: that *vakif* refers both to revenue-generating property and the purpose or property for which that revenue is generated. This bundle of properties, linked by the purpose and cause for which the revenue is generated is often referred to in the singular as *the vakif*. When referring to the entire linked set of properties, then, it makes sense to refer to the *vakif* as a foundation.

Centuries of legal debate between and within the four main schools of Islamic law led to different applications of *waqf* law in different places and time. For our purposes, however, the crucial unfolding is within the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, “the principles of Hanefî doctrine have been particularly stressed, because that doctrine was responsible for formulating the classical definition of vakîf in Islamic law – a legacy to which every period in Islamic history fell heir, and a basis upon which the Ottomans would create their own unique conception of religious foundations” (Barnes 1987, 2). The basics of the Hanafi school suggests that “the founder of the waqf remains the owner, but loses the rights of selling, bequeathing, or giving away the dedicated property” (Dallal 2004, 16). This basic Hanafi position sets the parameters for the articulation of a unique Ottoman legal system, one which incorporated an additional set of legal principles known as *qanun*, and which underwent significant transformations through the years.

As with the concept of *millet* discussed in Chapter One, there were numerous changes to the administration of the *vakıfs* over the years. For the purposes of this dissertation and chapter, the crucial point of change involves the adaptation of nineteenth-century post-reform Ottoman *vakıf* administration into the legal regime of the Republic of Turkey. During this adaptation, nascent differences in organization and administration were solidified into stark differences between Muslim and non-Muslim foundations in Republican era. Thus, other than the preceding discussion of definition⁸, I leave earlier forms of the *vakıf* and their administration to the side to begin with the late Ottoman version of *vakıf* administration that was the product of the centralizing reform of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century known broadly as the *Tanzimat*.

In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II created the *Evkaf-i Hümayun Nezareti* (Ministry of Foundations⁹). This same year marks what is known as the “auspicious event,” the destruction of the Janissary core in favor of a new military. This cleared the way for other centralizing reforms, known collectively as the *Tanzimat*. Before the *Tanzimat* era, “all the laws of waqf—and law and ethics in general—including the behavior and ethics of waqf administrators were elaborated by jurist-scholars who did not necessarily belong to the state apparatus” (Moumtaz 2012, 119). While prior to these centralizing tendencies we might be able to see direct state intervention into *waqf* administration in Istanbul, until the mid-nineteenth century this kind of attention would have been rare outside the capitol (Moumtaz 2012, 124–28). We thus see a marked shift in *vakıf*

⁸ For a further discussion of the difficulties of defining *waqf* and a useful “non-definition,” see Chapter 1: Waqf: A Non-Definition” in Moumtaz’s dissertation *Modernizing Charity, Remaking Islamic Law* (Moumtaz 2012, 55–117).

⁹ *Evkaf* being the Arabic plural of *waqf*.

administration in the nineteenth century¹⁰. Many of these shifts involved the administration of non-Muslim *vakıfs* as an emergent category different from “standard” Muslim foundations.

*Non-Muslim Vakıfs in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey*¹¹

Non-Muslim *vakıfs* have always been theoretically possible, in that there is no explicit injunction against them. A “specific pious purpose” (van Leeuwen 1999, 11) does not exclude a Christian, Jewish, or Hindu pious purpose. Even if the “pious purpose” must conform to Islamic norms, a non-Muslim could create an endowment for a pious purpose in line with Islamic standards of piety. “*Hanafi* and *Maliki* law requires that the object must be valid both according to Islamic law as well as according to the personal law of the dedicator (*wāqif*); *Shafi’is* and *Hanbalis* require conformity with Islamic law only” (Rashid 2006, 94–95). In all four of the

¹⁰ The 1856 “Edict of Reforms” and the Land Code of 1858 are two other major influences on vakıf law and administration in the Ottoman period. The “Edict of Reforms” will be discussed in more detail below with regard to the non-Muslim foundations. Here, we note that both of these legal shifts continue the centralizing trend with regard to land and *vakıfs* throughout the nineteenth century. As Barnes describes, one of the central questions in the developing Ottoman Empire with regards to *vakıf* property was its relation other categories of land (Barnes 1987). In the Land Code of 1858 we see *vakıf* property enumerated as one of five categories of land. Aytekin, as well as Pamuk, trace the integration of the Ottoman agrarian economy into the world economy in the nineteenth century (Şevket Pamuk 1987; Aytekin 2009), where a common complaint about *vakıf* property in the nineteenth century revolved around its inalienable status (Çizakça 2000) and hence its inability to circulate in an emergent capitalist economy. In other words, encroaching capitalism and capitalists took umbrage at the designation of a significant amount of property as by definition outside the sphere of circulation. In later attempts at state expropriation of *vakıf* property we continue to see the effects of this logic.

¹¹ As will become clear, much of this section is dependent upon the excellent work of the Hrant Dink Foundation in the introductory text of the *2012 Declaration*, prepared with the intention of meeting the legal demands of the promised property returns announced in 2011, discussed below (Polatel et al. 2012). I still remember waiting for an interview on the breezy balcony of the shared *Agos*/Hrant Dink Foundation office, talking with one of the Armenian page editors. When he heard I was interested in the *vakıfs*, he went inside and returned with the proofs of the section in the soon-to-be-published book upon which much of this sections depends. The other main sources I have used for the “Community Foundations” are *Son Yasal Düzenlemelere Göre Cemaat Vakıflar* [The Community Foundations According to the Latest Legal Regulations] (Reyna and Moreno Zonana 2003) and *The Story of An Alien(ation)*, which has presented the legal history of the non-Muslim *vakıfs* in an incredibly clear and useful manner (Kurban and Kezban 2009). While the first contains the texts of a number of important relevant documents and is therefore an invaluable resource, the clear, chronological exposition of *The Story of an Alien(ation)* and the *2012 Declaration* has been more directly useful for preparing the present work.

major schools of Islamic legal thought, then, there is no specific legal obstacle against the creation of non-Muslim *vakıfs*.

Over time, a distinctly non-Muslim *vakıf* emerged in the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. The question of what to do with existing churches, monasteries, and synagogues after the Ottoman conquest of Anatolia and Istanbul becomes a legal question that is eventually solved by the category of *vakıf*. Some scholars have suggested that these immovables were simply incorporated into this new legal framework¹². Alternatively, the well-known legal pluralism of the Ottoman Empire would suggest that the management of non-Muslim ecclesial properties was a non-issue left to the Bishops and Patriarchs. Whether or not the category of *vakıf* was a wide-spread or common answer to the question of non-Muslim collective properties in the classical period, by the nineteenth century there was a well-established practice of creating non-Muslim *vakıfs*, where the “identity of the person who establishes the foundation is not important; what matters is the aim and that *kurbet* [glossed earlier as “closeness to God”] is present in both the belief of the dedicating person and that it is in line with Islamic orders” (Polatel et al. 2012, 29).

Despite a consistent stream of literature on *waqf* (Çizakça 2000; Zencirci 2015; Dallal 2004; van Leeuwen 1999; Moumtaz 2012), there remains a serious dearth of studies on the non-Muslim *vakıfs* of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. Much of what follows depends on a handful of sources (Polatel et al. 2012; Kurban and Kezban 2009; Reyna and Moreno Zonana 2003), with

¹² “Under the influence of Islamic law, the Ottomans did not damage Jewish and Christian institutions in cities they took control of. The Ottomans recognized their existence with new edicts, or if the city was previously under an Islamic administration, protected their existing rights under earlier edicts. With the permission of the Sultan, who was the head of State, the income of an agricultural land could be allocated to a charitable foundation, which was similar to the establishment of a ‘fund.’ However, in practice, there were certain exceptions to the principle of recognizing vested rights” (Kurban and Kezban 2009, 9).

a heavy reliance on the important *2012 Declaration* of properties prepared by the Hrant Dink Foundation as part of a response to the promised return of some confiscated *vakıf* properties announced in 2011. Differences in the manner of establishing a foundation during the Ottoman Empire become the basis for conceptualizing a stark boundary between Muslim and non-Muslim foundations in the Republic of Turkey. It is in part the circumscription of the “Community Foundations” that sets the parameters for the kinds of collective action that can be launched from the site of the *vakıfs*.

During the Ottoman era, the creation of these non-Muslim *vakıfs* often followed a legal formula much different than their Muslim counterparts. “When a new church foundation was established, it was highly likely that the Sharia courts would reject its registration based on a decision that while establishing a church was *kurbet* within the framework of their faith, since they “diverted from the true faith,” the aim of *kurbet* was not realized” (Polatel et al. 2012, 29). In other words, there was a legal argument that the “pious purpose” at the heart of *waqf* establishment could not be met by non-Muslims. Though there were plenty of non-Muslim foundations established during the Ottoman period, this argument suggests that legal recognition was denied to many non-Muslim properties and projects. This tendency to obstruct the establishment of non-Muslim foundations is one point of continuity between the Ottoman and the Republican periods, although, as we will see, the legal arguments were somewhat different.

Given this legal difficulty, most “non-Muslim foundations that are still in existence today and who were in charge of the administration of institutions such as churches, synagogues, schools [sic] and hospitals, were established by the Sultan’s edict” (Polatel et al. 2012, 29). “Standard” Muslim *vakıfs* were established through the Sharia courts after examining the pious

purpose. The terms of foundation, kinds of properties, and charitable purpose would be recorded in the form of the “foundational charter” or *vakfiye*. This legal document was the guarantor of a foundation endowed in the standard manner. However, given the legal difficulty described above, the vast majority of non-Muslim *vakıfs* were not constituted in this manner. Instead, many were given definite legal (*vakıf*) status by an edict of the Sultan.

This becomes, in the Republican era, the crucial legal difference between Muslim and non-Muslim foundations that continues to haunt the non-Muslim foundations: the lack of a *vakfiye*, or foundational charter. In lieu of the *vakfiye* that characterized Muslim foundations, the non-Muslim ones had edicts from the Sultan¹³. Thus, from a legal perspective, non-Muslim *vakıfs* are actually quite distinct from the regular category of Muslim *vakıf*. The collection of these foundations under the same umbrella as Muslim foundations was in large part administrative, leading to a rather heterogenous set of institutions and properties all of which were called “*vakıf*.” Though this umbrella grouping was unproblematic for many years, late Ottoman reform began to enact and emphasize the legal difference between Muslim and non-Muslim *vakıfs*.

The 1856 “Edict of Reforms” fully codified the collection of non-Muslim properties and foundations under the banner of *vakıf*. Some of these properties and institutions—such as those

¹³ In conversation, Vingas reiterated and insisted that none of the non-Muslim foundations have *vakfiyes*. As will be seen below, the registration that occurred in 1936 resulted in documents that are sometimes considered *vakfiyes*, but Vingas was insistent that these were not the same. The *Declaration* makes a similar argument. At the same time, the language in the *Declaration* quoted above suggests the *possibility* of a non-Muslim foundation being instituted through a *vakfiye*. It seems possible that a Sharia court would allow such a thing. In fact, the *Declaration* goes on to describe the *vakfiye* relating to the famous Patriarch Malachia Ormanian, as well as the Beyoğlu Hovhannes Gümüşyan Foundation. What characterizes both of these foundations is their attachment to a very specific individual, as opposed to the communal properties themselves. So perhaps they are the exceptions that prove the rule.

older monasteries and synagogues existing prior to Ottoman conquest—had not been officially established with the status of *vakıf* (whether by edict or with a charter). It was at this time that the non-Muslim foundations became fully caught up in the Ministry of *Evkaf*, the Ministry of Foundations: “After this edict, for every community, the community’s efforts were done through a regulatory decision [*nizamname*], the community foundations were also contained in this way within the bounds of the regulation. In this system, the heads of the community foundations were separated from the community councils¹⁴” (Reyna and Moreno Zonana 2003, 35)¹⁵. The emergent systems of minority organization within the community (the councils in the quote) are undermined through changes in foundation law.

The next major legal development relevant to the non-Muslim foundations is the so-called “1913 Declaration,” or the “Decree Law on Legal Personalities Use of Immovable Property” (Polatel et al. 2012, 35). Again, the non-Muslim foundations were affected in a particular manner: given that prior to this law a *vakıf* could not be registered to a collective personality, they were registered either in the names of prominent individuals or through the method of *nam-ı mevhum*, that is, in the name of a saint or other revered figure (Polatel et al. 2012, 35). The 1913 Declaration made a number of changes, including allowing “for immovable assets to be registered under real person’s names or to be registered in the name of institutions,

¹⁴ The reference here, presumably, is to the emergent bodies of administration for the affairs of the *millets* during the nineteenth century. In the Armenian case, there were a number of councils and shifting administrative bodies that culminated in the adoption of a so-called “constitution” brought before the National Assembly in 1855 (Artinian 1988, 78). The question of the reforms in the *millet* are taken up in the previous chapter, and Artinian’s text provides an adequate starting point for understanding the situation among the Armenians.

The goal is not to rehearse the full history of the “Armenian Parliament” at this point but rather to point to the legal transformations that shape the current situation of the non-Muslim foundations.

¹⁵ All translations from Turkish (both textual and from interviews) and attending errors are mine unless otherwise stated.

but leaves out of its scope ‘*nam-ı mevhum*’ registrations” (Polatel et al. 2012, 37). In other words, the exigencies of the creation of the non-Muslim foundations put them at a severe disadvantage under the new law. The chaotic registration that occurred under the 1913 Declaration was partly responsible for the losses that occurred under later transformations.

Clearly, no account of property among non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire can ignore the Armenian Genocide, the Population Transfers, and other tectonic and tragic transformations that preceded the establishment of Republic of Turkey. In terms of direct loss of property (and life), Istanbul fared relatively well. After the initial rounding up of over two hundred Armenian intellectuals in the capitol on April 24, 1915—the date that is taken to mark the beginning of the Genocide and the day on which commemorations occur worldwide—Armenians in Istanbul were not deported and there were no major confiscations during the war. The properties of Armenians in Istanbul, especially the *vakıf* properties under consideration here, emerged from the ashes of the Young Turk Period relatively unscathed. Often this is attributed to the presence of the embassies and other Europeans in the city. Whatever the reason, the people and properties of Istanbul were spared the direct carnage of the provinces.

In the provinces, of course, it was a completely different story. The deportations of Armenians into the Syrian desert on forced marches resulted first and foremost in a huge loss of life. Consequent to that loss of life was the loss of the entire civilizational existence of the Armenians in Anatolia. A byproduct of this loss of life, Armenian-owned properties, both individual and collective, were left vacant throughout the villages and cities of Anatolia¹⁶. A law

¹⁶ There are a number of important studies revolving around property loss and the Genocide. See for instance, *The Confiscation of Armenian Properties* by Kevork K. Baghdjian and *The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide* by Taner Akçam and Umit Kurt.

on “abandoned properties” was promulgated in the Young Turk era in September 1915. This law—purposefully blind to the reasons the properties were abandoned—created a legal framework for state confiscation and redistribution. War-time exceptionalism meant that many laws expired with the foundation of the Republic, but the Law on Abandoned Properties created a legal category that continues to haunt the Armenian population in Turkey.

A law from April 1923 extended this logic of “abandoned properties” into the Republican era (Polatel et al. 2012, 41–43). These laws have continued to affect non-Muslim Foundations by declaring foundations defunct (*mazbut*) when in many cases the properties are still intact. In other words, though an apartment building or a church may still be standing, the foundation itself is declared defunct due to the absence of a population for which the original charitable purpose could benefit or due to the lack of a foundation board. While these laws were directly related to the foundations in the provinces¹⁷, the logic of and legal framework of “abandoned properties” are foundational for Republican era confiscations and the contemporary struggles to use the foundations to benefit the remaining Armenian population in Turkey.

With the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, non-Muslim minority life in Turkey and Istanbul would encounter many new challenges. At the same time, as I have argued in the previous chapter and suggest here, a number of continuities structured the legal and social lives of non-Muslims in the new Republic. The extent of these continuities has led Lerna Ekmekçiöğlü, in her truly groundbreaking study of Armenians in the early Republican period, to call the situation “secular dhimmitude” after the status of non-Muslims within Islamic states

¹⁷ Today, there are only four Armenian *vakıfs* outside of Istanbul: St. Giragos in Diyarbakır, St. Gregory the Illuminator in Kayseri, and the churches in Hatay, Iskenderum and Vakıflıköy, which share a priest.

(Ekmekçioğlu 2016). While my own take on secular conceptual categories and the logics of the transformation that occurred with the advent of a Republic grounded in secular law gives me some reservations about using the label, in general the term captures an affective structure around the new minority status¹⁸ that was inflected by years under the *millet* system, and it emphasizes the continuities between the Ottoman and Republican eras.

Under the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) that internationally established the Republic of Turkey and superseded the previous Treaty of Sèvres (1920), non-Muslim minorities were given explicit rights, including the protection of “religious establishments” in Article 42¹⁹. “Thus, autonomy was granted to non-Muslim foundations established by non-Muslim citizens to meet their education, religious, social, health-related and charitable needs (Kurban and Kezban 2009, 11). This moment is treated in detail in Chapter One, and the relevant portions of the Treaty are reproduced as Appendix 1, but here the important thing to note is that the relevant Articles recognize the right of non-Muslims “to establish and manage religious, social and educational institutions and articulate that the state will facilitate the use of these rights in any way it can” (Polatel et al. 2012, 49). With these provisions, the non-Muslim foundations, already instituted through different means than their Muslim counterparts, explicitly became *minority* foundations. That is, for the first time, the foundations were described and protected under the minority rights regime current during the Interwar Period, and hence were treated not as part of the *millet* system

¹⁸ As Laki Vingas put it during our interview, one of the crucial tasks was to “educate our minority members to think as equals.”

¹⁹ Baskin Oran’s discussion of the “Urban Legends of Lausanne” has been helpful here in avoiding some of the common characterizations about the treaty. For instance, it is often said that Armenians, Jews, and Greeks were singled out in the treaty, though they weren’t (Oran 2016). However, “Although the Treaty only mentioned ‘non-Muslims’ and did specifically mention any non-Muslim group, in practice only Armenians, Greeks and Jews were given minority rights” (Kurban and Kezban 2009, 11). See the discussion on pages 41-43 in Chapter One.

or Ottoman legal pluralism or through the language of Islamic law, but through the language and legal framework of minorities. While previous logics of governance might have treated non-Muslims in ways that *we* might recognize as minorities, the Treaty of Lausanne first marks an explicit invocation of a legal framework of minorities and minority rights.

“In addition to a statist economic ideology, the early republican era was marked by efforts to construct national identity as secular, homogenous, and ethnically Turkish” (Zencirci 2015, 537). Confiscation and sale of a number of *vakıfs*, especially those associated with the dervish orders, supported both the goals of secularization and state centralization. It was also a financially lucrative decision (Zencirci 2015, 537). These various moves during the first decade of the Republican Era culminated in the 1935 *Vakıflar Kanunu* (“Law on Foundations” #2762). Administrative changes attendant to the new 1935 law meant that “the previously existing Islamic *vakıf* law” was replaced “to create three distinct categories of *vakıf*: appendant (*mülhak*), congregational (*cemaat*), and registered (*mazbut*)” (Zencirci 2015, 538). The non-Muslim or “communal *vakıfs*,” “which were created by non-Muslim ethnic minorities (Armenian, Jewish, Catholic, and Greek Orthodox groups), were given a separate legal status. The groups retained special permission to manage their places of worship and schools but otherwise were prohibited from acquiring real estate” (Zencirci 2015, 538). This concretization of separate (minority) legal status is, I believe, what Laki Vingas had in mind when he said that “we never became *vakıf* by our own wish but were obliged to become that denomination.”

Additionally, this law also set the stage for the most significant confiscation of minority properties during the Republican Era. Through the “defunct” (*mazbut*) category, introduced by the September 1915 “Law on Abandoned Properties” and the problems of registration during the

1913 Declaration, “the Law on Foundations that entered into force in 1935, did feature regulations that enabled, in practice, the rendering defunct of community foundations, and thus the seizure of their immovable assets” (Polatel et al. 2012, 51). This possibility was realized over time through an aspect of the 1935 Law of Foundations known as the “1936 Declarations.” In addition to the changes in the law, “the temporary Article 1-A of the same law demands a property declaration,” and through the hurried and often haphazard ways these collections occurred, the road to confiscation was paved (Polatel et al. 2012, 51). The time frame to assemble the documents needed for the property declaration was incredibly short. *Vakıf* administrators also kept documents in different ways—there was no standard for administration of the foundations, a problem which continues to plague the foundations—and hence there was much confusion surrounding the paperwork needed to declare the properties. As a result of these difficulties and the haphazard collection of documents, not all of the revenue-generating properties of a given foundation were registered.

However, the crucial problem was that these declarations later were seen as *vakfiyes*, the charters for a foundation. Yet these declarations were fundamentally different than the Ottoman-era *vakfiyes* described above. And even these declarations-*cum-vakfiyes* did not contain all of the properties listed. Thus, “the inadequacy of the documents and the information kept under primitive conditions for years, the impossibility of transferring experience amongst administrators within the diminishing non-Muslim community are amongst the reasons resulting in declarations that were far from being complete or devoid of mistakes” (Polatel et al. 2012, 57).

A number of legal developments occurred during the intervening years, but the crucial point is that these inadequate and incomplete 1936 Declarations were used as the basis for the

expropriation of non-Muslim foundation property by the state throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. In particular, “from the mid-1960s onwards, the Directorate General of Foundations began to demand from the non-Muslim foundations their founding charters as proof of their legal ownership of the properties in their possession” (Polatel et al. 2012, 65). Yet we know that most non-Muslim foundations did not have actual *vakfiyes*, and when the 1936 Declarations were used as *vakfiyes* they were woefully incomplete. “From the decision of the General Council [in 1963] to 2002, when Law no. 4771 amending the Law no. 2762 on Foundations was adopted, the majority of the immovable assets acquired by non-Muslim foundations since 1936 were confiscated through a series of court decisions” (Polatel et al. 2012, 67). There were several other legal developments, but other than Law no. 5737 in 2008 that resulted in the expansion of the Foundations Council to fifteen members and included the new position that Laki Vingas was to occupy, this was the fundamental legal situation in which I found the non-Muslim *vakıfs* when I first began “exploratory fieldwork” in 2011.

In fact, it was that summer that the most drastic decision in the past few decades was made. This decision, known as “Decree Law no. 651” that entered into force on August 27, 2011, was the event that first drew me to the *vakıfs* as a central question for minority life in Turkey. Then Prime Minister Erdoğan announced at a *iftar* meal near the end of *Ramazan* that summer that many of the properties confiscated within the framework of the 1936 Declarations discussed above would be returned. This benevolent, exciting, announcement captured the imagination of Armenians and other minorities throughout the country. It portended possibilities of real change and the chance to use the foundations in an active way for the life of the community. The material possibilities, the real forms of wealth wrapped up in the confiscated

properties, could inject a much-needed material investment into the minority communities—and hence potentially other kinds investments and projects could be made.

When I returned in 2012, the Hrant Dink Foundation was in the process of collecting the information for and publishing the text known as the *2012 Declaration* that was intended as a legal help for the incredible bureaucratic process that was necessary to reclaim the properties²⁰. And when I talked with Laki Vingas in the middle of 2014, it was clear that the returns were not as monumental as hoped. Nonetheless, a number of properties were in fact returned. And at the very least, for the duration of my fieldwork, and continuing into the present, the potential for the material wealth of the *vakif* properties to be actively used for the non-Muslim population in new ways became a real possibility. In what follows, I trace a number of the debates, political maneuverings, and political projects that revolved around the *vakif* properties. The ethnographic material is meant to demonstrate that from these conditions, the strange mutations of a category of property developed during the Ottoman period continues to shape the possibilities for minority political engagement in Turkey today.

A Tale of Two Vakıfs: Foundations and Intracommunal Relations

While the announcement of the promised return of confiscated *vakif* property on the eve of Şeker Bayram, at the end of Ramazan in 2011 during my “exploratory fieldwork” was the initial impetus for my interest in the *vakıfs*, the mundane centrality of the institution was something that slowly impressed itself upon me. From one perspective, my major fieldsites were

²⁰ The same text I have relied heavily upon in this section. Hence my insistence that many of the people with whom I interacted in Turkey are “ethnographic interlocutors” rather than “informants.” Though it has perhaps at times led to difficulties in my work, I afford the legal work and expertise of my interlocutors the same epistemological status as other musings on the legal condition of the Ottoman Empire.

Where this tendency perhaps becomes more problematic is with regard to theological discourses. However, in terms of theories of interpretation and ideas of personhood and community, I see no reason to privilege academic social theory. For a further discussion of this methodological tendency, see the Introduction.

divided into two categories: churches and newspaper offices. Only later would I realize that I could conceive of all my sites under the single category of “foundation.” While the Hrant Dink *Foundation* has the term in its name, it seemed far removed from the *vakıfs* I had read about, those hundred year-old properties tied to the oldest churches in the city. In fact, the Hrant Dink Foundation falls under the category of “New Foundations,” and the differences between the “Community Foundations” and the “New Foundations,” as well as the category of *dernek*, or “Association,” are in fact a central limitation to the organization of a non-Muslim community, as Vingas would later point out to me.

At the same time, I initially didn’t think of the churches as *vakıfs* either. As an active deacon in the Armenian Apostolic Church, I encountered the churches around Istanbul in the same way I encounter them in a new city in America: liturgically, and through the hierarchy of the church embodied in the person of the priest. Only later did I discern the crucial importance of the legal status of each church as an individual *vakıf*, and the way in which this determined potential for association and action among Armenians.

Ethnographically, this chapter is concerned first and foremost with the “Community Foundations,” those *vakıfs* established by non-Muslims before the Republic of Turkey came into existence in 1923. At the end of this chapter, I spend some time exploring the limitations on communal action due to the division between community foundations, new foundations, and associations. The following chapter, on the Armenian press of Istanbul, returns to the “New Foundations,” of which the Hrant Dink Foundation (located in the same building as the newspaper *Agos*) is one. Finally, many of the choir groups described in Chapter Four are incorporated as *derneks*, associations, and we will have the opportunity to encounter these

institutions ethnographically there. Here, I want to focus on two of the several churches I frequented during my time in Istanbul, and explore the way in which their status as *vakıfs* shaped relations of the people that frequented them and their engagement with the politics of the Armenian community at large.

The two churches could not be more different: the first, located on the grounds of the *Surp Pırgiç* Armenian hospital was more properly a “chapel.” It made up a small portion of the larger *vakıf*, which is the biggest Armenian foundation in terms of property and finances. The head of the foundation, Bedros Şirinoğlu has sometimes been likened to the Armenian *amiras* or wealthy notables of the late Ottoman period in his aspirations within the community. At times, the relationship between the Hospital and the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate, one of the central institutions of Armenian life that nonetheless does *not* have status as *vakıf*, has been less than cordial. Nonetheless, across a small courtyard from the beautiful brick chapel is a small building split into two offices, with space for the priest assigned to the church.

Across the Bosphorus, in one of the small seaside *köys*, or former fishing villages incorporated into the sprawling megalopolis, sits another brick nineteenth century church. As with many of the smaller neighborhoods, Armenians slowly moved away, either to more densely populated “Armenian neighborhoods” such as Kurtuluş²¹, or simply outside of Turkey. Given the proximity to other older and larger churches and the dwindling Armenian population in the

²¹ It is important to note that demographic changes during the nineteenth and twentieth century are part of what allows me (and others) to describe Kurtuluş as Armenian. While in the early years of the Republic, the Greek minority was more populous than the Armenian, events in the mid-twentieth century reversed this. Most important among these are the “6-7 September Events” of 1955 and reactions to the Cyprus crisis (Kuyucu 2005). Kurtuluş, née Tatavla, was in fact a central Greek area and used to be more closely associated with Greeks than Armenians. Though today Kurtuluş is seen as solidly Armenian, several Greek *vakıfs* and a sizeable portion of Istanbul’s Greek population remains in the neighborhood. Thanks to Tolga Cora for reminding me of this. See Chapter Five for more on the representation of neighborhoods and how this affects minority life in Istanbul.

neighborhood, for many years the church was without a priest or indeed services for times any other than the name-day of the patron saint of the church. Despite the fact that there have been a number of ordinations to the priesthood in the past few years, this is the status of a number of the churches in the city. Not all of the thirty-six “active” Armenian Apostolic church foundations in the city are “active parishes” in the sense of having a dedicated priest and weekly services. What happens in this case is that the *vakif* itself remains as a legal entity, and basic upkeep is maintained. The *vakif* board continues to manage the finances²², and the existence of the church is sustained, but not much more.

St. Sarkis Church was like this for many years, and its reentry into a more engaged participation and an active liturgical schedule was a source of pride for many of those on the *vakif* board. I was first directed to the church by one of the old deacons who had befriended me: Jirayr, who had lived for some time in Chicago, immediately took me under his wing. He had been involved in the renovation of the church grounds, and a small plaque marked his contribution to the new bathrooms²³. During my first stint of fieldwork, he constantly insisted that I visit the church. At first I resisted, citing the long trek and my already considerably weekly schedule of church visitations. All throughout my time in Istanbul, I was constantly reiterating that my work did involve things *other* than church, usually to no avail. There was always another beautiful church to see, a special name-day service, or the Friday morning service in one of the Armenian neighborhoods that was held in the *other* small church, not the one I went to on

²² In a number of cases, not without scandal. Although misadministration of *vakifs* runs through the literature on them, the insinuation of financial misappropriation could be seen as a particularly nasty form of social control. We will see later the ways in which foundation board “transparency” has become one of the central political issues among the non-Muslim populations.

²³ At times, this led Deacon Boghos to the repeated joke of “going to the Jirayr.”

Tuesday. Eventually, before I left Istanbul that first Summer, I went with Jirayr to see the little church. Sparkling by the seaside, around the corner from chic boutiques, sharing a wall with a mosque, the interior a beautiful soft purple (newly repainted), I admitted to Jirayr it was in fact quite beautiful. I was taken, and regularly made the church part of my weekly rotation.

I admit that, I, too, was taken by the narrative of renewal. I recall the conversations I had at the cafeteria of *Surp Pırgiç* for several weeks in a row with a young man who eventually stopped showing up for the weekday services. After grabbing our trays and sitting down surrounded by doctors in white coats, it would always feel as if *he* was the one doing the interviewing. We spoke in Armenian, but he would often have to circle around a term or sometimes I would say it in Turkish. This narrative of decline, embodied in my own moderate command of Armenian, was our main topic: “But there really are no Armenian hospitals in America?” he asked one day. “It doesn’t really work like that. I suppose there are private hospitals, but not in the same way.” “And schools?” “Well, we have Armenian schools, but there are probably only a half dozen high schools in the whole country.” “The whole country? But we have more than that in Istanbul!” Of course, comparative decline was still decline, and we bemoaned the lack of interest in language, church, etc. among the vast majority of Armenians in both our countries. So, across the Bosphorus, the story of a church *reopening* its doors to regular worship was compelling.

Though he would often just direct me to their website whenever I asked questions, one day I managed to convince Samvel to sit down with me and discuss how the renovation and the reopening of the church had occurred. A confident, animated man that some accused of being self-aggrandizing, Samvel took a kind of fatherly liking to me, often calling me *yavrum*, “my

child,” part of what led to my genuine feeling of the little church being “my” church. The recording begins with his booming voice, speaking in Turkish²⁴, “For twenty years this place was closed!” When I try to ask when it was closed, he begins by recalling when they restarted services, in 2007²⁵, saying that it was twenty years before that. Even in the history of the church, the triumphant reopening was the temporal marker. To calculate when it was first closed, Kevork pipes in that twenty years before 2007 is 1987, not 1997 like Samvel first said.

Without making too much of a few short sentences, I find this initial part of the interview illuminating. Our conversation took place in the “sitting room,” one of two rooms in the building adjacent to the church. On another occasion, we had spoken in the office, with Samvel ruffling through the stack of Armenian newspapers to show me things he found important. Today, though, for this “official” interview, we sat in the more casual reception room. Kevork, a round man with a hearty laugh and a penchant for cigars, joined us. While Samvel was the head of the

²⁴ As with many Istanbul Armenians, while Samvel was able to speak to Armenian, he was much more comfortable speaking Turkish. He, also like many Armenians, had gone to an Armenian primary and middle school, but did not attend one of the Armenian high schools. He could understand and respond in Armenian, but I rarely heard him speak Armenian. Once, while sitting around the table sharing a meal after the *Badarak*, he checked with me to make sure I didn’t mind that everyone was speaking Turkish. “It’s our first language, after all,” he said. We will see in the next chapter the emphasis many Armenians placed on speaking Armenian with each other, for instance when one of my favorite priests overhead a young man around my age and I speaking Turkish together. “You should speak Armenian!” he told us. “I’m helping Chris practice Turkish,” Ari said. “He’s taking Turkish classes.” “He can practice Turkish all the time. You should help him practice his Armenian,” the priest responded. Thus, it suggests something about Samvel’s understanding of his job and position as the head of an Armenian foundation that he himself did not make the same kind of effort to speak Armenian.

²⁵ This is, of course, the same year that the AKP won its second major parliamentary victory, and also the same year several constitutional changes were made. Tolga Cora has suggested that both the early Europhile years of the AKP and a broad neoliberal turn in Turkey during the first decade of the new millennium is crucial to understanding the shifts in AKP attitudes towards minorities, and hence also some of these developments within the community. I am partial to this argument, though my dissertation is less interested in charting economic causes for AKP/minority relations or shifts in Turkish society at large than in tracing legal and conceptual categories that shape the possibilities for minority action. Whether or not the transformations of these categories are in large part *due to* economic factors is a question I leave to the side.

In a forthcoming article, “Promises of Property,” I cleave closer to the changing attitudes of the Justice and Development Party towards minorities and to some of these questions.

foundation, Kevork was in many ways the businessman behind the scenes. He had been involved from the beginning of the restoration, and often seemed to me more organized than Samvel. Yet it was clearly Samvel's show. During one of the many interruptions, when one of the old men shuffled in and was immediately apologetic when he realized there was something more than the normal chatter around a cup of tea, Samvel says simply that *he* is giving an interview. This despite Kevork's frequent additions and clarifications. So even in the opening few exchanges of our interview, Samvel marks his pride in the accomplishment of restarting services²⁶ at the church, often says "we" in describing the opening, yet at the same time marks his own initiative and central place in the process.

One of the striking things in the narrative of the reopening of the church, and for me one of the central features, is that the initiative comes from the *vakıf* board and from Samvel. "Look," he says, "we were doing services on the first Saturdays, but people didn't know, since there hadn't been anything for twenty years." He continues, "Aram Srpazan²⁷, who came to us, for a service, we all agreed." The sequence gets a little jumbled as another old man wanders in, but the implication is clear: they had started holding liturgy once a month and during one of those services when the Bishop came, there was a discussion about increasing the number of services. After a few jokes with the man, who eventually sat and joined us, adding his own details to the

²⁶ During the interview, Samvel alternated between the Armenian word *Badarak*, specifically describing the Divine Liturgy or Mass, and the Turkish word *ayin*, for ceremony or religious service.

²⁷ *Srpazan* is the Armenian word for Bishop. The reference is the Vicar General of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate in Istanbul, Archbishop Aram Ateşyan. For most of Patriarch Mesrob Mutafyan's illness, Aram Srpazan served as "acting Patriarch" or "Vicar General." The controversy over the Patriarch's illness and the potential election of a new Patriarch has simmered for years, and in the past few months the possibility of an election has been reopened. At the time of submission in July 2017, Archbishop Karekin Bekçiyān is currently serving as the Vicar General, and the election has become a full-blown controversy. An election for a new Patriarch might possibly occur in December 2017. See Note 5 in Chapter One.

interview later, Samvel began again: “From that time, Der Hayr²⁸ was with us. At the same time, he was shared with another church. He was looking after both there and here. So he was there on Tuesdays and here on Wednesdays. We spoke with him and he spoke with Srpazan.”

Becoming more animated, he says that they didn’t have any of the appropriate things for a church to operate, “because in those days we didn’t know.” “There wasn’t a chair or a table to sit at! There wasn’t a plate or a knife, let alone priest’s garments.” The punctuated repetition, beginning with the lack of a chair inside the church that first drew Der Hayr’s attention, moving through items not explicitly associated with the service to the priest’s garments, emphasizes how little the church had in 2007, and by extension, the great accomplishment of transforming the church into a functioning parish. Later that year, when we were preparing for Holy Week, we were in the back of the church together sorting linens and liturgical vessels. Samvel pointed out the hundred-year old vessels that had been safely kept and the new linens that he and his wife had purchased. The long history was a source of pride, but so too were the recent accomplishments and the effort placed in restoring the church.

Despite the early lack of the appropriate material conditions to function as a *church*,²⁹ they persisted: “After that, in any case, Aram Srpazan said, ‘Okay.’ ‘Let’s open it,’ he said. ‘Make it a church, we’ll talk,’ he said.” Then, Samvel continues, Der Hayr supported them and went to the Patriarchate. Eventually, they were able to have *Badarak* every Wednesday. Since 2007 they had been doing this, and this was the state in which I found them: a small but active

²⁸ “Der Hayr” is the generic term for a married Armenian priest. I use it here in place of the name of the specific priest, where the form for speaking of a specific married priest is “Der Vartan,” for instance, using the name of my own childhood priest.

²⁹ The emphasis on the difference between the building as part of a foundation and an active church, characterized by regular liturgical services, was the most pronounced during the controversy described below. Here, it is important to highlight that in Samvel’s description, all of this renovation was what made the *vakif* into a church.

group with services every Wednesday. Again, I want to reiterate that in Samvel's narrative, Aram Srpazan appears almost reticent: "Okay," he says. In fact, it takes the support of the priest, who mediated on behalf of the foundation, to finally get the Patriarchate to make the weekly service official and to have a dedicated priest come every Wednesday.

This question of "sending a priest" provides us entry into one of the central debates in the Armenian community today, namely the centrality of the Armenian Patriarchate and its relationship to the individual *vakıfs*. While we will return to the little church across the Bosphorus, I want to pause here to use the story of the church's revival to illuminate this crucial concern. It also offers the opportunity to contrast the little church with the *Surp Pırgiç* Hospital *vakıf*.

The larger question of the representative status of the Armenian Patriarchate has been addressed in the previous chapter through the description of the *millet* system. Here, it suffices to recall that the legacy of the *millet* system remains in the *de facto* leadership of the Patriarch, or, in the current case, of the Vicar General. Aram Srpazan often appears with the Prime Minister, and he, along with other heads of non-Muslim ecclesial structures are also sometimes invited to the Presidential Palace. While the head of the Armenian Catholic Church in Istanbul also participates, there is a real sense that government officials see Aram Srpazan as the "spokesman" of the Armenian community. In addition to Armenian Catholics and Protestants, there are a sizeable number of areligious Armenians or merely supporters of a secular basis for political identification that find this *de facto* situation incredibly problematic. Yet what becomes clear through the Patriarchate's ability to "send a priest" is that regardless of representative status, the

Patriarchate is a crucial, central, institution for the functioning of many of the other Armenian institutions.

Without a priest, as Samvel realized, the *vakif* exists, but in a fundamental way it does not fulfill its function. It isn't a church, but merely a collection of properties grouped together as a foundation. For some *vakif* boards, this is unproblematic. Given that *vakif* charters always specify funds for the administrative upkeep of the foundation, it is possible to support oneself "working" for a foundation. Yet Samvel wasn't content with this, and was critical of other *vakifs* that kept their doors closed. He wanted the foundation to be a church. And for this, the cooperation of the Patriarchate was necessary.

Though the Patriarchate has the ability to exert this kind of pressure on the individual church *vakifs*, it is limited in two ways. First, the Patriarchate itself is not a registered *vakif*. The *2012 Declaration*, published by the Hrant Dink Foundation, describes the problem in this way: In the absence of legal regulations concerning the election of chief rabbis and patriarchs, and the authority these people represent, the commonly held view is that the institution of the patriarchate does not hold a legal personality. The fact that its legal personality is not recognized leads to the patriarchate being viewed as a seat of authority that belongs to a single person. As a direct result of this, the patriarchate cannot generate revenue, acquire property, open a bank account or take legal action. This also leads to many difficulties in everyday life (Polatel et al. 2012, 53). Given this, there are severe limitations to the kinds of legal recourse available to the Patriarchate. At the same time, given that each church is itself an individual, registered *vakif*, from a legal standpoint the churches have a significant amount of sway.

In fact, Meline, my friend at the Hrant Dink Foundation, when we first discussed the *2012 Declaration* book, mentioned that the Hrant Dink Foundation was encouraging the individual churches to act more like independent NGOs, and to realize that they could in fact act on their own accord, without the Patriarchate's coordination and approval. As of yet, though, most churches have not taken up this call. Rather, as Meline noted in the same conversation, when they were doing the research for the book, many heads of the foundations were wary of speaking with them. They would insist that they had to check with the Patriarchate before granting access to charters and other documents the researchers wanted. So, while legally the individual *vakıfs* stand in a position of relative power vis-à-vis the Patriarchate, they clearly recognize its authority³⁰.

Hence the centrality of the ability to “send a priest.” This also helps explain the relative friction between the Patriarchate and *Surp Pırgiç*. While there is the small little chapel on the grounds, the *raison d'être* of the entire foundation does not rest on the Monday services held every week in the chapel nor the massive celebration on the Feast of the Ascension held there every year. So the Patriarchate could refuse to “send a priest,” limiting the function of the chapel, but this wouldn't touch the core mission of the Hospital in its entirety. Recognized as one of the

³⁰ It also, as Tolga Cora reminded me, shows the division in the Armenian society with respect to the newspaper *Agos*, the Hrant Dink Foundation, and the figure of Hrant Dink himself. Many people are wary of the activist bent of this portion of the Armenian population, as we will see later in the chapter. Many of the *vakıf* heads would be uninterested in the project of acting more like NGOs and the “democratization” project related to it. Similarly, in the following chapter on the Armenian press, we will see the divide between readers of *Agos* and readers of the other newspapers. There is a significant part of the Armenian population that views the group around *Agos* with emotions ranging from cautious reticence to outright hostility.

leading hospitals in the entire country, *Surp Pırgiç*, though of historical importance to the Armenians of Istanbul,³¹ not only functions, but thrives without any recourse to the Patriarchate.

This autonomy is bolstered by the financial status of the Hospital. In addition to the Hospital itself, as a *vakıf* it owns a number of revenue-generating properties, some of which are incredibly valuable. For instance, the Hospital owns the IGS Building on İstiklal Street, the lucrative commercial center of Istanbul. This is actually one of the most prominent cases of the return of *vakıf* property, which was returned after the Hospital won a legal case in the European Court of Human Rights on June 26, 2007 (Polatel et al. 2012, 143). With revenue-generating properties located in central parts of Istanbul, the financial security of the Hospital helps maintain its independence.

Additionally, we can see in the case of the returned property two other possible aspects of the tension between the Patriarchate and the Hospital. First, the success of the Hospital returns, including the IGS Building but also other land closer to the Hospital,³² contrasts sharply with the Patriarchate's woes over the beautiful Sansaryan Han, built with the intention of supporting the Patriarchate at the end of the nineteenth century. Due in large part to the legal status of the Patriarchate described above, however, the Patriarchate has not had control over the building or its revenues. Where *Surp Pırgiç* has been able to win a number of high-profile court cases over

³¹ In addition to the connection with important nineteenth century *amira* notables, the area around the chapel also boasts the grave of wealthy founder of the influential Gulbenkian Foundation in Portugal.

³² Specifically, in January of 2014 a court case ruled that a large plot of land, over 40,000 square meters in the municipality of Zeytinburnu where the Hospital is located, should be returned to the *Surp Pırgiç Vakfı*. While the newspaper Daily Sabah used this return as a successful example of "Armenians step[ping] up efforts for return of lands they reclaim from Turkey," (Daily Sabah 2015), the reality is more complicated. As *Agos* has recently reported, the municipality of Zeytinburnu is refusing to relinquish control of the property (Kuyumciyan 2016a). Nonetheless, the initial court decision should be viewed as a victory.

their properties, the Patriarchate remains mired in a long legal battle over its most visible property.

More importantly, the court cases and subsequent property returns demonstrates the Hospital's willingness to do exactly what most of the other *vakıfs* have not done: operate as independent foundations vis-à-vis the Turkish state. In particular, with the IGS Building and the willingness to take the case all the way to European institutions of justice, the administration of the *Surp Pırgiç* Hospital has operated as an independent organization without explicit communicative recourse to the Armenian community. Of course, the actions are framed as benefitting the Armenian community, but the decision to pursue the court case was not made in consultation or with regards to other Armenian institutions. Rather, the Hospital administration pursues a policy of *leading by example*.

Leading is exactly what Bedros Şirinoğlu, the head of the *Surp Pırgiç Vakfı*, tries to do. In fact, the final factor in the tension between the Hospital and the Patriarchate is as much personal as it is a product of institutional factors. Şirinoğlu, as the head of the largest and most financially successful of the Armenian Foundations, has positioned himself as a community leader and in fact as an alternative representative for the Armenian community. In the recent development in the controversy over the possible election of a new Patriarch, Şirinoğlu has been a vocal supporter of elections. Given that the status quo favors Aram Srpazan and it is not immediately clear that he would win an election,³³ calling for elections is effectively a direct

³³ In order to be elected Patriarch of Istanbul, there are both internal regulations as well as a number of strictures placed by the Turkish government. Most importantly, the Bishop elected Patriarch has to have been born (not just be a citizen of) in Turkey. At present, in addition to Ateşyan, there are only a handful of other potential candidates, including the learned former dean of the Seminary in Etchmiadzin who also resides in Istanbul, Bishop Sahag Maşalyan. For some time, he was the only other bishop currently living in Turkey, though Archbishop Karekin Bekçiyan has returned to Istanbul and is the Vicar General as of the time of submission in July 2017. Other eligible

attack on Ateşyan and his leadership. Though Şirinoğlu tries to temper his criticism, the recent quote from an article in the Daily Sabah newspaper is revealing: “Şirinoğlu says that Armenians have no intention of removing Ateşyan from his post. "He can be a candidate. What matters here is holding an election," Şirinoğlu stated. "Ateşyan has been serving as an acting patriarch for seven years. You can't be an acting patriarch for seven years," he said” (Daily Sabah 2014).

I would like to conclude this section with a description of the annual celebration of the Feast of Ascension held at *Surp Pırgiç*. In this single “situation”³⁴ we can see the multiple uses of the space of the foundation, as well as the relationship between the Foundation and Patriarchate. On this day all of the clergy in the city gather for a festal *Badarak* in the morning at the little chapel on the grounds of the Hospital, and then there is a huge dinner given by the Foundation in the evening. This one situation, then, brings together everyone involved in the *Surp Pırgiç* Foundation, as well as members of the Armenian population at large and other dignitaries.

During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to attend both the service and the banquet two years in a row, in 2013 and 2014. The account that follows blends notes from both years as well as subsequent newspaper articles. It also draws on newspaper articles describing more recent iterations of the event. The sketch most closely follows the events of 2014, when, the second time around, I was fully aware of the unique confluence of actors the situation allowed.

The Feast of the Ascension (*Hampartsum* in Armenian), celebrated by a number of Christian denominations every year on the fortieth day after Easter, commemorates Jesus’ return

candidates for the position of the Patriarch of Istanbul include the head of the Eastern Diocese of America, another bishop residing in America, and the Diocese of Gougark in Armenia are all eligible candidates. See Note 5 in Chapter One and Note 27 above.

³⁴ Following Gluckman (1940).

(ascension) to Heaven after the Crucifixion and Resurrection celebrated at Easter³⁵. It marks the official end of Eastertide, and is considered one of the Five Major Feasts of the Armenian Church. For the forty days following Easter, every single day is considered a “dominical day” usually reserved for Sunday, and there is no fasting (contrasted with the previous forty days of fasting during Lent). *Hampartsum*, then, is a major part of the Armenian liturgical calendrical year.

Notably, in Istanbul in particular, *Hampartsum* has become more than a liturgical feast, due to the annual banquet at the Hospital. However, it also results from popular folk customs surrounding the Ascension that have been taken up by less church-oriented people as part of a general recovery of pre-Genocide Armenia.³⁶ Specifically, there is custom of young girls participating in a “wishing game.” This practice is immortalized in the folk song “Hele, hele,” and is associated in particular with the city of Diyarbakır. In an interview for an article in *Agos*, Bishop Sahag Maşalyan describes these and some other customs of *Hampartsum*, and (naturally, for the Bishop) places them in the context of the Christian celebration (Dadıroğlu 2013). All of this is to mark the collective excitement and importance surrounding the Feast of the Ascension—an interest that already exceeds the liturgical but is nonetheless grounded in the temporality and calendrics of the Church.

On the morning of *Hampartsum* (always a Thursday, since it is forty days after Easter Sunday) in 2014, I woke up earlier than normal and dressed in the full black suit with tie that I

³⁵ The account is briefly described at the end up the Gospels of Mark and Luke (but not Matthew or John), simply saying that he was “taken up.” A longer account occurs at the beginning of the Book of Acts, in 1:9-11.

³⁶ In this respect, see especially the “Houshamadyan” project. Though based in Berlin, the project taps into a general sentiment that, as we will see, is also articulated in the pages of *Agos* and through the work of the Hrant Dink Foundation. <http://www.houshamadyan.org/en/home.html>

wore only rarely. After the more, shall we say, strict, priest had begun his tenure at St. Sarkis, I had started wearing a tie on Sundays more often, but this outfit I reserved for important days. And it wasn't just that it was one of the five major feast days of the Armenian Church; *Hampartsum* was the only time I had ever seen every single priest and bishop assembled together at the same time. I'm sure there were other meetings, and I had missed the ordination of priests the previous year which I assumed everyone attended. In part, though, since The Feast of the Ascension fell on a Thursday, the priests were not disbursed across the city at their own parishes like they often were. So, they all assembled at the Hospital (Figure 3). Often intimidating in the singular, I dressed my best in preparation for seeing all of the priests at once.

Given that I regularly served at the altar at the Hospital, I was given the opportunity to serve that day, which began with a long morning service where the priests joyfully sang the parts usually sung by choir members or deacons. As with most Feast days, the liturgy includes longer hymns and extra variables. Such liturgical services often take hours, and today was no exception. The little chapel was packed to the brim, including a number of the dignitaries and Foundation Board members. The final moments of the service that took place outside the chapel, the *Antasdan* or "Blessing of the Field" service that accompanies many feast days was a prime photo op (again, see Figure 3). Despite their attendance, there was a clear "division" of labor between the Patriarchate and the Foundation Board, as this was the church event and many of the dignitaries that we see in the newspaper photograph are literally "in the background." The liturgical services that placed the day calendrically were sequestered to the little area up the stairs that formed a separate and separated courtyard from the rest of the Hospital grounds.

After the liturgy ended, I spent some time in the little office across the church courtyard, but only after the celebrant clergy had removed their liturgical vestments and left. Feast days like this were always a nice chance to catch up with friends and altar servers from other parts of the city. I chatted for a while with my friend Ari who attended a church I visited regularly, but not on a weekly basis. Of the same age, we always enjoyed each other's company. If the anthropological category of ritual as the structural-functionalists saw it is supposed to create solidarity, at the very least this "ritual" quite explicitly brought a significant portion of the Armenian population together at one place. At the same time, it also highlighted a number of crucial tensions, all played out on the stage offered by the *vakif*.

Returning that evening after a walk along the *sahil*, the seaside, and an interview back on the other side of the city (carelessly scheduled), I found many of my church friends that had been at the center of the action that morning during liturgy. A number of them feature prominently in the picture below. Nonetheless, in the evening, we were just one of the approximately three hundred attendees to the annual banquet. Aram Sprazan and a few other high-ranking clergy were seated at the elevated "head table," but many of the clergy were either among the ranks of the rest of us or did not even attend, highlighting the division between the two activities. My friends and I grouped together, started eating pastries, and waited to be served wine.

Other than the food itself, the evening consisted of music, a slideshow detailing some of the Hospital's work, and a few speeches extolling the importance of the Foundation.

Hampartsum was chosen as the annual day for the feast because this was the day the Hospital

was founded in 1832³⁷. Yet the size of the feast and the attendance spoke directly to the prominence of the Hospital as well as the assertion of influence by the Foundation in the person of Şirinoğlu. While even the Saturday feast at St. Sarkis brought most of the priests, as I mentioned, the full contingent including both bishops was virtually unheard of. The centrality (as well as pretensions to) of the Hospital was metonymically marked by the size of the banquet.

The highlight, perhaps, of the evening, was the two speeches given by Aram Srpazan and Bedros Şirinoğlu, respectively. What brought to my attention the importance of this “situation” was in fact the speech given by Şirinoğlu in 2013. That first banquet I wasn’t sure what it was exactly I was attending, but the rather direct criticism of Aram Srpazan he offered that year, while the Bishop sat almost directly next to him, was astonishing to me. It was *the* topic of conversation among my church-going friends for days. So in 2014, I came armed with my tape recorder. Unfortunately, the tone of the speeches that year was rather tame. In 2016, though, Şirinoğlu again took the opportunity to weigh in on the question of Patriarchal elections, saying, “All of wealth of our *vakıfs* concerns our community [*cemaat*]. At the times when we organize, we can be successful in anything. But today we are in such a divided condition that we are nearly reduced to hundreds of groups.” He went on to question whether or not the community [again, *cemaat*], had a Plan B. In a clear assertion of the projected leadership of the Hospital, he continued, “The Hospital has Plan B, it also has a Plan C. Our community needs a Plan B.”

³⁷ Armenian calendrics are outside the scope of the present chapter, but the coordination of extra-ecclesial events with liturgical calendar was quite common. While the practice is generally lost (although, for instance, weddings are generally not performed during Lent), in Istanbul the coordination is still felt on days like *Hampartsum*. I often find myself searching my fieldnotes on the basis of liturgical time. For instance, I knew my interview with Laki Vingas was also conducted around the time of *Hampartsum*, so a quick look at the date of Easter 2014 reminded me of when we met. The role of liturgical time in the shaping of contemporary rhythms is a topic I plan to address in future work. It briefly recurs in Chapter Five where I explore the affective resonances between Armenian hymns and the call to prayer.

Stated in the presence of one of the acknowledged and “traditional” heads of the community, the contrast was a thinly veiled criticism of existing leadership and an assertion of his own prowess as a community leader (Kuyumciyan 2016b).



Figure 3. Newspaper Article about the Feast of the Ascension at Surp Pırgiç Armenian Hospital. Pictures include the assembled clergy of the city, the head of the foundation, Bedros Şirinoğlu, and a cameo by the author. Nor Marmara Newspaper, Istanbul, Friday, May 10, 2013. Issue 10185, Page 1.

We see, then, that the *vakıfs* are a crucial site on which the dynamics of communal politics play out. They provide a platform from which individual actors can stake a position within the community: the material support offers the necessary resources to support projects central to the community and given that they are one of the few visible organizations, a position

of leadership within the *vakif* structure is one of the most prominent roles among Armenians. Having explored some of the tensions between different *vakifs* and the structural tensions arising from the place of the Patriarchate, we turn to another central question within *vakif* organization, that of the structure and make-up of individual foundation boards.

The Debate over Vakıf Board Elections and the Question of Transparency
Given that each *vakif* is chartered independently, with the methods of organization

stipulated by the founder in the charter³⁸, there is absolutely no uniformity in the administration of the *cemaat vakifs*. As with a number of other characteristics of *vakifs*, a generic structure or structure applicable to all categories of foundations results in particularly pernicious unintended effects with regards to the non-Muslim community foundations. In this case, the general lack of uniformity in administration of the foundations isn't immediately problematic in the case of Muslim foundations. Indeed, the ways in which this lack of uniformity is articulated as a problem for non-Muslims elucidates the nature of the descriptor "community"³⁹ used for *cemaat*, creating the euphemistic category "Community Foundations."

That is, Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in Turkey, demographically as well as politically, rarely find the need to coordinate as *all* Muslims. In part, various state structures

³⁸ The legal form of the *waqf*, including the question of its foundation and the role of the founder was briefly described above. Since the goal of the chapter is not a comprehensive legal history of the institution of the *vakif* in Turkey, some of the details of the founding of a foundation may not be perfectly spelled out. The important point in this instance is simply that as a result of the laws surrounding the charters of *vakifs*, there is no uniformity in the administration of them. Moreover, recall that the charters referred to here are not even the *vakfiye* of the standard foundation, but mostly the legal documentation drawn up as a result of the 1913 and 1936 Declarations.

³⁹ That is, community becomes a problem exactly for the marked, or minority category. While in contemporary usage we might worry about a sense of community in a neighborhood, say, community already marks out a special set of circumstances, a population that is or needs to be set apart for some reason. This is why the "feel-good" nature of community described by Zygmunt Bauman (Z. Bauman 2001) is challenged by John Kelly and Martha Kaplan in their book *Represented Communities*. For them, communities in Fiji were "constituted by specifically imperial institutions of representation" (2001, 83). In other words, "community" is often explicitly that group that is marked out as separate or even problematic by technologies of power.

fulfilled and fulfill this role (the Şeyhülislam and the Diyanet). Likewise, during the Ottoman period, Armenians were less likely to coordinate as *all* Armenians: there were differences of class, geography, and religion. So, a *vakıf* supporting a church in the provinces would have had little organizational reason to coordinate or develop a similar administrative structure to the *Gentronagan* School in Central Istanbul. Today, though, there are only four remaining recognized Armenian *vakıfs* outside of Istanbul⁴⁰, and also given that not all the churches or *vakıfs* are “active” other than in a legal sense, the material heritage of the Armenians of Istanbul has increasingly been articulated as the property of the “community.” I would distinguish this from the idea that it is the heritage of “all Armenians,” as this doesn’t necessarily suggest coordination between organizations: the fact that a world historical site like that Blue Mosque is seen as heritage for Muslims throughout the country (or indeed, for “everyone”) doesn’t lead to calls for coordination between it and the Rüstem Paşa Mosque not too far away. To the extent that the coordination occurs, it does so through the state. So it is not the status as “heritage” per se that raises the problem of coordination among *vakıfs*, but rather the status as *community* heritage. In this case, the notion of a community is articulated exactly through the material structures that are woven together.

Given the sense that the “Community Foundations” are exactly heritage that is drawn together for a community, then the coordination and articulation among them becomes a question. In fact, it is not a coincidence that it was when the Foundations Council began

⁴⁰ The St. Krikor Lusavoriç Church in Kayseri, though without a priest or an active population, has maintained its status as a *vakıf*. The two Armenian churches in the province of Antakya, which share a priest, are both recognized foundations. Finally, the magnificent St. Giragos Church in Diyarbakir, recently renovated and until very recently the site of an emergent group of both Christian and Islamized Armenians, is also a “community foundation.”

including one member explicitly related to Community Foundations that the coordination of the foundations began in earnest. When representation to the state became possible—but limited in the number of representatives—then the need for the *vakıfs* to coordinate arose. We will return to the manner in which this representation within the Foundations Council altered the modes in which minority populations engaged with the state in the final section of the chapter. Here, I turn to the debates over coordination between foundations and specifically the administration of the *vakıfs*, one of the central and ongoing sites of political engagement among non-Muslims of Turkey.

When I returned to Istanbul to begin long-term fieldwork in Autumn 2012, other than my usual engagement with the churches, I wasn't entirely sure where to start. I knew I planned to work with the Hrant Dink Foundation, and had made some contacts there during “exploratory fieldwork” the year before. Yet I wasn't sure what exactly I could do there. Other than that, my fieldwork consisted in finding places where the Armenian language daily newspapers were sold, and reading both those two papers as well as the bilingual Turkish-Armenian weekly *Agos*. One of the features of all three papers is the “announcements” section, usually featuring big church events like the one described above. Shortly after my arrival, though, I noticed something different: an announcement for a series of “town hall” style meetings regarding the *vakıfs*. I translated the announcement, but without knowing the background, the topic remained a little opaque.

Fortuitously, the first in the series of lectures was in my neighborhood⁴¹ at one of the churches. So I collected my notebook and made my way to the event. It was organized under the heading “New *Vakıf* Election Organizing Principles,” and took place in one of the “salon” large rooms on the grounds of what at the time I just thought of as churches—but which I would later recognize as *vakıfs*. The banner of the school associated with the church and the *vakıf* hung behind the table set up in the front of the room. About fifty people were scattered in the audience sitting on folding chairs. In the front, the speakers, assembled from a group of intellectuals that were working with the name “Düşünce Platformu,” which I’ll translate as “Opinion Platform,” sat at a long table. A powerpoint had been prepared.

Between the powerpoint itself and the article in *Agos* about the event the next day, I began to put the pieces of the problem together. The meetings were actually a platform for the “Opinion Platform” to present the results of a survey they had conducted about the *vakıfs* and the election of their administrators. The powerpoint included answers to questions like, “Why are the *vakıfs* important?” questions I myself was interested in. Much of my appreciation for the system and the centrality of the material basis for minority existence in Turkey today derives from this first fortuitous meeting.

Among the issues raised included the discomfort over the total lack of transparency of *how* many *vakıfs* appointed or elected their administrators. Similarly, as Laki Vingas would point out to me later, there was a general sense that foundation administration should be by council,

⁴¹ I lived in Pangaltı, only because of a friend I knew from a completely different context. Later, I figured out it was adjacent to Kurtuluş, one of the most densely populated Armenian neighborhoods in the city. So though my fieldwork was not quite done in the immersive experience of living with a family that has classically characterized anthropological ethnographic work, I found the experience of living so close to Armenian institutions and corner stores that sold the Armenian papers quite instructive. In later chapters as well as articles in preparation, I describe how living in this neighborhood led to particular ethnographic insights.

though the regulations only stipulated that the minimum number of council members was three, while some councils had as many as nine members. This lack of uniformity was another topic that informed the work of the “Opinion Platform.” A final crucial issue was that of the representative or democratic aspects of the *vakif* administration. The Platform noted that there were only about three women in all the foundation councils. Thus, the goal of the survey and the subsequent town hall meetings to disburse the results of the survey (also published in *Agos*) could be seen as a kind of consciousness-raising activist effort to push for reform in the *vakif* administration. As the powerpoint presentation noted, given the huge material support available from the foundations, and given the possible projects that could be developed using the foundations as the organizational starting point, democratic access to and representative status of those foundations was crucial.

Notably, though the meeting took place on the grounds of a *vakif* that was anchored by a church (and the accompanying school), priests or other church-goers were notably absent. In fact, the only people I recognized in the room were the then-editor of *Agos* I had met at the office and the lawyer who took prominent minority rights cases that I knew from the paper. Several of the people who asked questions after the initial presentation were Turkish-Armenians born in Istanbul but who were living abroad, including a young woman who was a university student in France. In fact, in addition to Turkish and Armenian, I heard a significant amount of French being spoken around me.

The point of this observation is to highlight two things about *vakifs* and the debate over their administration. First, there are significant divides over the importance of *vakif* reform and indeed over the need for the kinds of politics that can be built around the foundations. This is

perhaps unsurprising, and I don't want to suggest that church-goers were not present because they were somehow inherently conservative. Rather, I want to offer my own initial inability to conceive of the churches as *vakıfs*: for many of the deacons, choir members, or just devout men and women I spent time with at the churches, the *vakıfs* were first and foremost churches. This is not to say that they weren't interested in the proper administration of them, as a number of scandals and the reactions to them made clear. Rather, it was that the function of the *vakıf* was limited to its primary function: a church, a school, a hospital—or at most a hospital that also contained a chapel. Political action mounted through or over *vakıfs* was not part of their political repertoire.

For the people grouped around the Hrant Dink Foundation, and specifically in this case the “Opinion Platform,” essentially it was a waste of resources to use *vakıfs only* for their primary function. This relates to the second point I want to highlight about the debate: *vakıfs*, whether conceived as such or not, are already used in these multiple ways: the “Opinion Platform” met in the room above the small room where I would later sip tea with an influential priest. I would come to other meetings and ceremonies in the same “salon” throughout my time in Istanbul. Similarly, the Hospital, by hosting the banquet or even just as a space where elderly Armenians sat in the shade and spoke freely in Armenian, was a space with multiple uses. Even the church-goers who conceived of *vakıfs* primarily through its stated purpose also used the same foundation in a multiplicity of ways. The debate was not over the fact that the *vakıfs could* be used to multiple ends, but rather if they should be the site from which to launch a coordinated political effort for a different way of conceiving the community.

The central divide is between those who see the *vakıfs* primarily through their stated function (church, hospital, orphanage), or to a lesser extent as a generic site of collective gathering, and those who see the vast material support—both physical and financial—as a site from which to launch political projects. This divide straddles, but is not isomorphic to, a debate about and interest in representation. As seen above, the “Opinion Platform,” in its attempt to articulate and shape collective action among Armenians through the *vakıfs*, equated democratization within the Armenian community with the *vakıf* boards being more “representative.” Gender equity, in particular, is an issue that the “Opinion Platform” asserts can be addressed through the representative status of the foundation councils.

Here, those interested in representation are also those who think the *vakıfs* should be used to launch a new, democratic, intracommunal politics. It is possible, though, to see the attitudes toward the *vakıfs* as sites of potential politics and the interest in representation aligning in several different ways. The mirror position, those who are neither interested in representation nor alternative coordinated collective action grounded in the foundations, is embodied in someone like Harut, an older man who was on the same liturgical circuit I was. Harut happily ate lunch at the Hospital after *Badarak* and was clearly interested in the sociality of the spaces offered by the *vakıfs*, but was otherwise uninvolved in the life of the foundations. *Surp Pırgiç*, for him, was the site of a church, a meal, conversation, and sometimes medical services.

Then, there are visions of new or alternate collective action and coordination that are not interested in representation at all. Many of these are complicated by the fact that the actual collective and social work is undertaken by the *derneks*. Two examples will demonstrate how the *derneks* are often connected to *vakıfs*, complicating the potential for communal action. First are

the choir associations. We will encounter them again in detail in Chapter Four. Here, I introduce them as an example of a coordinated effort connected to the foundations that is not interested in whether or not the foundations are representative institutions or how to create institutions which are more “representative” at all.

Many churches, which are registered *vakıfs*, have long traditions of skilled choirs, singing not only during the *Badarak*, but in concerts. Though dependent upon the *vakıf* in that they derive from the church, they are registered separately, as *derneks*. These choir associations could be seen as noncontroversial extensions of primary *vakıf* activity. However, as we will see in detail, the concerts they offer exceed a liturgical function and subtly extend the sphere of possible collective Armenian engagement. Thus, we can say that they are interested in using the *vakıfs* as sites for new kinds of collective action—though collective communal actions that are in no way engaging with the question of representation.

A second example are the school alumni associations, also registered *derneks*. As with the choir associations, these alumni groups are grounded in *vakıfs* (schools having their own complicated status, yet usually on the grounds of *vakıf* property and associated with a particular foundation). Their collective legal basis, though, is that of a *dernek*. These groups are some of the most dynamic sites for collective Armenian action, to the extent that many have affiliate groups in New York and Los Angeles. They organize parties, participate in sports competitions, and sponsor speakers and lectures. Though perhaps not as explicitly political or progressive as the activists around the Hrant Dink Foundation, these alumni groups clearly envision the *vakıfs* as potential sites for collective action. At the same time, though, these activities are singularly uninterested in the question of representation.

Finally, there is a significant and powerful contingent interested in representing the Armenian people, and having the *vakıfs* be representative, without launching any kind of new collective project—certainly not a progressive politics—using the foundations and their resources. The idea of a *vekil*, a minister, also potentially translated “representative,” extends simply to the head the *vakıf*, or, in a different context, to Aram Srpazan in his role as chief bishop of the Patriarchate during the actual Patriarch’s illness. Someone like Bedros Şirinoğlu, as we have seen, sees the representative capacity of the position of *vakıf* head, but works solidly within an existing vision of the role of the foundations.

This leads to a related, important, debate about the coordination of the *vakıfs*. Through the “Opinion Platform” and other venues, people supported in part by the Hrant Dink Foundation had one vision of how to coordinate the foundations in order to put them to the service of the entire community. Another platform also exists, known as VADİP, the *Vakıflararası Dayanışma ve İletişim Platformu*, the “Interfoundation Solidarity and Communication Platform.” This group is headed by Bedros Şirinoğlu, and has gradually become one of the most important spaces for the foundations to coordinate. However, the group is not without criticism, and the politics of someone like Şirinoğlu clearly has different priorities from the gender-equitable and democratic vision of the “Opinion Platform.” Even Laki Vingas expressed some reservations about VADİP, because they had not constituted themselves as a legal body, a *dernek* (association). Instead, they were a loosely affiliated coordinating body—not exactly the paragon of legal transparency for which the “Opinion Platform” advocates.

VAKİP is an all-Armenian coordinating body. The Greek population has a separate coordinating body, Rumvader, which, as Vingas pointed out, is an official legal *dernek*. Its

official name is the *Rum Cemaat Vakıfları Destekleme Derneği*, the “Association for the Support of the Greek Community Foundations⁴².” Though these two entities, VADİP and Rumvader, perform similar functions for the Armenian and Greek populations respectively, the ad hoc nature of VADİP and the refusal to seek official status creates a question of legitimacy for some Armenians⁴³.

We can also see here another twist of the screw in the legal difficulties surrounding the inability to create new *cemaat vakıfs*, and the confusion arising from the three separate categories. The “Opinion Platform,” grouped around the Hrant Dink Foundation, is thus supported by a new foundation (*yeni vakıf*), and uses that support and independence to critique the opaque, undemocratic, and ad hoc nature of the administration of community foundations. In the Armenian case, those community foundations are coordinated by a collection of *vakıf* leaders with no legal status whatsoever. In the Greek case, the coordinating body, due to the nature of its mission, was established not as a *vakıf*, but as a *dernek*. This leads to the rather strange situation where the coordinating body for these community foundations is not itself a foundation. Any collective political action among non-Muslims in Turkey must navigate this complex legal landscape. The legacy of Ottoman law and the Treaty of Lausanne guarantees at least one additional level of complexity for non-Muslims, namely the legal sequestering of the category of community foundation.

While there are a number of other important debates that we could trace within the Armenian (and other non-Muslim) populations over the *vakıfs*, my goal in the last two sections

⁴² See their website (in Greek and Turkish), <http://www.rumvader.org/Page/84/anasayfa.html>

⁴³ Though many of the debates about transparency and intracommunal democratization also occur among the Greek population (Adar 2013).

has been to highlight the way in which the foundations themselves are a site on which intracommunal politics plays out. As I have suggested, this is due in large part to the significant material resources that are available, from directly financial to built infrastructure. At the same time, it is clear that the influence of the *vakıfs* also has to do with their unique position as historical, registered corporate associations. Hence the authority of the foundations as a site from which to launch a political vision of the Armenian community exceeds the material support.

Importantly, these debates only sometimes tackle the representative status of the foundations and the role of representational politics in the constitution of the Armenian community. I want to emphasize that there are clearly different modes of representation active: the representative status of Aram Srpazan is different from the head of a *vakıf* and both invoke different political possibilities from the idea of creating a more representative institution by including more women on the foundation councils. *Within* the Armenian population, then, there are debates about not only the role of the *vakıfs* and the most effective way to use them for the collective good, but also about the necessity of representational institutions and the kinds of political representation possible.

In the final section, I would like to turn from the *intracommunal* political possibilities back to Laki Vingas and his role on the Foundations Council as a crucial site of minority politics as the minority communities encounter the state. Here, the question of representation is more explicit. It is also perhaps more complicated: VADİP and Rumvader, in addition to representatives of the Jewish *vakıfs* all elect a single representative to the Foundations Council.

In this respect, Vingas⁴⁴ represents all non-Muslim foundations to the state. And, to the degree that the *vakıfs* are as seen institutions representative of their respective communities, he becomes an important representative of non-Muslims in general. As with Bedros Şirinoğlu in his capacity not as chair of a single *vakıf*, but the most prominent one, or with Aram Srpazan as the acting head of the site of ecclesial authority, Vingas' position is not just about intracommunal activity but about the site of contact between the non-Muslim population and the state.

The non-Muslim Member of the Council of Directorate General of Foundations and the Question of Representation

To close the chapter, we return to the Greek Cemetery up the Bosphorus and to Laki Vingas. His comments and voice have run throughout the chapter in part because of his articulate, studied answers to my questions and his commentary on so many aspects of the Community Foundations. At the same time, though, he was present throughout the chapter because of his unique and novel position. The regulations that changed in 2008, described earlier in the chapter, have given the *vakıfs* the opportunity to be “more free to act, to be more participant in the social life of our communities,” he told me earlier in the interview. Nonetheless, there was much to accomplish: harking all the way back to the original fragility of the non-Muslim foundations grounded in the decree from the Sultan, the current freedoms were “given by somebody” and therefore could be taken away again. Therefore, there was a need for “another legal base for sustainability of our rights.”

⁴⁴ Since our interview, Vingas stepped down from his position after two terms. With a kind of Washingtonian sentiment, he insisted that despite his popularity the democratic impulses he and many other non-Muslim leaders were trying to foster dictated that someone else take the helm. He wanted it to be someone outside the Greek community, so that the different minority groups would learn to work with each other. Today, his position is held by Toros Alcan, an Armenian orthodontist and professor.

Yet, he said, “You cannot compare it to ten years ago.” Then, in 2008, his position was created. When I asked about minority representation to the Directorate General of the Foundations before that, he responded:

Not at all. I’m the first ever. They widened the council [in 2008]. It was five, it became fifteen. Ten are nominated from the government and five are elected. One, me, is elected for the 167 *Cemaat* Foundations. Three people represent the “new” foundations and one represents the *mülhak*.

Later, when we were discussing this representative status, he noted that when the position was first created there were a number of people who thought that there should be one representative for each community. He himself thought this was a “bit extreme.” In fact, in his own work he stressed the importance of bringing together the different minority groups, all of whom he saw as having similar situations vis-à-vis the state.

Yet the initial debate strikes to the heart of modern secular representation. Though the Patriarchates have often been seen as “representatives” of the communities⁴⁵, Vingas recognized that this was unsustainable. At the same time, even if minority representation is already a fraught question, it strikes to the heart of the secular tenants of the Turkish Republic that “non-Muslim minority” is a category that is represented by a single individual to the Directorate General of Foundations. If Vingas’ (now Toros Alcan’s) position demonstrates the centrality of the *vakıfs* in the life of the non-Muslim communities—indeed his is in a sense the only freely elected position that is directly a representative of those populations—it also speaks to the paradoxical premises of a secular regime.

⁴⁵ See Chapter One.

Ultimately, the debate and efforts surrounding the *vakıfs* demonstrates the multiple possibilities for collective action which can be launched from them. Many of these possibilities are set squarely within the legacy of the *millet* system discussed in the first chapter. Indeed, the specific status of non-Muslim *vakıfs* takes on a new salience simultaneously with the secularization of the *millet*s and the injunction to keep religion and ethnicity (as well as politics) separate. Many of the forms of collective action launched from the site of the *vakıfs* are concerned with what I am calling “modern secular representation.” At the same time, there are clearly other possible conceptions of collective action that rely on other modes of representation and other forms of grounding and making the community present. In the following chapter, we turn to Armenian theological conceptions of “the Word” and the contemporary Armenian press in Istanbul in order to explore potentially different forms of “presence making.”

Chapter Three: *The Armenian Press and Forms of Presence Making*

“You know where to buy the papers, right?” Nishan asks me in Armenian. It wasn’t the first time he had asked me this, and I knew where the conversation was going. We had just gotten off the bus that runs from the little church on the Asian side of the Bosphorus to the busier hub of Üsküdar. Stepping off the bus into a bustle of people headed from the tram, the ferries, or just to lunch by the water, I stayed close to the old man as we crossed the street.

“Yes,” I responded. “Usually I get them by my apartment, but I know a couple places.”

“Good,” he replied. “So what you need to do is buy them and just read them out loud. Even if you don’t understand everything. Just practice reading. The papers are perfect for it.”

Invariably, this conversation would happen after I read the Gospel in the context of the liturgy at the little church. As an ordained deacon of the Armenian Church, one of my duties was to read the Gospel. Though many Armenians in Istanbul don’t speak Armenian, those who do usually speak it much better than I do. I first learned to read in the context of liturgy, being taught by the wife of one of my priests when I was ten. It was only years later, during college, that I studied Armenian in earnest and was able to understand the words I was reading. Those Armenians in Istanbul who *do* speak Armenian, however, often went through a rigorous primary and secondary education at one of the prestigious Armenian “special” schools in the city. So I

was always a little anxious to read the read the Gospel in front of them, knowing that even if I had practiced the reading the night before, I would stumble somewhere.

Nishan's repeated admonitions to practice reading my Armenian aloud were elicited by a public performance of spoken Armenian in the church. Though the reason for my linguistic training was ecclesial, Nishan did not direct me to practice by reading the Bible itself. Earlier in my Armenian education, priests would have me read passages from the Gospel or from the liturgical services themselves in order to improve my reading fluency. But Nishan directed me elsewhere: to the Armenian language newspapers of Istanbul. In this chapter, my goal is to unravel some of the reasons why Nishan would insist on the newspapers as a privileged site of language learning for liturgical purposes. What I will suggest is that the newspapers, their uses, and the interventions they make into the daily life of Istanbul Armenians resonate with a form of presence-making as it is understood in Armenian Christology.

We have already encountered the Miaphysite Christology of the Armenian Apostolic Church (and of the other "Oriental Orthodox Churches") in the first chapter on the *millet* system. There, I argued that the theological, specifically Christological, difference between Chalcedonian and Miasphysite Christology was the organizing principle behind the division of the two Christian *millets*. Recall that the Chalcedonian formula posits that Jesus Christ has two natures, God and man, united in one person. The Miaphysite position offers a less obvious description of Jesus Christ as one nature, God and man, without mixing. Counterintuitive at best, the Miaphysite position has encouraged mystical tendencies in Oriental Orthodox theology and bolstered a specific mode of Armenian hermeneutics sketched in the final chapter. Here, I want to suggest that it also supports a specific conception of presence-making.

Of course, all post-Nicean Christian churches conceive of Jesus Christ as both God and man, emphasizing the Incarnation of God as the man Jesus Christ in the narrative of salvation. From this perspective, the Incarnation is exactly a moment of presence-making, of making God present on Earth. St. Athanasius, the stalwart defender of the divinity of Christ, in his reflections *On the Incarnation*, describes this coming into the world, saying, “For this purpose, then, the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God comes into our realm, although he was not formerly distant” (Athanasius 2011, 65). The invocation of Christ as the Word of God comes from the opening passages of the Gospel of John. With John and Athanasius, then, if we take seriously the identification of Jesus Christ as the Word of God, then the Christological reflection on the making present of God in this world is also a reflection on a semiotic conception of presence-making whereby the Word is made present and known¹.

If, then, the Armenian (Miaphysite) Christological position differs substantially from the Chalcedonian one, then there exists a different mode of conceiving the Incarnational moment. To reiterate, all Christians who accept the Nicene Creed consider the Incarnation to be the moment that God as Word is made present in the world. But if the articulation of the nature of Christ differs, then the *way* in which the Word becomes present in the Incarnational moment is different. The non-Chalcedonian Christology of the Armenian Apostolic Church has been “crucial in Armenian Church history; and an attempt to understand it may shed light on other

¹ I am, of course, nowhere near the first to suggest the link between semiotics and Christology. John Milbank, in *The Word Made Strange* not only demonstrates various links throughout Christian history between semiotic or linguistic concerns and Christological ones, but offers a rich account of this connection in light of broadly postmodern trends in the philosophy of language (Milbank 1997, 84–120). What I would note, however, is that even Milbank is thoroughly Chalcedonian in his Christology. Precisely what I want to emphasize is the different ways this link between Christology and semiotics can be made in light of a strikingly different mode of Christological reflection.

matters also-problems concerning the personalities and literature of later periods” (Sarkissian 2006, 3). Exploring the potentially alternative semiotic ideology (Keane 2007) suggested by this Miaphysite Christology is an ongoing project, which I sketch further in the Conclusion. Here, I want to offer the possibility that this reflection on the theological presence-making of the Word might resonate with the way in which the Armenian newspapers in Istanbul make present the Armenian community.

The now-classic treatment of the relationship between newspapers and community formation is Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* (2006). A number of important critiques have been levelled against Anderson’s basic premise that the “empty, homogenous time” of modernity provided the means through which newspapers circulated to create an instantaneous collective that could “imagine” itself as the same group precisely because they were reading the same things at the same time. I situate Armenian ideas about language and the press within these frameworks, opening up the question of the role of the Armenian press in community formation as well as the form by which the press helps to “make present” the community. The chapter is less a critique of Anderson than an exploration of the links between language, the newspapers, and community that he has drawn attention to, with an eye to the potentially different aspects of presence-making revealed through the Armenian newspapers of Istanbul.

If the previous chapter detailing the role of the *vakıfs*² as sites for collective action demonstrated both the continued traction of politics based on modern secular representation and

² The *Vakıf*, or “religious foundation” is discussed in detail in Chapter Two. These organizations provide the material basis for Armenian organization and also are one of the few places where Armenians have the

other forms of projects less interested in questions of representation, the goal in this chapter is to parse the mode of presentation of the community to itself. At the same time, the chapter will highlight the way in which the newspapers themselves *participate* in the community. While they call into being and represent the community in an Andersonian manner, the Armenian press of Istanbul also partakes of different modes of making present that we can conceive of as active participation. As Nishan's instruction to use the newspapers to practice my Armenian pronunciation for liturgical purposes suggests, the Armenian press does much more than sustain a space of collective imagination. Armenian newspapers bolster and intervene in the material basis of the community in ways that do not depend on their representational functions.

The Armenian Press in Istanbul, Representation, and Forms of Presence-Making
A lively Armenian press, including two Armenian language daily newspapers, *Jamanak* and *Marmara*, the weekly Turkish-Armenian bilingual *Agos*, a monthly "society" paper *Luys*, and a monthly cultural magazine *Paros* constitutes the majority of the Armenian literary and publishing scene in Istanbul. In addition, the publishing house of *Aras* and the Turkuaz Bookstore are central institutions of the broader Armenian literary life in Istanbul. Separate from both the ecclesial organizations of the Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, and Protestant Churches, and the institutional context of the *vakıfs*, Armenian publishing is one of the central sites of collective Armenian life in Turkey. All of these publications have physical offices that serve as meeting places, and they each, in their own way, attempt to influence the way Armenian life is represented. In other words, with the press, we are confronted not just with the legal and

opportunity to politically represent themselves. As I discuss, the movement from *vakıf* to press helps to articulate the various ways in which different conceptions and instantiations of representation are relevant to the formation of an Armenian community.

material parameters of collective life that we explored in the previous chapter on the *vakıfs*, but with the representation of that life.

John D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, in their book *Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonization*, alert us to the elision of concrete methods of representation in Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities*. Kelly and Kaplan are careful in their exposition of the relationship between political and semiotic representation. In this chapter, by focusing on newspapers, one of the central technologies of semiotic representation of communities, I first show the complex and multiple arguments in the Armenian community over the literary representation of the community. Then, I connect those arguments over semiotic representation to the *vakıfs* and other sites of more explicitly political representation, demonstrating the anxiety over modern secular representation that follows from the demand that adequate political representation also be a form of faithful semiotic representation. To accomplish this, I will rely in part on the literature on "linguistic ideology" and its extension semiotic ideology within linguistic anthropology. Using some of the arguments in particular from *Regimes of Language* (Kroskrity 2000), I analyze the different ways the newspapers are used in debates over the semiotic representation of the Armenian community in Istanbul and its relationship to the larger Armenian community and nation.

Ultimately, in tracing these debates over the way in which Armenians view the press, language, and community, I return to Nishan's insistence to use the newspapers in different ways. As we will see from other uses of the newspapers, while the semiotic representation of the Armenian collective is central to debates about the constitution of the community and potential forms of action, practices of reading insinuated by Nishan point to other aspects of the

newspapers. By exploring the way in which newspapers are actively used to intervene into relationships, in particular through a form of participation, we can glimpse an alternative form of presence making. The emphasis on participation here signals the Armenian theological impulse to elide debates about the relationship between the human and divine aspects of Christ by always focusing on the person of Jesus himself. Participation in the divine through an engagement with the *person* of Jesus allows for both the divine and the human to emerge in that participation. This has been one of the major theological moves within Miaphysite Christianity to address how we encounter the person of Christ understood as one nature, God and man. Hence, exploring the moments when the word (of the press) is encountered in a form of active participation is one way to consider the possibility of a resonance with the Christology of the Armenian theological tradition.

As we will see, the Armenian press in Turkey offers a fairly clear chance to explore these questions of national identity, community formation and representation, and active forms of participation in the press. Only about 60,000 Armenians are left in Turkey, most of whom are in Istanbul. In Chapter One, I discussed the difficulties in determining the exact number of Armenians in Turkey, especially in light of a number of undocumented workers from the Republic of Armenia currently working in Turkey. Demographic questions addressed in the Introduction aside, in a city of 14 million and a country of 75 million, the Armenian population is small. Based off a survey conducted by the group *Nor Zartonk* in 2007, it is clear that an even smaller percentage of Armenians in Turkey speak Armenian or are comfortable enough to read

in Armenian³. I suggest in this chapter that the size of the population and the relationships of the readership result in the possibility that “participation” rather “representation” is the dominant trope for understanding of the role of the press.

A Brief History of the Armenian Press

There are few people more obsessed with the physical alphabet used for their language than Armenians. Anecdotally, the concretized alphabet can be found in ornate poster form hanging on the walls of homes, offices, or, in a particularly rococo form, made out jewels saved from the Soviet government inside of the headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Republic of Armenia. Leaving the interesting semiotic ideology at play in this tendency towards the materialization of the Armenian alphabet, we can see this obsession over the written word not only through a Christian lens⁴ but also through a national lens. In the alphabet created by a monk in the early fifth century some have seen a boundary-making project during a time when the Armenian nobility was pulled between Byzantium and Persia⁵. As with my own quick history here, almost all histories of Armenian printing or Armenian newspapers begin with the invention of the alphabet. Of course, this plays into the sort of “invented tradition” Hobsbawn et al are wary of (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983), but I note it here because the central importance given to the printed word in Armenian intellectual circles begins with the invention of the alphabet as an

³³ The results of the survey can be found in English from the organization’s website:
<http://www.norzartonk.org/en/?p=33>

⁴ One theological explanation relates the written word to the Incarnation, as the material manifestation of the Word of God, Jesus Christ. Thus, an extended theological metaphor is built from the embodiment of Jesus Christ in the world and the linguistic word (see Introduction), especially in its written, material form. During the Armenian Apostolic Liturgy, the congregation always stands when the Gospel or the Prophets—but not epistles—are read, because this is seen as an Incarnational moment: the Word being embodied.

⁵ Nersessian writes that Mashdotz, as a missionary, recognized the need for a national script which “he considered would help not only to spread the Christian faith but also to establish greater unity among his people” (V. Nersessian 1980, 9).

ethno-religio-national moment and all literary endeavors are ultimately seen as heirs of Mesrob Masdotz, the fifth century monk⁶.

If the invention of the Armenian alphabet stands as the starting point both of an idea of a continuous Armenian literature and the north star of all subsequent literary endeavors, in our brief history we can skip to the beginnings of Armenian printing in the sixteenth century.

Tellingly, the first Armenian printing presses were in Diaspora: Venice, Amsterdam, and Marseilles. Due to various restrictions on printing in the Ottoman Empire,⁷ printing presses were not used by Armenians inside the Ottoman Empire until the late eighteenth century. The first books printed both in and outside of the Ottoman Empire were largely religious, and the patterns of circulation often moved through priests and merchants. As with the first Armenian books, the first Armenian periodical was also printed outside of the lands where Armenians traditionally lived. Sustained by a wealthy merchant community originally from New Julfa in present-day Iran, *Azdarar* (“Intelligencer”) was published by an Armenian Apostolic priest in Madras, India for two years beginning in 1794 (Ghougassian 1999, 260)⁸.

⁶ Examples of this heritage, legacy, and indeed burden abound. Meline Pehlivanian’s article on the first *published* Armenian texts makes the connection explicit: The title of her article is “Mesrop’s Heirs” (2002). The first burst of translation following the Armenian translation of the Bible in the Fifth Century is known as the “Golden Age” of Armenian literature. An important period of Medieval production is known as the “Silver Age.” There is a feast of the “Holy Translators” in the calendar of the Armenian Church, and the same “Surp Tarchmanchatz” is given as a name for churches as well as schools. Lest this history seem far removed from a discussion of contemporary Istanbul, both of the Armenian language newspapers dedicated their children’s section to poems and statements by students about the importance of the alphabet on the Friday before the Feast of the Holy Translators.

⁷ See the special volume of the journal *Culture and History*, “The Introduction of the Printing Press in the Middle East” (Volume 16) for a good overview of this history. For the Ottoman case, see Johan Strauss’ “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire?” (Strauss 2003).

⁸ There are a handful of resources concerning Armenian printing and periodicals, but this section derives much of its information from the most succinct and collected statement on the history of the Armenian press, a 1963 dissertation by Karlen Mooradian at Northwestern University entitled “Armenian Journalism: A History and Interpretation” (Mooradian 1963).

At this time, and for the next two centuries, in addition to Diasporic centers such as Madras, Venice, Vienna, and Amsterdam, the main centers of intellectual and publishing activity were split between Western Anatolia (Istanbul and Smyrna, present-day Izmir) and the Caucasus (mostly Tiflis, modern Tbilisi in Georgia as well as the religious press established by Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi at the headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Etchmiadzin, currently in the Republic of Armenia). As a result of this split in publishing, one which mirrored a much longer partition of Armenian-speakers along an East-West axis⁹ two different dialects emerged during the nineteenth century, one centered on the literary tradition of Istanbul and the other around intellectual circles in Tbilisi. To this day, two major dialects, with a number of regional variations, exist: “Western Armenian” spoken in Turkey and the Diaspora which hails from the Ottoman Empire, and “Eastern Armenian” spoken in the Republic of Armenia. While some activists and intellectuals moved between these centers, the political tensions between Russia and the Ottomans meant that the literary development was mostly separate, and we will restrict ourselves largely to the Western Armenian periodicals produced on former Ottoman lands.

Among those, the papers *Arshaluys Araratian* and *Hairenaser* in Smyrna are concurrent with those in the Ottoman capitol of Constantinople, largely due to the presence of foreign companies in the port city (Mooradian 1963, 310–11). However, by the end of the nineteenth

⁹ The partition of Armenia into two, and sometimes three spheres has lasted at least since an agreement between Rome and Persia in the late Fourth Century which split the Kingdom of Armenia between the Romans and Sassanid Persian Empire. This East/West was maintained later between Byzantine/Persians, Ottoman/Persians, and later Ottoman/Russian with a sizeable Armenian population still in the Persian Empire. With the Armenian Genocide effectively ending indigenous Armenian life in Western Armenia, the Soviet Republic of Armenia and then then current independent Republic of Armenia remained on what had been the Eastern portion of this divide.

century, Istanbul had more Armenian periodicals than any other Armenian city. Outside of the capitol, the most important paper was the “Eagle of Vaspurakan” printed in the Van region of Turkey by an important Armenian Bishop known affectionately as Khrimian Hayrig (a diminutive form of father), who would lead Armenian delegations before the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and would eventually go on to become the Catholicos of all Armenians in the years directly before the Armenian Genocide (Mooradian 1963, 368–70).

Within Istanbul, newspapers were first organized along lines in a literary debate over the use of the vernacular. Later, a number of papers became party organs for the various Armenian Revolutionary parties which emerged in the last years of the Nineteenth century. The most important papers, however, introduced the important Armenian writers of the day, translated European (mostly French) literature into Armenian, and discussed the broader political issues of the Ottoman Empire in its period of reform. Many renowned Armenian writers got their start in the pages of daily or weekly periodicals, as columnists or perhaps with serialized novels. Perhaps *the* iconic writer of the early Twentieth century, Krikor Zohrab, an intellectual, member of the short-lived Ottoman Parliament, and personal friend to Talat Pasha (perpetrator of the Armenian Genocide), submitted short stories, poems, and columns to papers such as *Masis*.

Of the two Armenian language daily papers printed in Istanbul today, both claim a pedigree going back to the late Ottoman Empire. *Marmara* is technically *Nor* (New) *Marmara*, paying homage to, although not a direct descendent of, an important paper published in the late nineteenth century. And *Jamanak*, a family business started by the current editor Ara Koçunyan’s great-grandfather, is one of the only papers—in any language in Turkey—to run continuously from the end of the Ottoman period through the Republican period to the present

day. During my fieldwork I was able to attend a conference celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Armenian language daily.

The Armenian Press in Istanbul Today

Two things should be emphasized in this brief history of the Armenian Press. The first is that any Armenian literary endeavor is always self-consciously placed in a long tradition that has an ethno-religious characteristic. Even nationalist authors of the nineteenth century or explicitly anti-clerical writers of the twentieth century Diaspora acknowledge the debt owed to a fifth century monk that made Armenian literature possible at all. The conscious placement in this literary tradition and the emphasis on the alphabet itself—and hence literacy in Armenian as a virtue—is part of a larger semiotic ideology informing the Armenian press today. It also attests to the ecclesiastic legacy of all Armenian literary production, highlighting the possibility that Christology, exegesis, and other Armenian Christian concerns about the Word of God might resonate with extra-ecclesial uses of the word.

Second, Istanbul stands within this larger literary tradition with a special pride of place. As the capitol of the Ottoman Empire and the intellectual center for Armenians until the Armenian Genocide of 1915, Istanbul saw more presses and newspapers than any other Armenian city for much of the nineteenth century¹⁰ Many of the great Armenian authors of the nineteenth century were members of the intellectual elite of Istanbul, and these authors are still taught, in the original Western Armenian dialect, in schools in the Republic of Armenia. Writers like Siamanto, Daniel Varoujan, Krikor Odian, and Krikor Zohrab remain exemplars of the Armenian language throughout the Armenian-speaking world. Additionally, the newspaper

¹⁰ See (Mooradian 1963, 310–11).

Masis, now defunct but published in Istanbul for many years, was seen as *the* standard bearer of Armenian journalism. The publishing houses of Istanbul produced books still found throughout the Diaspora, to the point that there is a particular typeset that I can recognize on sight as late nineteenth century Istanbul¹¹.

Moreover, Istanbul was the locus of the standardization of the Western Armenian dialect. The “standardizing” regimes of Europe were “supported by the centralising institutions of education, labour markets, mass media and government bureaucracies that inculcate in the population a respect and desire for such linguistic forms” (Gal 2006, 162). Linguistic anthropologists have noted the role of power and nation-states in the formation of standard languages. The old joke is that a language is simply a dialect with an army¹². Western Armenian has never had an army. While there are textbooks and school curriculum from the nineteenth and twentieth century as well as an emergence of the Istanbul dialect as dominant, Western Armenian never had the full support of a state, even though it is taught in the Armenian *özel* schools in Istanbul. The press in Istanbul and Beirut stand as exemplary forms of written Western Armenian, and educated priests and the teachers are exemplary speakers. So the standardization available to Western Armenian today depends on these press institutions and exemplary speakers rather than being able to rely on state support.

¹¹ See Figure 4 below. From medieval manuscripts to the printing history discussed here in brief there is a beautiful tradition of Armenian typeface. Henrik Mnatsakanyan was a noted Soviet Armenian typographic artist who also collected and categorized Armenian fonts (Berry 2002, 166).

¹² Irvine and Gal discuss this “well-known saying” in a note to their chapter “Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 79). See also Haugen, “Dialect, Language, Nation” (1966).

Given that Armenian is a polycentric standard language, in that in the nineteenth century it was standardized into Western (Istanbul) and Eastern (Tbilisi) variants, there is a question of relative stability and institutional backing of the two major standards. Today, the Republic of Armenia continues to uphold standard Eastern Armenian. Eastern Armenian, as the state language of the Republic of Armenia has standardizing forces that Western Armenian never had and certainly does not have now. So, for instance, neologisms related to technology, etc. are almost always borrowed from Eastern Armenian. This lack of full institutional support for the Western Armenian standard is a large factor in the dominance of Eastern Armenian in the twenty-first century Armenian diaspora since the fall of the Soviet Union and the free movement of Eastern Armenian speakers throughout a formerly more homogenously Western Armenian speaking Diaspora.

Armenian publishers, editors, columnists, and writers are all highly aware of this specific Istanbul literary tradition, as well as the burden of being standard bearers. A recent conference organized by the Gulbenkian Foundation has sought to invigorate processes of Western Armenian language learning and dissemination, and several editors and writers from Istanbul took part. Thus, any literary endeavor in Istanbul today partakes of the larger legacy of Mesrob Masdotz, the heritage of the literati of nineteenth century Istanbul, and the burden of bolstering the Western Armenian standard in the twenty-first century.

ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹԻՒՆ

ՀԱՅՈՑ

ԳԼՈՒԽ Ա.



Յաղագս պատրիարքութեան Չաքարիայ, և. Յովհաննու Համատանց-
ւոյ, և. հարսածանայ Հովմէական Հայոց:

(1772) ՊԱՏՄՈՒՆ պատրիարք կաղզուանցի՝ միաբան ա-
թուոյն Էջմիածնի և նուիրակ, նստաւ յաթուռ պատրիարքու-
թեան կոստանդնուպօլսոյ՝ ՚ի վեցերորդ ամի թագաւորու-
թեան Սուլթան Մուստաֆա արքայի, և ՚ի տասներորդ ամի
Հայրապետութեան տեառն Սիմէօնի Հայոց կաթողիկոսի՝ յամի
տեառն 1772 ՚ի նոյեմբերի 30:

(1777) Յաւուրս սորա աէր Սիմէօն կաթողիկոս Էջմիածնի՝
արար փոփոխութիւն Տօնացոցին Հայոց, զոր շինեալ էին
նախնի սրբազան Հարք, սուրբն Իսահակ Պարթեւ և սուրբն
Մեսրոպ. որոց զինի և սուրբն Գրիգոր վկայասէրն՝ եղբայր
Ներսէսի Շնորհալուոյն՝ զվարս սրբոց թարգմանեալ ՚ի Յունա-
կանէն, և բերեալ ՚ի մի ըստ աւուրց նահատակութեան նոցին՝
կարգաւորեաց զՏօնացոցն, և բանադրանս յաւելեալ ՚ի վե-
րայ՝ վաղեաց զնա, յասելն. “Որպէս զի մի՛ իշխեսցէ այլ ոք
օտար ինչ և սխալական գիւտ մուծանել ՚ի յայս հաւաստա-
սահմանեալն Տօնացոց ”: Իսկ Սիմէօն կաթողիկոս առ ոչ ինչ
համարեալ զայս կապ բանադրանաց, արար փոփոխութիւն
սօնախմբութեանց՝ որպէս ինքն կամեցաւ: Յաւել ՚ի նմա և
զերիս անուանս, այսինքն՝ զՅովհան Որոտնեցի, զԳրիգոր, և
զՄովսէս Տաթեւացիս, և սահմանեաց տօնել զնոսս ընդ սուրբ
և աստուածաբան հայրապետին Յովհաննու Օճնեցւոյ՝ յերրոր-

Figure 4. First Page of the History of Armenia by Avedis Berberian, depicting the distinctive typeface of nineteenth century Istanbul. Printed 1871 in Istanbul. Digitized by Harvard Library.

Both of the Armenian language dailies explicitly place themselves in this tradition, but all linguistic output in Istanbul is aware of this background to some degree. The Aras publishing group publishes new material, including glossy tabletop books with the photographs of famed Armenian-Turkish photographer Ara Güler, but the largest amount of work is reprints and

Turkish translation of Armenian classics. Armenian writers of Istanbul such as the celebrated female author Zabel Yesayan make up the bulk of these translated classics. Even the iconoclastic *Agos* purposely publishes in Turkish as a response to the iconic relationship assumed between Armenian language speaker and member of the Armenian community. And it is worth noting that one of the only new works of fiction written in Western Armenian anywhere in the last twenty-five years comes from the pen of one of editors of the Armenian pages of *Agos*.

If this common legacy ties all of the contemporary press in Istanbul together, the different publications and literary centers all have different missions, each borne out in their pages. For the time being, I leave to the side both the Turkuaz bookstore and the *Aras* publishing house, and concentrate on the various periodicals in order to give a sense of what material is available to interested Armenian readers. There are three rough ways of categorizing the Armenian periodicals in Istanbul: first is by frequency of publication; second, language; third, the publication's own stated goals and mission. Obviously, both the first and second criteria are related to the goals of the publication, so I will begin by grouping the publications according to these first two methods.

First, there are two daily Armenian newspapers left in Turkey. *Jamanak* and *Marmara* are both distributed every day except for Sunday. They both are in the same format: a single large sheet folded into four pages and folded in half (Figure 5). *Jamanak* costs 25 kuruş (cents), while *Marmara* is 75 cents¹³. When I first began buying the papers, *Marmara* ran extra pages with color, often in Turkish, on Fridays, to which I attributed the price difference. However, this

¹³ The prices of both papers have gone up since I did my fieldwork in 2012-2014.

practice discontinued around 2015. Both papers have a fairly conventional “front page” which consists of news about Turkey generally, Armenian issues outside of Turkey, and issues specific to the Armenians of Turkey. The back page is almost always a continuation of stories from the front or inside pages. The inner two pages change based on the day of the week and are also where the major differences between the two papers can be found. These differences will be explored further below. Circulation of both of these papers is no more than 2000, and they are distributed through subscription and are sold at corner stands and a handful of markets in neighborhoods most populated by Armenians. Since they are entirely in Armenian and not widely distributed, it is clear that their intended audience is actually a fairly small, Armenian-literate subset of the Armenian population.



Figure 5. Front page of the daily newspaper Nor Marmara, Istanbul. March 26, 2013. Issue 1014, Page 1.

Agos, founded in 1996 by a group centered around Hrant Dink, is both the most widely circulated and well-known of the Armenian papers. Unlike the other two papers, it is a weekly consisting of twenty-four pages and is mostly in Turkish, with a four-page Armenian section in the middle of the paper. In addition to the same corner stands and markets in Armenian neighborhoods where the Armenian language dailies can be found, *Agos* is distributed to bookstores in the central shopping street of İstiklal, including chain music and bookstores like D&R. Turkish was consciously chosen as the language of publication. First, Dink and his co-founders knew that many young Armenians did not speak Armenian, or did not know it fluently enough to read the daily newspapers. Thus, the choice of language was an explicit attempt to widen participation in Armenian public life beyond the confines of a linguistic community. Second, the goal of the paper was to introduce Armenian issues to interested parties outside of the Armenian community, narrowly defined. In other words, using Turkish meant that the target audience was always larger than the Armenian community itself. This outward orientation has irked some Armenian readers, including a friend of mine that I served on the altar with for several months at a number of churches. One day, on the train home from the small Asian Side church I frequented, I asked him about *Agos* and he told me that “When it was first published, it was more oriented towards Armenian issues, but slowly became more interested in being a leftist voice in Turkish politics” more broadly. It is interesting to note that Haig claimed that the number of pages in Armenian was also reduced, such that he linked a drop in focus on the Armenian community to a decreased use of the Armenian language in the paper. As far as I can tell, *Agos* has always been publishing the same amount in Turkish and Armenian, so this

statement tells us more about a presumed link between Armenian language and the Armenian community than it does about the paper itself.

The last two publications are both printed monthly, and are newer endeavors. Neither will feature prominently in this chapter, but it is necessary to mention them in order to give a complete picture of the Armenian press in Istanbul. *Luys*, meaning “Light” debuted to much fanfare during my fieldwork in April 2013. Announcements for the “launch party,” which was attended by literati and bishops alike, appeared in the other Armenian papers¹⁴. Included in its description of itself on its website is the statement that “It’s possible to find lots of topics such as fashion and the latest trends.”¹⁵ Hence, I would describe it as a monthly society paper. Larger than the other papers, roughly the size and feel of the London Review of Books, it is published in Armenian and includes glossy pictures of Armenian newlywed couples, recipes, and interviews with Armenians both in and out of Turkey who are seen to be accomplishing great things.

Paros, the other monthly, could not be more different from *Luys*. Founded in 2011 by a number of intellectuals, it is a magazine that covers not only the Armenian community, but other non-Muslim populations, with the articles written in Turkish. It publishes cultural interest pieces, for instance a multi-issue series on Gomidas, the famed ethnomusicologist and arranger on the Liturgy who was rounded up with other intellectuals during the Genocide but was spared, eventually living out his days in an insane asylum in France. He is one of the most recognizable Armenian figures in addition to becoming a symbol of the Genocide. Like both *Luys* and the

¹⁴ See, for instance, the interview with the founder in *AGOS* on 12 April 2013, “Luys, the Colorful Face of the Armenian Community” (Page 9).

¹⁵ From their website, <http://luys.com.tr/wp/about-aja>. Translation from Turkish is mine.

Armenian language dailies, it often publishes pieces about the Armenian schools or other local community activities, but the goal of the magazine format is to publish longer, most intellectually stimulating pieces. In addition to subscriptions, it is distributed in established bookstores.

Language, Content, Audience

Each of these publications has a target audience, but if we leave aside the more directed audiences of the monthly magazines, we are left with the two Armenian dailies on one side, and *Agos* on the other. As mentioned above, the first and major difference between the target audiences of the papers is the language of publication. One of the important qualifications about language and the press that has come out of linguistic anthropology is the insistence that “homogenous language is as much imagined as is community” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 76). We see in the differences between Eastern and Western Armenian an interesting qualification to this, but the language ideology of the vast majority of Armenians sees this difference as either inconsequential or as marking a deep divide within the community. So, most of the Armenian language speakers certainly imagine the homogeneity of Armenian, but also subscribe to a Herderian “one people, one language” ideology¹⁶.

Thus, the founding of *Agos* is in part a rejection of this principle, or at least the recognition that “the community” cannot be identified purely with the linguistic community. It also helps to explain the antipathy to *Agos* by some conservative Armenians: a sense of the Armenian community as bounded by the institutional structures of Patriarchate goes hand-in-

¹⁶ See the excellent discussion of Herder’s ideas on language in Bauman and Briggs’ chapter in *Regimes of Language*, “Language Philosophy as Language Ideology: *John Locke and Johann Gottfried Herder*” (Bauman and Briggs 2000, especially page 174).

hand with a Herderian language ideology. From this perspective, *Agos* not only espouses dangerous “leftist” views that promote a different vision of collective institutional organization, but its use of Turkish maps directly onto those views. A form of inconization as Irvine and Gal describe it (2000, 58) identifies the left-leaning *Agos* and its interests beyond the Armenian community with its use of Turkish as such.

In a sense, then, there is a break between the ways in which the relationship between language and community is understood when it comes to the bilingual *Agos* and the Armenian-only dailies. As Silverstein notes in his discussion of Anderson, “The standard that informs the language community’s norm thus becomes the very emblem of the existence of that community, with a characteristic social distribution of strength and mode of allegiance” (2000, 122). The distaste with which many of my Armenian-speaking informants described *Agos* can be usefully understood within this mode of allegiance. Silverstein continues, “those with the greatest allegiance to this emblem of community-hood tend to imagine the existence of the perfect standard-using member of the language community as a democratically and universally available position of inhabitation of the language community to which everyone can, and even should, aspire” (122). Despite the willingness of *Agos* to disentangle the perfect community member from the use of Armenian as standard, it is interesting to note that even *Agos* marks certain kinds of news as more oriented toward the community by its publication in Armenian.

Much of what appears in the Armenian pages of *Agos* are not reproduced from the Turkish pages. Sometimes, if something is assumed to be of universal interest or fairly important, it is printed in both languages. For instance, the visit of the Diyarbakir-born Armenian oud player Onnik Dinkjian and his son, Ara, was described twice (see Figure 6). Even here,

though, the headlines are telling. In Armenian, the headline reads “The Dinkjians for Tibrevank,” suggesting that the performance was done for one of the “special” Armenian schools of the city. By contrast, the Turkish headline says, “An epic display of artistic skill from the Dinkjians.” In other words, the Armenian headline specifically references one of the central institutions of the Armenian community. Thus, even *Agos*, which seems to be less invested in a linguistic practice that privileges Armenian as a sign of inclusion in the Armenian community, nonetheless here offers a stark iconic use of Armenian as marker of membership in the community.



Figure 6. Differing Headline Describing the Same Event in the Pages of *Agos*. *Agos Newspaper, Istanbul. April 12, 2013. Issue 886, Pages 1 (Armenian Section) and 16.*

Beyond this first division of target audience by language, each of the three newspapers assumes certain types and categories of readers, that is, the “utterances” in the newspapers have “both an author” and an “addressee.” As Bakhtin describes, this addressivity of the text can assume an addressee who is “an immediate participant-interlocuter in an everyday dialogue, a differentiated collective of specialists in some particular area of cultural communication, a more or less differentiated public, ethnic group, contemporaries, like-minded people, [...], and so forth” (Bakhtin 1986). Through these assumed addressees, the various sections of the papers give a fairly robust idea of what the newspapers take to be the components of the Armenian community. Thus, we have already seen that *Agos* imagines not only an Armenian community

well beyond the subset of Armenian speakers, but it presupposes that its readership will exceed the Armenian community as such: other minorities and a certain dedicated progressive finds much in its pages. Often, columnists at *Agos*, Hrant Dink himself for instance, have also been columnists at other significant Turkish leftist papers as *Taraf*. The assumed readership of *Agos* includes the readers of *Taraf* and thus also suggests that Armenian issues may be of interest for a readership larger than an Armenian community conceived along ethnic lines. It opens up the possibility that “community” is defined by certain sets of interests or concerns, and this idea derives from Hrant Dink’s insistence that a Turkey that could adequately deal with the memory and trauma of the Armenian Genocide and the place of minorities generally would be a more democratic Turkey.

The two Armenian language dailies, necessarily targeting a much more limited audience, produce content that is directed to assumed subsets of the Armenian community. Of course, the attempt to target an audience tells us as much about the ideologies of the papers themselves as it does about those target audiences. For instance, *Jamanak*, of the two Armenian language dailies, is perhaps closer to the Patriarchate and is much more likely to publish articles related to Church events. It supports perhaps the most “socially conservative” outlook of the papers. In this regard, we can locate the reinforcement of a general conservative emphasis in the particular treatment of women in the paper: *Jamanak* publishes a once a week middle section dedicated to the “feminine” (*gnochagan*) that often espouses a highly conventional and restrictive understanding of gender norms. It is also *Jamanak* that dedicates space to publishing poems and essays written by students of the Armenian Schools.



Figure 7. Section of the Newspaper Jamanak dedicated to the “Feminine.” Jamanak Newspaper, Istanbul. Wednesday, April 10, 2013. Issue 10089, Page 3.

Newspapers and Publishing Houses as Physical Meeting Places

One of the most striking things about these newspapers and the publishing house of *Aras*

is the degree to which they serve as intellectual centers and physical spaces of gathering and collaboration. *Agos* is the most visible of these, to the extent that the office of *Agos*/*The Hrant Dink Foundation* is the de facto consulate of Turkish Armenia. During one conversation with my friend Meline she noted that when Diasporan Armenians come to Turkey, they often come straight to *Agos*. However, many make their first stop the Apostolic Patriarchate. Yet the Patriarchate often sends visitors interested in sightseeing or other aspects of “Armenian Istanbul” to the Hrant Dink Foundation. While no love is lost between the Patriarchate and *Agos*, even the Patriarchate recognizes the importance of the Hrant Dink Foundation as a gathering place.

Although *Agos* was a central ethnographic field site for my research, I slid between ethnographer and participant, partaking in the vibrant intellectual scene on the terrace of the Foundation on many occasions. Almost always, sipping tea on the terrace while chatting with

Orhan or Meline, someone was visiting. The *lingua franca* was Armenian, but Turkish, English, and French were other common languages. Behind the veneer of an institutional office, the Hrant Dink Foundation was a vibrant place where intellectuals from throughout the Armenian Diaspora mingled and discussed the most pressing concerns of Turkey, Armenians in Turkey, and Armenian political and cultural life around the world. On one of my first visits, I was waiting to meet Meline for the first time and was talking in English with Orhan about my newly discovered interest in the *vakıfs*, while lamenting that I couldn't find any good information about them. Orhan got up to do some work, leaving me alone momentarily. An older gentleman, white moustache stained yellow from tobacco, whom I would later recognize as one of the editors of the Armenian pages of the paper, shoved a set of papers in front of me, saying in Armenian, "This is from the book that Orhan was talking about." It was the draft of a chapter for what is now the definitive book on the Armenian *vakıf* properties of Istanbul¹⁷. In its mission to press beyond the limits of a narrow, sequestered Armenian existence in Turkey, *Agos* moved beyond the pages of its paper to create a space where the same conversations it fostered in print could be had in person.

Agos could easily be seen as the exception to the way in which newspaper offices and publishing houses function as physical centers of collective life, given that the establishment of the Hrant Dink Foundation was predicated on extending the vision of the newspaper's founder and editor. However, I found that most of the literary centers worked in a similar fashion. During my first visit to the *Aras* Publishing House, for instance, the owner talked with me briefly, long enough to learn that I was an anthropologist. "Ah! Then, surely you must know Hratch over

¹⁷ This is the *2012 Declaration* on which I rely heavily in Chapter Two on the *vakıfs*. See especially pages 103-104.

there?” I had to admit that I did not, but the editor introduced me, saying that he was an ethnographer also. We ended up talking in a mix of English and Armenian, with Hratch more or less checking my credentials. Later, I would realize that I was in fact talking with one of the premier Armenian intellectuals of the city. Yes, his books are published by *Aras*. But he was merely sitting around that day, visiting with his friends, speaking Armenian in one of the few gathering spaces.

Likewise, *Marmara* sits on the same property as the Holy Trinity Church in Beyoğlu. As all churches, especially the larger ones set behind walls (see the description of the *vakıfs* and their spatial organization in the previous chapter) are meeting grounds, *Marmara* partook of the casual pace of collective life, where older Armenians wander onto the grounds, smoke cigarettes, and chat. Even *Jamanak*, in a tightly controlled building in the very Armenian neighborhood of Kurtuluş, disconnected from other buildings or foundations, was a meeting place of sorts. The office contains not only a large sitting room, where I went with an Armenian-American professor who was visiting Istanbul one evening, talking with the editor Ara Koçunyan for hours, but also a small display of the history of the paper. Much smaller and less accessible than *Agos* or even the *Aras* publishing house, *Jamanak*'s office was still clearly oriented to receiving visitors and displaying its own history for them.

Presence and Participation

Both the content of the publications and the centrality of the physical offices and locations of the Armenian press in Istanbul suggests a role beyond simply imagining the larger collective. While it is impossible for every Armenian to know every other of the 60,000+ Armenians in Istanbul, I would argue that a number of factors lead to a social existence among

Armenians to act as if such a thing were possible. Two short anecdotes offer both the tendency to treat Armenian life in Istanbul as if it were situated in a village and the impossibility of actual village life in a megalopolis of 14 million people where the Armenian population is spread throughout the entire city.

As a deacon of the Armenian Church, I can serve on the altar in any Armenian Apostolic Church anywhere in the world. When I travel within the United States and visit new churches, usually I am welcomed by the parish priest as a helpful and knowledgeable addition to the weekly *Badarak*, no questions asked. For various reasons, taken up in Chapter Five, in Istanbul I was greeted with some suspicion, and was asked for “my deacon’s card” when I first suggested I could do more than sing in the choir¹⁸. Eventually, after requesting a copy of my certificate of ordination from the Diocese in Los Angeles and repeatedly calling one of the senior clergy in Istanbul, I was told simply that if anyone asked me about serving on the altar I should direct their questions to him. I later realized this was organizational as much as anything: unlike in the United States where, for instance, there is not a single Armenian Apostolic church in the entire state of Vermont, in Istanbul there are thirty-six parishes all within a public transit ride of each other. The goal is to assign deacons to particular parishes, especially given the density of a few Armenian neighborhoods. Travelling from parish to parish, I was the anomaly. All of this regulation assumes that a single individual deacon cannot be known by all of the other Armenian

¹⁸ The Armenian Apostolic Church ordains four levels of liturgical service before the priesthood. Deacon sits at the top of these “minor orders,” and is seen as simultaneously the highest rank of the minor orders and the first rank of clergy. While many choir members, both in Istanbul and in America, are ordained to the first minor order of “acolyte,” it is not necessary to have a service of ordination to sing in the choir. The physical layout of an Armenian church includes an area set apart from the congregation and then the raised *bema*. Technically, to ascend the altar one should be ordained to at least the rank of acolyte. So while many acolytes sing in the choir, unordained people are perfectly allowed to enter the *tas*, but not to ascend to the *bema*.

priests, deacons, and church officials throughout the city. Even within the smaller subset of active churchgoing Armenians, the bounded group exceeds complete face-to-face familiarity.

Nonetheless, Armenian life in Istanbul always proceeds as if such full familiarity were possible. In particular within the population of churchgoers, it often felt as if I moved within a family or a village. Visiting a church on the western coastline of the city, not far from the Patriarchate, I was asked to convey my greetings to a clergy who worked at the Patriarchate. While I was amazed that such physical proximity included such a conceptual boundary—since the *Vardapet* who worked at the Patriarchate was assigned to a different church those parishioners from the church on the coast rarely saw him—the filial sense that everyone knew everyone made both the physical and conceptual distance feel smaller. The movement between the various churches and neighborhoods, and the fact that many Armenians live in one of a handful of neighborhoods, even if they go to church elsewhere, increases the feeling of a small community living in close proximity to each other.

One day in particular brought this feeling home for me. I had attended the funeral of a priest at a church I normally did not attend. Many of my friends from the various churches I attended had asked if I was going to go, and even though I did not know this priest personally, at the very least it felt like a good opportunity to visit one of the most historic churches in the city. After the funeral, I returned my neighborhood, one of the most densely populated Armenian areas in the city. Almost immediately after getting off the train, I ran into a high-ranking clergyman from the Patriarchate and Deacon Vagharshag, who were returning from the funeral. We stopped and talked for some time. Walking up the street to buy groceries, I ran into a group of three young men, whom I associated with one of my favorite churches in the Old City of

Istanbul but who actually lived in my neighborhood. “Did you go to the funeral?” I asked them. They hadn’t, because there had been another important event. As I rounded the corner, I stopped to buy the Armenian language newspapers, and an older man, whom I did not recognize, was also buying them. In this geography of Istanbul, a single event and one “Armenian” neighborhood crosscut the entirety of the city and, though I walked by at least a thousand people on those crowded streets, made it seem like I could encounter the entirety of the city in my one neighborhood.

Given these contradictions between living in a spread out megalopolis and the fact of a fairly circumscribed set of activities and locations in which Armenians move, what role does the Armenian press actually play? Often, when describing the Armenian papers to my Turkish friends, I would tell them that during the week the paper would tell you where to go or what event was happening, on Friday it would remind you of the event, and on the following Monday you would read a description of the event you attended. With such a direct, interventionist relationship to the events themselves, the idea that the newspapers are representing the community seems to be only part of the story. Rather, I would suggest that one function of the Armenian press in Istanbul is to facilitate the participation in the community. Of course, this can be done through representational modes and technologies. But what begins to emerge is an engagement with the words of the newspapers as part of the participation in the community. Perhaps merely a matter of emphasis, there is in fact a participation in the words as a form of making present the relationships and events that make up a sense of Armenian collective.

The little chapel attached to the Hospital was one of my favorite places to go to attend Divine Liturgy. Though it was perhaps the most arduous public transit journey of all my weekly commutes, it was always worth it. I felt encouraged, supported, and even needed. After the service, every week, our motley crew of deacons, choir members, and parishioners would slowly make our way through the landscaped grounds of the hospital, awaiting the 12 PM cafeteria opening. If church had ended early, we would sit in small groups on the benches, hoping for a cool breeze. Inside, we lined up with nurses, doctors, and other staff members and the round, bespectacled man who punched a hole in the staff members' meal cards would count down the line of deacons and altar servers, marking the number of meals under "Kilise," "Church" in Turkish. Here, every week, we ate our portion of soup, meat, bread, and a sweet, usually talking about the weekend futbol match or upcoming travel. On the days when Haig came, Melkon would insist that we sat together, so I could make sure Haig, who had lived in Los Angeles for a couple years, didn't forget his English. Otherwise, Melkon and I usually sat together, along with other old deacons and choir members, four to a table, where it usually felt like Melkon was interviewing me: when did I learn Armenian? Does my sister know Armenian? Do I have a girlfriend? Is she Armenian?

On many days, Melkon would head directly from the cafeteria to a small market on the other side of a park, close to the Hospital. There, I learned the proper way to pick out the best mandarins, and Melkon asked questions about kitchen prowess: did I really cook? All those Armenian dishes? Did my roommates cook? Do I know how to cut the fish properly? I wouldn't always accompany him, and either way, we would be back to the Hospital well before 2:00 when

the free shuttle left for the two major Armenian neighborhoods. So, either directly after lunch, or laden with the week's fresh produce, we returned to the hospital grounds. Across from the chapel was another small building, divided into two rooms. The smaller was the priest's office, and the larger room included a small kitchenette, a coffee table, and enough chairs for all the deacons and choir members waiting for the free shuttle. There, we drank tea or Nescafé poured out of little packets and talked about anything and everything.

Often, the topic of the day was inspired by newspapers. A stack of Turkish daily papers was spread on the coffee table, and usually provided some basic fodder for politics or sports. The Armenian papers, though, were meticulously collected by the Sister, one of the few Armenian nuns in the world who often ministered to the sick at the Hospital. She often brought them out to start a particular conversation. If Turkish dailies provided an impetus for national conversation, the Armenian papers, however, usually were mobilized for much more mundane activities. In a perhaps narcissistic example¹⁹, after a trip home to America for the holidays, I returned to Turkey in early March. I had decided to slowly ease my way back into fieldwork, and so the first week I'd skipped going to the Hospital for church. During Lent, the Bishop regularly made mid-week rounds to the various churches, and he was scheduled for one of my favorite churches. So I thought I would make an appearance at "my" church and quietly reemerge on the Istanbul scene.

¹⁹ The point is not that I was somehow "newsworthy." As often happens with anthropologists, their presence is notable (if not outright disruptive) in its own right, and therefore they sometimes find themselves in the pages of local newspapers as news or are asked to give an interview. My point with this example, though it relates to me, is precisely that I was *not* newsworthy. My inclusion in the paper had to do with the rhythms and temporalities of Armenian liturgical life, not with me as such.

I should have known better in a city where a neighborhood of half a million can feel like a village...



Figure 8. Short Article in Jamanak Detailing the Visit of the Bishop to a Church During Lent, Author on the Right. Jamanak Newspaper, Istanbul. Thursday, March 20, 2014.

So, I returned to the Hospital the following Monday to a hearty round of “I saw you in the paper!” From the moment I stepped in the Church, to when I sat down with the Sister with my Nescafé, through to seeing a few more people on the *servis* on the ride home, I was greeted with

“I saw you in the paper!” Of course, the next question, which I had hoped to avoid was, “When did you get back?”

From this incident, I first realized that something else was happening other than providing fodder for conversation or filling the “homogenous, empty time” of the nation with news about the Republic of Armenia (which often was the front page of the Armenian papers) in order to help imagine the 60,000 Armenians of Istanbul as part of the larger Armenian nation. Community, here, was made present through participation in the papers themselves as material instantiations of events and relationships that were already accessible in other ways.

Early on in my daily march to the busy corner of Kurtuluş and Ergenekon to buy the Armenian language dailies, I was confused at to why often one of the papers would be sold out when the other wasn't. With *Marmara* at 75 kuruş and *Jamanak* at 25 kuruş, I assumed everyone did what I did: spend an even lira for both. But when I arrived later in the afternoon, after most people had already made their way home from work, I often found one sold out but not the other. At first, I decided it was simple economic. The first time this happened, it was, after all, *Jamanak*, that had sold out. However, there were times when *Marmara*, the more expensive paper, was the one that was sold out. It wasn't until I started appearing in the paper that I began to make sense of this: most likely, someone's grandmother was buying ten copies of the paper the day her grandson made a cameo. And while she was probably at the event herself, it was important, in the way that keeping a report card is important, to have the material instantiation of the event in the newspaper. The papers sold out, I realized after I was tempted to buy a few copies of the issue with my picture, because particular people living in particular neighborhoods wanted the papers as a material instantiation of an event in which they had participated.

This material presence of the event in the newspaper extended beyond individual pride. On the staircase to the upper meeting hall of my neighborhood church, framed cut-outs of articles about the choir are hung on the wall. They are selective, of course, limited to big group shots, or after a trip to Jerusalem, or when multiple bishops visited, but they partake in the same logic. Though most everyone who would see the picture was present at the event and for the picture, it is the newspaper article, and not the original picture itself, that adorns the wall.

Now, with Facebook, this practice is extended even further. Barkev, the head of the foundation at St. Sarkis, whom we met in Chapter Two, is notorious for sending in pictures and small articles to *Jamanak*. In fact, when I first met the editor of *Jamanak* we laughed about how often he ran pictures from St. Sarkis. On the church's Facebook page, the original photograph is posted in one album, and a collection of scanned articles is in a separate album. The newspaper articles are a material reminder of the place of the church in the community. St. Sarkis, only recently renovated in 2005 proudly by the initiative of the members itself rather than from a decree from the Patriarchate, is especially proud of its place in the Armenian community of Istanbul. Constantly sending pictures to *Jamanak*, and consciously displaying them, becomes a way of marking that pride of place.

In addition to presenting and materializing relationships in the smaller, if not quite “face-to-face” group of Armenians of Istanbul, the newspapers also played an active role in their construction. *Not*, I want to stress, by representing relationship, but through concretely directing people to events. Often, on Wednesday, an article in the paper would discuss an upcoming event, whether that be an important Church Service where the Bishop was going to be present, or a meeting about *vakıf* representation. Then, on Friday, there would be a short advertisement with

the details of the event. On Monday, invariably, would be the article describing what happened at the event. Of course, the event was represented for those who were not there, but often, they were that concrete presentation of what was already known and experienced.

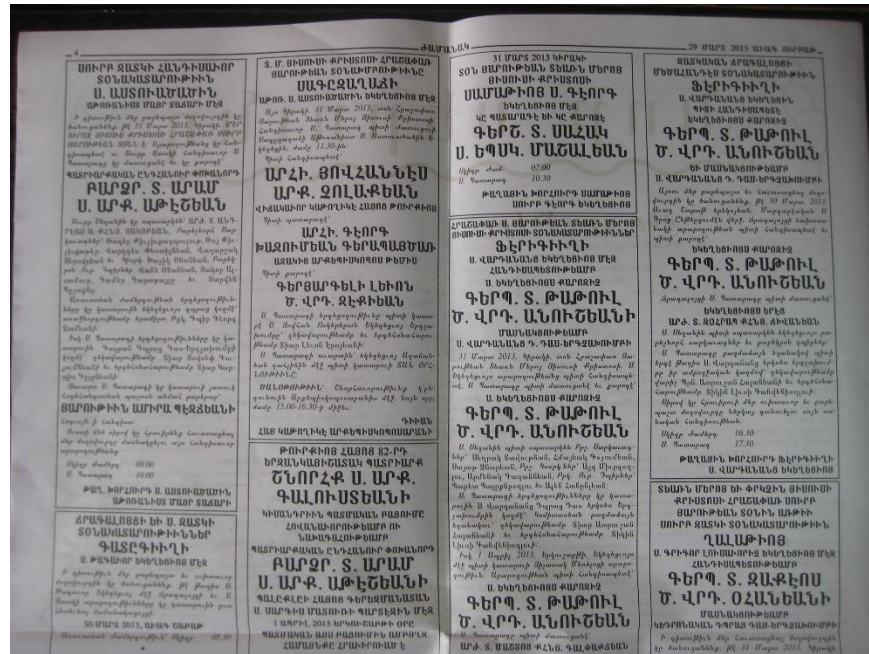


Figure 9. Portion of the Newspaper Jamanak Announcing Upcoming Events. Jamanak Newspaper, Istanbul. Tuesday, March 26, 2013. Issue 10076, Page 4.

When those events were already known or experienced, the newspaper account of them often resulted in a different kind of elicitation. “Did you see what they wrote about the bishop’s speech?” Boghos exclaimed one week in the Sister’s room before Liturgy at the Hospital. He produced a folded paper, *Jamanak*, one of the Armenian language papers, and smoothed it out next to the other pile of Turkish-language daily papers. There had been a recent controversy over the role of the *vakif* administration, and during a meal after a church service, the bishop addressed this debate. Boghos, it was clear, was unhappy with how the paper had placed the bishop’s intervention into the debate, and how the controversy was characterized. This led to a

lively discussion that ranged from the controversy, the specifics of the church where the bishop spoke, specifics of his address, and the representation of it by the paper.

As I thought about the discussion on the *servis* ride home later, I remembered that Boghos as one the choirmaster *Hoca*'s devoted followers, usually spent Sundays at the church where the bishop had given his talk. Thus, the concern was not with the event itself, or even the material instantiation of the event, but the representation of the event. Representation, here, though, is not of the same order as of an event on the other side of the world or even of a political event within Turkey. The newspaper elicits a response not because, in Habermasian manner we can sit around with our Nescafé and debate the accuracy of the semiotic representation of the community or the political representative possibilities of the Armenian minority community, but because of a deeply personal involvement in the event at hand. It is a concrete mobilization of relationships: a newspaper that often supports the Patriarchate criticizing a speech of the Bishop, an account of an event that surprised him, given that it wasn't his initial reading or concern. Participation in the words of the newspapers is precisely participation in the community, and a concrete form of making present and participating in relationships. Talal Asad, in a discussion of blasphemy and secular criticism asserts that, "it is not the secular claim to truth that worries me, but what critique may do to relationships with friends and fellow citizens with whom one deeply disagrees" (Asad 2009, 140). Similarly, here, the public criticism of an event where Boghos was present surprised and disturbed him. The press materializes a relationship, it presents the community, it directs individuals to public events, it elicits responses, and it intervenes, often violently, in the relationships between members of the community.

Representation of the community in homogenous, empty time, then, is only part of what the papers do. One of the most compelling examples of a horizontal relationship of the nation was during the election of the new Patriarch of Jerusalem. After the death of Patriarch Torkoom Manougian, one paper ran poetry published by him when he was a young monk. Slowly, the reporting moved from the former Patriarch and his funeral to the politics of who would be the next Patriarch. This elicited conversations among my friends, including ones in which I was a privileged interlocutor, because one of the candidates was the Bishop in New York. Here, the newspapers reported on events that were of interest to the Armenians of Istanbul as part of a broader Armenian community—which included, of course, me and the people I knew in America. Here, we have a classic Andersonian representation of the nation as a farflung imagined community.

Yet limiting the discussion of the role of the press to this form of representation would be drastically misleading. In the case of the Armenian newspapers of Istanbul, first, there are different semiotic relationships of representation at play in that there is a materialization in the concrete presentation of events and relationships. At the same time, beyond this difference—an iconization rather than indexicality, in part—the Armenian newspapers intervene practically and actively in the construction of community that only peripherally relates to their semiotic function at all. While more work needs to be done in order to state definitely the extent to which the particular forms of participation and intervention resonate with the Miasphysite Christological reflection on Jesus Christ as the Word of God, the goal of the chapter has been to chart both the debates about the proper representation of the Armenian collective and insinuate other forms of presence-making and participation in the word as a simultaneous participation in concrete human

relationships. This Armenian, Miaphysite form of presence-making, which we begin to see in these questions of the word, is operative explicitly in the singing and making presence of the Word through hymns in liturgy. In the next chapter, we explore the ways the Word is made present in the liturgy through the choirs.

Chapter Four: ***Choirs and the Community***

Զարթօրք փառք իմ, զարթօրք. եւ եւ զարթօնայց առաւօտնուց. աղէրիս:
Zart'ik' p'ark' im zart'ik' ew yes zart'yayts' arawōtuts'. Alleluia!
Arise, O my glory, arise! And I shall arise in the morning. Alleluia!

Arising early nearly every day of the week, crisscrossing the megalopolis of Istanbul by bus, train, ferry, or private shuttle, devoted choir members daily sing this line from one of the first hymns of the Night Office of the Armenian Apostolic Church in churches across Istanbul. Arising even earlier on Sundays, a cherubic host of youth assembled at one of the largest churches in the city sing the same hymn, the youth choir eventually yielding to the adult choir made up a significant number of trained musicians. And I also, for most Sundays and usually two days during the week for my two years in Istanbul, would arise and sing the same hymn, a hymn I had learned in my own youth, a hymn I had sung daily for a year as visiting student at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, a hymn I had sung in Armenian churches around the world. While rising and singing with these various choirs and choir members around the city, then later serving on the altar as a deacon, was my main mode of entry into the lives of Armenians in Turkey, my way of establishing Geertzian rapport, I also recognized early during my fieldwork that the choirs held a special importance for the lives of Istanbul Armenians.

To begin with, nearly every church-going Armenian I knew seemed to have an angelic voice and perfect pitch. Then there was the huge number of children, some with their choir robes engulfing them and dragging on the floor, holding books they clearly could not yet read, who

would come every Sunday to the church in my neighborhood, dressed and singing by 8:30. Add to this the school performances, the public concerts given by several choirs, and the weekday practices, and it was clear that the church choir in Istanbul exceeded the purely liturgical function I had always known it to have at Armenian Churches in America. By closing following two separate groups of early risers and their respective choirmasters, this chapter explores the choirs of Istanbul and the different modes of engagement with liturgical singing as part of a broader liturgical tradition.

Hoca¹, a lively man in his early seventies who had no formal musical training², led a group of devoted followers around the city to *Badarak*, Divine Liturgy, at a different church each day. Most of those who accompanied him from church to church were older men, retired or able to manage their own businesses with ample flexibility. Many had sung in choirs as children, but almost none had any formal musical background. Maestro, on the other hand, had studied opera at The Istanbul Municipal Conservatory (the İstanbul Belediye Konservatuarı, since incorporated into the University of Istanbul as the “State Conservatory”³). He conducted the choir at the Neighborhood Church—one which I have often described to Armenian friends in America as the most “complete” Armenian Church in the world.⁴ His choir had weekly practices,

¹ A Turkish term meaning “Teacher” or “Master,” used today in a number of educational settings.

² By formal, I mean simply that he has no degree from a university. The alternative form of pedagogy through which he learned to sing is a major focus of this chapter.

³ <http://konservatuvar.istanbul.edu.tr/?p=6545>

⁴ In an earlier era (even before the nineteenth century, as the decline of the Armenian Monastic system predates the Genocide, although the Genocide was obviously the fatal blow to a system that had experienced a brief revival at the end of the nineteenth century), a church situated in a town or village would be headed by a *Der Hayr*, a parish priest who was married with a family. He would take care of the daily needs of the parish or church community and would be the celebrant who performed the basic liturgical functions during the Sunday *Badarak*. Ideally, there was a monastery nearby, consisting of unmarried *apeghas* or monks. On Sunday, a monk who had attained the rank of *vardapet* (lit. “teacher,” but a specific academic rank often translated as “doctor of the church”), would come to the parish church and would deliver the sermon.

but normally sang in a liturgical context only at that one church itself. Several members of his choir had been trained at the university level in musical theory or musical performance.

Throughout the chapter, other salient differences between the two choirmasters and their choirs will emerge.

First, the chapter introduces the liturgical setting that is the central context for these choirs. Without attempting either a complete theological description of Armenian liturgics or a reduction of the liturgy to ritual⁵, I sketch the liturgical practice of the Armenian Apostolic Church as it is encountered not only in Istanbul, but worldwide. Though there are differences in practice, the basic stability of the liturgy that allows me to serve as a deacon in both Istanbul and Chicago is crucial to the notion of a liturgical tradition. Next, I turn to the specificity of Istanbul's liturgical landscape, placing these choirs in the urban setting of post-Genocide Istanbul. Deploying the two choirmasters and their choirs as instantiations of two potential strategies for the continuation of liturgical activity in the contemporary city, I also explore other ways of engaging with the tradition of liturgical singing in the Armenian Apostolic Church. While all of these different choirs are situated squarely within the Armenian liturgical tradition, I articulate the difference between degrees of embeddedness within a liturgical tradition. These differences arise through the extent to which the pedagogy for liturgy is to be found in liturgy

At the Neighborhood Church, this division of labor is still enacted: a high-ranking unmarried priest who normally works at the Patriarchate comes regularly to deliver the sermon, while the married *Der Hayr* leads the services and is assigned to the church during the week. In this, the Neighborhood Church is one of the only Armenian churches in the world that preserves this classical division of labor.

Additionally, as we will see later in the chapter, the level of liturgical completeness is extraordinary. Services that are heavily abbreviated in America (if performed at all) are offered every single week in full.

⁵ See Asad (1993, 55–79) and N.D. Mitchell (1999) for discussions of the anthropological category of ritual and its relation to the specific Christian conception of liturgy.

itself. The chapter ends with a discussion of how liturgical and minority traditions emphasize both pedagogical and affective aspects of a robust concept of tradition.

We will see, over the course of the chapter, how the choirs themselves, as well as our understanding of them, are placed within and conditioned by the specifics of the earlier chapters: the broad historical setting of post-Genocide Armenian Istanbul, the institutional setting in relation to specific *vakıfs*, and the role of the newspapers in the advertising and representation of the choirs. Previous chapters of the dissertation have delineated crucial institutional contexts and the operative categories for thinking Armenian collective life, marking the limits and transformations of an Armenian minority tradition. This chapter continues with the institution of the choir. Yet this chapter also begins the textured account of the Armenian liturgy in order to unfold the affective, urban form of belonging open to a practitioner of the Armenian liturgical tradition, to one who is deeply embedded in the tradition. On the one hand, this chapter and the following one depends on the earlier chapters: the choirs are inextricably tied to the *vakıfs*, and are inheritors of the *millet* concept. If the previous chapter offered the possibility of an Armenian conception of presence-making tied to Christological reflection on the Word, this chapter offers a site where such presence-making is explicit. Thus, this chapter depends on and deepens arguments I have been making about collective action, community, and forms of presence-making. On the other hand, the previous chapters have demonstrated the obliging character of modern secular representation and the associated forms of (political) collective action. These final chapters leave modern secular representation to the side, interrogating how Armenian theological forms of presence-making and the pedagogical practices of the Armenian liturgical tradition cultivate an Armenian liturgical subject where forms of belonging and action are quite

different from the collective action and conceptions of collective life afforded to the secular citizen grappling with modern secular representation. In this chapter and the following we will focus specifically on how the Armenian liturgical tradition opens up the possibility of an embodied and affective urban mode of minority belonging.

Armenian Liturgical Singing

The hymn from which the epigraph to this chapter is taken is one of the first things sung in the *Night Office* of the Armenian Apostolic Church. It is the first of seven daily services of the Church that evolved in a monastic setting. This cycle of services ostensibly would have been performed every day in some monasteries⁶, and the question of which services were performed in the parish setting is still open to debate. One of the central liturgical texts, the *Zhamagirk* ‘ or “Book of Hours,” sets out each of these services⁷. In translation, these services are called the Night, Morning, Sunrise, Midday, Evening, Peace, and Rest services. The Midday service is an alternative to the full Mass or “Divine Liturgy” (in Armenian *Badarak*) and is perhaps the least performed of the services. The *Badarak* is found in the *Zhamagirk* ‘, but is also given in its own liturgical book. In addition to textual primacy, it is the *Badarak* which is offered every Sunday at Armenian churches throughout the world, and daily in Istanbul. Thus, the *Badarak*, where Holy Communion is given, is the central liturgical act of the Armenian Apostolic Church, as it is with all the Ancient Churches.

⁶ Even this is debatable. For instance, the *Sunrise Service*, a later addition, might have been intended as an alternative to some of the longer daily offices. For a number of reasons, it is difficult to reconstruct to the exact liturgical life of the late Medieval Armenian monasteries.

⁷ Though manuscript copies of the *Zhamagirk* ‘ exist from the early centuries of Armenian Christianity, the rise of printing in the Armenian world drastically changed the variety of services and the local variations between monasteries. Simeon Yerevantsi, a seventeenth-century *Catholicos*, in particular, was highly influential in the standardization of liturgical practices throughout Armenian Christendom (Aslanian 2004).

Beyond the *Badarak*, a few of the “daily offices” are performed with some regularity. In America, it is common for churches to offer an abbreviated form of both the Night and Morning Services. The Sunrise Service, both in America and in Istanbul⁸, is offered as an alternative to the other services before *Badarak* on Sunday mornings during Lent. Finally, some churches in America offer the Peace and/or Rest hours during weekday evening services during Lent. In addition to this liturgical cycle, there is a rich sacramental life of baptism, weddings, funerals, etc. all of which have their attendant services that require at least one choir member.

While both the full theological import as well as a practical description of all this liturgical activity is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to note the complete centrality of liturgy and worship to the Armenian Apostolic Christian tradition. Liturgy in the Armenian Church organizes time: there are three “kinds” of days, namely dominical (usually Sundays), fasting or penitential, and saints’ days; both social life and agricultural events are marked or delimited by liturgical season (the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in August is accompanied by the “blessing of grapes” marking the first harvest, while weddings are not conducted during Great Lent); and there is a complex system of liturgical music explored below and in Chapter Five that changes with the day. Perhaps more importantly for our purposes here in thinking about a theological tradition, as V. Rev. Fr. Findikyan has pointed out, the Armenian Church’s theology is present first and foremost in its liturgy. While there are plenty of

⁸ Further research would be required to trace the fascinating Diasporan links between Istanbul and other former centers of ecclesial and liturgical authority in the nineteenth century and the specific practices in the United States and other countries. This practice, for instance, of offering the Sunrise Service during Lent is one that is common between Istanbul and America but is not practiced in the Republic of Armenia. There are certainly fruitful theoretical questions about the institutional connections within a Diaspora that could be explored through the liturgical practices and their evolution outside of the “traditional Armenian homeland” in the past century and a half.

Biblical commentaries, and famous books of questions and answers, such as that of Vanakan Vartapet which we encountered in the Introduction, the kind of “systematic theology” that characterizes Medieval Catholic thought is conspicuously absent from the Armenian Christian tradition. Complex theological ideas are expressed and worked out in the hymns of the daily offices, such that though “liturgy is no substitute for catechesis,” nonetheless “it is the primary means by which we come to understand more deeply what the Christian faith is all about” (Findikyan 2008, 21). This emphasizes as well that liturgy has a profound pedagogical importance.

For the Armenian Christian, then, liturgy, crowned by the taking of Holy Communion during the *Badarak*, is the central activity of the theological tradition⁹. Within that liturgical activity, the singing of hymns is certainly the most audible aspect. Strains of melodies deployed in other settings¹⁰ are recognizable to men and women even if they do not actively learn the hymns, young men and women are encouraged to sing in the choir, and repeated phrases from the most well-known hymns often pepper normal conversation. Beyond that, there is a singular pride in the Armenian hymn as a kind of civilizational achievement of the Armenian people. Nowhere, perhaps, is this love of choirs, hymns, and liturgical singing more apparent than in Istanbul.

The Liturgical Landscape of Armenian Istanbul

In Istanbul, a subset of the thirty-six functioning Armenian Apostolic churches is put into a weekly or monthly rotation for weekday liturgical services. A priest, often the same priest who

⁹ Communion, as the name suggests, is the central cohesive activity of the *ecclesia*. As Findikyan says of liturgy more broadly, “the liturgy was produced by the church and it is conducted (or celebrated) *by* the church, *for* the church” (Findikyan 2008, 17).

¹⁰ Classical and jazz compositions often riff off liturgical music. The jazz pianist Tigran Hamasyan is one of the more recent artists to this explicitly, for instance in the album *Shadow Theater* (Hamasyan 2013).

will be the celebrant and preacher at that church on Sunday, comes to lead the services. Local altar servers, again often the same ones who live in the neighborhood and will be there on Sunday, assist the priest at the altar. However, many of these functioning churches are closer to the “active” churches described in Chapter Two. They are located in neighborhoods whose Armenian populations are drastically reduced from an earlier time when it made sense for that neighborhood to have its own church. While the number of priests has increased in the past few years¹¹, leading to a few additional churches gaining full-time priests, there are still many churches where Sunday *Badarak* does not make sense given the population.

For these churches, *Badarak* will be celebrated on feast days associated with the name of the particular church. At the same time, they might be included in the weekday rotation on either a weekly or monthly basis. For much of my time in Istanbul, this was the case of St. Sarkis, described in Chapter Two, and it remains the case for the church at Balat, as well as others. If we were to construct a typology of Armenian churches in Istanbul, these would come just after the “active” churches in that there are regular services, despite the fact that there is no Sunday *Badarak*.

Next would follow churches that have regular Sunday *Badarak*, but who don’t have weekday services. Many of these churches are in neighborhoods that are heavily trafficked but not necessarily lived in by Armenians, or are churches where many people have family connections but themselves live in different neighborhoods. Several of the churches in the central district of Beyoğlu fit this description. The beating heart of commercial Istanbul and the

¹¹ Since I began exploratory fieldwork in 2010, there have been three married and three celibate priests ordained in Istanbul.

European and minority center of the nineteenth century, fewer Armenians actually live in the area than one hundred years ago. At the same time, it is a central neighborhood, near places where Armenians do live and where many will happily spend a Sunday afternoon after services. At these churches, there is an assigned priest for every Sunday, regular choir members and altar servers, and “parishioners” who would consider that church their home parish, whether or not they live in that neighborhood. Though in many ways more vibrant and centered on the needs of an active group of people who call the church home than the previous category of churches, they nonetheless do not have weekday services of any kind.

Finally, we find the handful of genuine parish churches, the churches located in neighborhoods with dense Armenian populations and which function as anchors of neighborhood activities—liturgical or otherwise. These churches have an assigned priest who can often be found on the grounds of the church at any point in the week. In addition to regular Sunday *Badarak*, these parishes have often multiple weekday services. They function as part of the weekday schedule, but sometimes they even have services conflicting with the “rotation.” Hence, the group of wandering choir members and faithful who go from church to church during the week might not necessarily come to these churches’ weekday services. At these parishes, there might be Morning and Evening services offered once or more a week, a weekday *Badarak*, as well as regular Sunday services. I would count no more than six churches in this category, with three in particular anchoring the most densely populated Armenian neighborhoods.

We may say, then, that there are two overlapping liturgical landscapes for churchgoing Armenians in Istanbul. The first is one that is anchored in specific parishes, with a dedicated group of altar servers, choir members, and parishioners who generally live in the neighborhood

and who come to most, sometimes all, of the services and activities offered at that church. My group of friends at the St. Kevork Church were very much like this. Tuesday morning, they worshipped in the little chapel opposite the large church, offering only *Badarak*, without any of the other daily services. On Thursday evenings, they would come for a short evening service and to hear one of the Bishops speak. Friday mornings, they went to the small church around the corner from the main church, under the jurisdiction of the same priest, and sang only the Night and Morning services, without offering *Badarak*. Sunday, in the huge main church filled to the brim with hundreds of people, they returned for Night Service, Morning Service, and Divine Liturgy.

The other landscape traces movement from church to church around the entire city throughout the week. Most of the people who traverse this landscape also have their own parishes on Sunday, but I have found that people who are attached to one of the major “parish” churches do not regularly join this circuit. Generally, they are members of Sunday churches, those churches where there is *Badarak* offered every Sunday, but no other liturgical or parish life. Hence, they are free to move throughout the city during the week to other churches. While this landscape tends toward a single circuit, with the same people seeing each other at different places in the city, there are some days where conflicting services take place. So, while Thursday was regularly held in Balat, on the first Thursday of the month, there was also *Badarak* offered elsewhere.

We see in these two landscapes a liturgical overlay to the understanding of the churches as *vakıfs* described in Chapter Two. That is, this chapter extends the argument developed with regard to St. Sarkis and the recognition that a church is more than merely a building. To

elaborate, for a robust liturgical life to exist at all, the church *qua vakif* must be in good financial and physical order. With this bare minimum, the *vakif* may then operate much as a contemporary NGO, as the Hrant Dink Foundation encourages them to do. The board could organize lectures, classes, or philanthropic projects. Yet once we emphasize, as I do in this chapter, the *vakif qua* church, then, for an Armenian Apostolic Church, the liturgical life must come to the front and center. As Samvel recognized in his desire to make sure there was weekly *Badarak* offered at St. Sarkis, liturgy is constitutive of the church as a church. It is not a financially-sound endowment or even the presence of a group of a people that makes the church. In fact, the *vakif* as such could anchor many different visions of community. Liturgy, though, is crucial for a *vakif* to function as a church, to create an *ecclesia* rather than a community. Liturgy is constitutive of and central to an ecclesial conception of the *vakif* that goes hand-in-hand with an ecclesial grounding for the community.

The Choir's Role in Liturgy

Once we take the liturgical life as the central aspect of the *vakif qua* church, the choir quickly comes into focus as one of the most noticeable institutions. When you enter an Armenian Apostolic Church, you first come into the vestibule, separated from the main part of the church by doors (often, in Istanbul, huge iron-wrought bars rather than full doors that block visibility). Immediately, even before you can see the altar, two of your other senses will register the building as a church: you will smell incense and you will hear singing.

From the vestibule, you might buy a candle (or have one with you which you bought outside the church building from another part of the grounds) and then light it in front of an icon on either side of the doors separating the vestibule from the rest of the church. At an appropriate time (there are certain prayers or hymns when it is considered proper to wait before entering),

you walk through the doors, make the sign of the cross, and begin towards your seat. In earlier times, and to this day in the Republic of Armenia, churches do not have pews, but in Istanbul as in America there will be two sets of pews with a center aisle¹². Before walking up the aisle or turning to the side, you will now have a clear view directly to the altar.

Depending on when you arrive, the two parts of the altar will be more or less populated, set up in different ways. Let us assume you have arisen in the morning, with angels, schoolchildren, old men who sing in the choir, and the bleary-eyed author, and have arrived in time to hear the hymn from the epigraph, sung early in the Night Service. You will first notice that there is no one on the raised part of the altar, about three feet high, called the *bema*. Instead, everyone is gathered into two small groups in the chancel, a single step up from the pews demarcated by a short wooden railing, huddled around two lecterns with liturgical books spread open. The groups are clustered to either side of the center, and sitting on the *bema* directly in the center is a small stand with another liturgical book on it. As you make your way to a seat in the pews, pausing to make the sign of the cross again as you sit down, you begin to follow the Night Service. One side, led by an older man, dressed the same as the rest of the group, in a single colored robe and a stole draped over his left shoulder, sings the verse from the epigraph. Then, the other side, with the priest in a plain black cape over a black robe in the middle, answers with the next verse, that begins with the same *Zart 'ik'*, “Arise!” Back and forth, antiphonally, the two

¹² In Istanbul, the two sides are gendered. On the left side (facing the altar), only women sit. On the right side, single men and families will sit. While not rigidly enforced, this arrangement is ubiquitous across the city. There are very few other places where this strict, gendered division of church space is kept. In the Republic of Armenia, as there are no pews, the issue does not arise. In America I have very rarely encountered this kind of arrangement.

groups, mostly men, but often interspersed with one or two women, sing the rest of the hymn before the priest and then a deacon moves to the center to say a prayer and a litany, respectively.

Later, at the end of Night Service and Morning Service, with the beginning of the *Badarak*, the spatial arrangement will change, with the priest with a number of deacons and altar servers ascending the *bema* while the rest of the choir either comes together as a single unit in the middle of the lower chancel where everyone was before, or, in some larger churches, retreating to a second-floor balcony in the back of the church. Yet you have now met the major liturgical actors in the Armenian Apostolic Church: the priest, the altar servers, and the choir. During the Morning services, though the priest stands out in his black robes, and those who will ascend the altar sometimes wear different colored garments from the choir members who remain, the group sings together as a single choral unit. When you entered the church, before you saw anything, it was their voices you heard. The choir, more than even the priest, is the foundational liturgical actor¹³, certainly the most audible.

If liturgy, then, is the central activity of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the choir is, from the perspective of the senses, the central actor. Of course, from a practical perspective, most services require a priest and a deacon, and the deacon can serve as the choir. The centrality I am describing, then, is the felt, experienced centrality, the way a parishioner or visitor

¹³ Discussions of liturgy in “early church” often stress the lack of a hierarchy in these first gatherings, so the “foundational” here is less absolute than suggestive of the role of singing of hymns in the ecclesial gathering. *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order* makes a strong case for the differentiation of roles in the church community with regard to service (Barnett 1995). This differentiation is less marked in the setting of the “churches” themselves, where we might locate an early form of liturgy. Though “the most visible and profound way in which the community gives physical expression to its fellowship is in the common which the members share” (Banks 1988, 83), the meal that eventually evolves into the more formalized communion, coming together to sing hymns was certainly a central activity for the early churches. Notably, Paul and Silas sing songs in prison in the description in Acts 16:25, and several of Paul’s letters mention the singing of hymns in connection with the meeting of “house churches,” for instance in Colossians 3:16.

encounters the liturgy, walking through the church doors in the manner I have described above. Visually, the priest is distinguished. Yet before one sees the differential wardrobe, one hears the singing of hymns.

Theologically, too, the singing of hymns is a central liturgical activity. As mentioned above, some of the most complex and developed theological reflection of the Armenian Church can be found in its hymns. For instance, one would be hard-pressed to find a more succinct, elegant, and orthodox Trinitarian statement than this short verse from the Sunrise Service: “Three persons and one nature, one godhead, we for ever confess Thee, Holy Trinity” (Sarxian, Nersoyan, and Manoogian 1957, 49). Yet this theological centrality goes beyond the theology found *in* the hymns to a theological assertion of their priority. That is, as Schmemmann asserted, for the Orthodox Christian, humans are fundamentally a “worshipping being,” what he called *homo adorans* (Schmemmann 1973, 118). The repeated injunctions in the Psalms to “make a joyful noise unto the Lord” emphasizes the centrality of singing hymns to a conception of worship and liturgy, the crucial activity of humanity as *homo adorans*. Hymn singing and the choir, then, are constitutive of the liturgical experience both practically and theologically.

This is the main context in which the singing of hymns by Armenian choirs occurs. Perhaps it goes without saying, but the original context and reason for these choirs is liturgical. Yet, as with any practice, and certainly as with strains of melody and haunting hymns, choirs in Istanbul have gone well beyond this primary context. At the very least, individual choir members practice in their own homes or during arranged lessons with choir masters. Some groups give concerts outside of the walls of the sanctuary. Several choirs (either historically important or merely large in number) have been registered as *derneks*, “associations.” Some of these larger

choirs have sung abroad in various contexts. In order to explore and elucidate these other contexts, and to think about how they relate to the primary context of singing in a liturgical context as part of a religious tradition (and thus how that religious tradition is flexible, malleable, and transformable/transformatory), we turn now to two very different choirs, embodied in two very different choir masters.

The Hoca and the Maestro

In Istanbul, as with many other aspects of Armenian life, liturgical singing and choirs have a long and storied history. Just as, in Chapter Three, we followed the distinguished literary tradition of the city through to the present, we could as easily follow the choir as an institution through time. Instead, in this chapter, I would like to hew closer to the present, with only a brief detour to understand the kinds of roles our two choir directors, the *Hoca* and the *Maestro*, inhabit¹⁴.

We can begin to describe the difference between the men and their respective choirs through their respective titles, *hoca* and *maestro*. *Hoca*, the Turkish term of respect for a teacher, is heard today even in the halls of American universities by students describing their Turkish language teachers or eminent historians of the Ottoman Empire. In contrast to other terms for a teacher, *hoca* emphasizes a one-on-one relationship—generally, the *hoca* has his (and it is usually a his) apprentice. Our *Hoca*, an elderly yet spry man in his seventies has a number of students, some who follow him devotedly, others with whom he works privately, and one or two

¹⁴ This idea of role inhabitation is partially based on MacIntyre's discussion of "the self who inhabits a character whose unity is given as the unity of a character" (2007, 217). He contrasts this embedded notion of a role to Erving Goffman's sociology, which he contends has for a unity of analysis, "the individual role-player striving to effect his will within a role-structured situation" where "the goal of the Goffmanesque role-player is effectiveness and success in Goffman's social universe is nothing but what passes for success" (MacIntyre 2007, 115). It will become clear that the role inhabitation I have in mind here is exactly one embedded in a tradition.

who could be considered his genuine apprentices. Among them was a young man exactly my age, Mikael, who in many ways, as we will see, was my own *hoca*. The relationship with a *hoca* likewise emphasizes continuity, such that I studied with Mikael, who was the *Hoca*'s student, who in turn studied under one of the most famous vocalists of twentieth century Istanbul, Krikor Habyan. Not only do people refer to *Hoca* using that honorific title, but his mode of education, transmission, and study conformed closely to the accepted idea of the role. Despite the existence of other brilliant vocalists and teachers in the city, *Hoca* was rather universally recognized as *the hoca* in the city. Hence, he appears in this text with the honorific title as his name.

Maestro, too, uses Maestro as a title appended to his name, and, like *Hoca*, sometimes was addressed simply as Maestro. In contrast to the title *Hoca*, Maestro emphasizes his musical training and proficiency. A term that emerges from the world of Western music, maestro can mean simply virtuoso, or it can refer specifically to the conductor of a musical group, usually an orchestra. As conductor of one of the largest Armenian choirs in the city, Maestro is certainly an appropriate title. Here, I want to reiterate that in their titles, which I use as names in this text, the different attitudes, pedagogical practices, relationships to the practice of liturgical singing as situated in the Armenian Christian tradition, and the significant differences between the two men and their choirs are already marked. *Hoca* is a Turkish term relating to an Ottoman relationship of master/apprentice that emphasizes continuity of expertise through time, where the authority for that expertise derives in large part through that continuity. By contrast, maestro is a term taken from a Western musical context that emphasizes musical virtuosity and training, where the form of expertise is based on the individual learning and the achievements of the individual and the authority is grounded in the position of the individual as the head of the choir/institution. We

will see, in what follows, that these terms for the two men could not be a more accurate indicator of their approaches to the practice of liturgical singing.

At the same time, I want to make it clear from the outset that neither of these men is “more traditional.” Both of them are highly skilled practitioners of the Armenian liturgical tradition, and each of them, as well as the choirs and specific pedagogical practices, are squarely located within the Armenian liturgical tradition. Both choirmasters are actively engaged with the Armenian liturgical tradition. They both animate it, extend it, and grapple with the best ways to instantiate the central practices of the tradition. From the perspective of MacIntyre’s definition of tradition, they both squarely are involved in “an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition” (2007, 222)¹⁵. If at times the *Hoca* appears “more traditional,”¹⁶ I would suggest that this is because his semi-monastic pedagogy resembles the crucial pedagogical practices central to the Armenian tradition.

Each man leads what are called *Tbrats’ Tas Yerkch’akhump*, the “Acolyte Choir Ensembles” which are choirs associated with particular *vakifs*, often registered as *derneks*. These

¹⁵ In considering these two men, their choirs, and their relations to the practice of liturgical singing within the Armenian Christian tradition, the complex interaction between tradition, practice, and institution suggested by MacIntyre comes to the fore. In conversation with a liturgical conception of tradition, this deepens the articulation between these elements in several ways. One is the question of scale, or perhaps of “embedded traditions”: the practice of liturgical singing is part and parcel of a broader Armenian Christian tradition, upheld by institutions such as *vakifs*, dioceses, and Patriarchates. At the same time, we can think of a tradition of liturgical singing with the choir as an attendant institution, wherein the practices are fine-grained issues of musicality such as are discussed in Chapter Five. While it is not particularly useful to get bogged down in such a topological exercise, I do want to present the possibility of a “fractal” (Irvine and Gal 2000) notion of tradition, that can be helpful in conceptualizing the ways certain practices and discourses constitutive of a tradition can be “peeled off” and applied elsewhere. In the kinds of choral shows and practices we will encounter below, this becomes relevant. Here, I want to suggest that we view the choir itself as an institution that upholds the practice of liturgical singing central to a liturgical conception of the Armenian tradition.

¹⁶ Or, even more problematically, “more Oriental.”

two forms of corporate association often coordinate, and in this case, the *dernek*, or association of the choir is attached to the *vakıf*, the church. In addition to his *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch' akhump*, however, *Hoca* is also at the center of what I will call the peripatetic choir, a group of (mostly) men who follow the weekday, mobile liturgical overlay of the city. Though *Hoca* is not at every one of these services, he was, during the time I was doing fieldwork, present for at least three of these liturgical services a week. Moreover, if he was leading the choir on a given day and there were multiple options for where to sing, the members of the peripatetic choirs would follow him. Hence, though the chapter is largely structured around the two men, the real difference is between the *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch' akhump* and the peripatetic choir. It is the fact that *Hoca* leads the peripatetic choir in addition to his institutional choir, and that it is in the peripatetic choir that we see a thoroughgoing embeddedness in the liturgy and its pedagogical potential, that maps the difference on to the men themselves.

Over the years this institution of the choir has taken many different forms. In America, for instance, the Armenian Church choir is largely confined to the walls of the church on Sunday mornings, with a few practices interspersed throughout the year to learn the specific hymns of feast days. These choirs are almost always completely composed of amateur singers. At the cathedral in New York, however, the choir is made up of paid professional singers. In monastic settings, the choir is indistinguishable from the student body and monks, other than by the fact that certain classes support the choir and that certain students will find their unique form of praise and ministry in the singing of hymns.

In Istanbul, as has been suggested, the choir is an institution anchored by two separate organizing principles, the individual teacher and the specific church, i.e. person and place. When

each of the thirty-six churches in Istanbul had robust congregations supported by neighborhood populations, these two anchors overlapped. This remains true to some extent, but because there are now more churches than genuine congregations (as described above), these two principles of organization have been separated. Hence, while *Hoca* is the director of a central church in Beyoğlu, he also moves throughout the city during the week such that the choir he directs on Sunday is different than the choir that converges around him on weekdays. Maestro, on the other hand, is fully situated in the model where a choir director is attached directly to a particular location and church, and the choir is identified by the church.¹⁷

These two organizing principles result in rather different organizations. First and foremost is the extent of institutional support and even simply the question of being instituted at all. Maestro's choir is one of twenty-one *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch' akhump*, the "Acolyte Choir Ensembles" associated with specific sites around the school. Attached to the Neighborhood church, it was founded in 1932. As the appellation "Acolyte Choir Ensembles" suggests, all twenty-one of these choirs are directly attached to a *vakıf* through the individual churches. Some of them carry the names of the churches associated with the foundations, others are named for the schools that often accompany *vakıfs*, and others carry names of famous Armenian musicians (for instance, the Sayat-Nova chorus, associated with the *Surp Yerits' Mangants' Church* in Boyacıköy is named for the famous trilingual eighteenth century troubadour). These choirs are

¹⁷ It is a matter of further research to determine the degree to which the newer form of anchoring a choir around a particular teacher is possible only through the population loss in the city. Potentially, a famous teacher would attract students from outside the neighborhood where his church and choir were located. This in fact happened with the singular figure of Gomidas Vardapet, famed celibate priest of the Armenian Church, harmonizer of the Divine Liturgy, and ethnomusicologist. When he arrived in Istanbul, he set up a huge choir composed of children throughout the city. In this, he may actually be the originator of a particular form of the Istanbul choir. At the same time, the fierce neighborhood loyalty of Armenians in Istanbul results in many choirs which remain strictly neighborhood-based.

listed in the directory at the end of the annual “Calendar” published by the Armenian Patriarchate, together with the priest in charge and the lay head of the choir. The Neighborhood Acolyte Choir Ensemble maintains a Facebook page where it proudly announces its institutional history, including the founding date. We should see these “Acolyte Choir Ensembles” as official institutional branches of the larger *vakıf* complex, one of the many aspects and associations grouped under the umbrella of the foundations.

Many of these choirs are registered as *derneks*, associations. Alluded to in the chapter on the *vakıfs*, the *dernek* is a legal category for corporate entities that do not fulfill the basic (usually charitable) requirements for registration as a *vakıf*. Given the impossibility of creating new “community foundations,” one potential institutional form is the “new foundation.” However, registration as a *dernek*, or association, as an alternative to the “new foundation,” emphasizes two differences. One is the scope and purpose of the group. While registration as a *vakıf* is rather stringent (including a ban on explicitly racial or sectarian projects), the *dernek* category is much more forgiving: explicit ethno-cultural groups are allowed¹⁸. Secondly, *derneks* are often subordinate organizations. That is, as with the choirs, they are auxiliary to *vakıfs*, or subsets of larger groups¹⁹. The same is true of the “school alumni associations” throughout Istanbul. The *özel* (literally “special,” here semi-private) Armenian schools are also part of *vakıfs*, funded by and administered in part through the foundations. Many of the larger schools maintain alumni

¹⁸ For instance, many Alevi groups use the *dernek* category, given the continued inability to register *cemevis* as houses of worship. In this case, using the *dernek* category both acknowledges and bypasses continued exclusionary policies of the Turkish state (Gratien and Hamza 2017).

¹⁹ This is not a constitutive feature of *derneks*, as there are plenty of independent *derneks*. Or, as we saw in Chapter Two, it is possible for a *dernek* to serve as a coordinating body for a *vakıf*. Rather, the less stringent founding rules for a *dernek* mean that smaller, auxiliary bodies are often registered as *derneks*. The choir itself does not have a “charitable” function, yet is attached to the larger foundation.

associations. Within Turkey,²⁰ these are registered as *derneks*. So in this case, the *dernek* category offers a form of corporate identity and legal recognition as an institution, but also emphasizes its part in a larger set of institutions. Both *vakıfs* and *derneks* are institutional forms of support for collective action. Choirs, to the extent that they took a recognized and legal institutional form, were registered as *derneks* and were usually associated with specific *vakıfs*.

By contrast, the choir surrounding *Hoca*, that moved from place to place during the week, had no such institutional support. *Hoca*, in his capacity as the head of the Beyoğlu choir, where he was anchored on Sundays, was also the head of a *Tbrats ' Tas Yerkch 'akump* as was Maestro²¹. However, the peripatetic choir, as I experienced it, was something quite different. It was not named, was not connected directly to a church, school, or *vakıf*. Nor was it registered as a *dernek*. It was explicitly transient and ephemeral. The contrast here then, is not between *vakıf* and *dernek*, but between the institutionally supported *Tbrats ' Tas Yerkch 'akhumps* and the peripatetic choir. As we will see, this difference relates to a level of embeddedness within the liturgical tradition, largely through participation in the liturgy as a mode of pedagogy.

Though there was a core group of older men who would follow *Hoca* around the city, some would only join him at certain churches on certain days of the week. Some, like Barkev, met with him outside of the liturgical setting to practice the modal system of hymns, specific songs, and vocal technique. Others, like Yervant, would follow him from church to church every day, slowly increasing their proficiency. Another, Aram, who would constantly compliment me

²⁰ Some of the largest and most famous schools, such as the *Gentrongan* School in central Istanbul, maintain branches of the alumni associations outside of Turkey. These, of course, operate in completely different legal environments.

²¹ An additional reason why it is impossible to view him as an embodiment of “tradition” and only one kind of choir in contrast to Maestro.

on my ability to intone the litanies, practiced on his own with a book and a CD of recordings the *Hoca* had made. Aram constantly praised *Hoca*, and whenever he and I talked, he would remind me of how knowledgeable *Hoca* was. This choir, then, was grounded in the daily liturgies that were offered around the city, and the personal expertise of the *Hoca* as a renowned and accomplished singer of Armenian sacred music.

Several other differences between the two men in their capacity as the head of either a *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch' akhump* or the peripatetic choir demonstrate the degree of embeddedness within the liturgy. We can see some of them in the contrast between the highly structured extra-liturgical rehearsals of the *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch' akhump*, a kind of practice completely foreign to the peripatetic choir. After many Sundays singing at the Neighborhood Church under the direction of Maestro, I arranged for an interview with him. We met on the grounds of the church on Friday evening before the weekly practice of the choir. Even in this choice of location we can note the pattern of distinctions I have been trying to elucidate: our interview was conducted not only at the institutional site of his choir, but before a regularly scheduled practice. He wanted me to see the choir “in action,” and the choir, as an extension of his professional persona, served as part of the interview. Slowly, people filtered in, and at one point on the recording he quickly says hello to one of his choir members and then adds, by way of letting them know he can't talk further, “I'm giving an interview.” While he indulged all my questions, the real end of the interview came not when I ran out of questions, but when rehearsal began.

The next few audio files after the interview are recordings of some songs which were clearly performed for my benefit—although they were justified as warm-up exercises. Throughout fieldwork, I was equipped with two separate pieces of audio equipment: a

“prosumer” Tascam recorder and a Livescribe pen that coordinates audio recordings with what you write in the specially designed notebook. Having begun the interview with both devices, as I often did as a precaution, the batteries in the Tascam started dying, so I turned it off. When we concluded the interview and Maestro asked if I wanted to record a few songs from the rehearsal, I told him I would be thrilled to. However, when he noticed that I was using the pen, he instructed me to use the Tascam so that I would get a better sound quality.

I include this incident to highlight two central facts: first, that the institutional locus of Maestro’s choir was central to how he thought about his work. I was invited to the rehearsal of the choir, which itself takes place on the grounds of the church *vakif*. Once there, Maestro made sure that the rehearsal of the choir itself became part of the interview. For him, his own identity as head of the choir, and the importance of the choirs generally, was tied to the professionalism and quality of his choir. This is the second point: for Maestro, though the *raison d’etre* of the choir remains the liturgy, the Neighborhood Choir is marked by a professionalism and purpose that exceeds the liturgical. From that perspective, the use of the Tascam over the Livescribe concretizes the professionalism of his choir. They have cut several CDs and performed with Turkish pop star Sezen Arzu. Given the choice of two recording devices, it was clear that the one that would produce better sound quality was the appropriate one to record his choir. The song choices likewise demonstrated not a liturgical effervescence, but rather a technical mastery.

My interview with *Hoca*, on the other hand, took place in one of the two rooms in the “office” building of St. Sarkis. After asking for a couple weeks about setting up an interview, with him casually responding that sometime after weekday services would work, we agreed to talk for a while after *Badarak* one Wednesday. Usually, it is his star student Mikael who leads

the choir at St. Sarkis, but *Hoca* also often comes. As is the normal practice at St. Sarkis, we had a lovely meal in the bucolic garden space adjoining the church after the Liturgy. As others prepared to leave, *Hoca* and I went into the *vakif* director's office, sat across the table from each other, and began to speak. Here, I want to note that the setting of our interview followed the temporality of the normal liturgical week in Istanbul: on Monday when we both usually serve, we planned to meet at another of the weekday liturgical stops. So, if Maestro's interview was scheduled after a Sunday service and was conducted on the grounds of the Neighborhood church before a regularly scheduled rehearsal, *Hoca's* interview was scheduled according to his liturgical schedule. Even in the arrangement of our interviews, the organizing principles of the two choirs was made apparent.

Perhaps the most visible difference, the various *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch'akhump* (including the *Hoca's*) give extra-liturgical concerts, while the peripatetic choir grouped around *Hoca* was confined to this primary liturgical setting. While some of *Hoca's* devoted students from his *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch'akhump* choir join the circuit of the more ephemeral choir, some of his best students I only met once or twice. At the same time, many of the older men who follow *Hoca* around the city do not sing with his *Tbrats' Tas* Choir. Thus, we can separate the peripatetic choir and locate it squarely within the context of liturgy. While both kinds of choir were situated squarely within the liturgical context, *Hoca's Tbrats' Tas* Choir, Maestro's choir, and a number of choirs throughout the city, though, often sang and performed in extra-liturgical settings.

Choir Activities, Choir Purposes

All the choirs, then, partake of the central or primary activity of liturgy. Even children's choirs, more directly associated with the schools than the *Tbrats' Tas Yerkch'akhump*, sing during Morning Service or *Badarak*. In Istanbul, though, many of the long-standing *Tbrats' Tas*

Yerkchakhump regularly give concerts. A concert, even when the songs are largely taken from the liturgy, is not explicitly worship. The songs themselves, the practice of liturgical singing, and the institution of the choir are all transplanted to a different context. If the point of reference is a broad Armenian or Armenian Christian tradition, then we encounter a question regarding context within a tradition—that is, if a practice migrates away from the institutions and contexts where it was developed and sustained, is the practice itself “the same”? In this section, I explore these other activities wherein the practice of hymn singing occurs in order to articulate how a practice, central to a tradition, fares in other contexts, and whether that migration to a different context, in the end, transforms the tradition itself.

As I have described the Armenian *Badarak*, the liturgical context, with some detail earlier in this chapter as well as throughout the text, I would also like to attend a few concerts together in order to get a sense of the range and formats of the kinds of singing in which these two choirs engage. Over the course of my time in Istanbul, I attended several concerts, organized for a number of purposes and performed by different groups. In contrast to the primary and necessary liturgical function of choirs, it is worth exploring what motivates the giving of extra-liturgical concerts throughout the city. Two very different concerts I attended suggest the range of institutional embeddedness and variety of extra-liturgical settings open to the practice of liturgical singing.

The first was a year-end celebration for the Armenian school in Samatya. Samatya, one of the neighborhoods in Istanbul with a dense Armenian population, is also home to the school with the highest enrollment. Often, visiting the church and talking with the priest, Hayr Zakeos, I would hear the playful playground noises common to children around the world. Given that the

schools and churches are part of the same physical complex (see Chapter Two on the *vakıfs*), Hayr Zakeos's office was quite close to the school entrance. Fairly acquainted with the neighborhood, its church, and its school, when I read about the end of the year concert given by the schoolchildren (see Chapter Three on the newspapers), I decided to attend.

Strikingly, this concert, a full assembly of a few hundred children as well as songs performed by members of the adult church choir, was not given within the neighborhood of Samatya. Rather than using the large church itself, or perhaps one of the halls in the school (none of which would have been quite large enough), the school used a municipal performance hall across the city (though still on the European side) in the municipality of Şişli. Nearby Armenian neighborhoods and proximity to the central Taksim area probably played a role in the decision, but ultimately, I think it was the necessity of a large concert hall that motivated the decision to hold the concert in a different neighborhood. Given strong neighborhood affiliations, marked by everything from restricted church movement to long-standing histories and even stereotypes²², the pragmatic decision was nonetheless striking.

Convincing my girlfriend to come with me, after taking a brisk walk in the Spring air up the main street from our apartment, we found the entrance to the building, tucked between storefronts and rather nondescript considering both its size and function. Inside, there was a large lobby. As with almost all the Armenian events I attended, this one was free. Explained in part because it was a school event, the patronage of the *vakıfs* is also part of this material support.

²² See, for instance, the delightful sketches of Armenian neighborhoods by the nineteenth century comedic writer Hagop Baroյan, *Bduyd mē Bolsoy T'agheru mēch (A Stroll Through the Neighborhoods of Istanbul)*, recently translated into Turkish.

That is, in these concerts we see a concrete manifestation of the kinds of material support for community which the foundations provide.

Rushing downstairs, we entered a vast auditorium with people spread out in seats throughout, though it was far from full. We took a seat off to the right, and had a few spaces between us and the next person. The crowd was diverse in age, and clearly there were families sitting together, though most of the children were young. This, of course, was because the main event was the children's choir.

The second half of the show was the *vakif*'s choir, organized in the same manner as the Maestro's choir, namely as a "Acolyte Choir Ensembles perhaps not achieving the level of professionalization as Maestro's choir, which, in addition to himself, includes several conservatory graduates, the "Samatya Acolyte Choir Ensemble" is full of people who sing often, in and out church. Selections included *Amen*, *Hayr Surb*, from *Badarak* and the well-known folk song *Khapama*. Soothing, haunting, and beautiful, everyone clapped appropriately and clearly enjoyed this portion of the show.

However, it was the first half of the show, not the semi-professional *vakif* choir that had brought all of these families out. The curtain revealed several hundred schoolchildren, ranging in age from about eight to fifteen, arrayed in no particular order. Girls were next to boys, and perhaps the only arrangement was by height: the tallest in the back and the shortest in the front. This children's choir, composed of the students of Samatya's *özel* ("special") Armenian school, sang their hearts out. They sang Armenian folk songs, Armenian national(ist) songs, and songs from the Liturgy. Many of the songs I knew, and like a few others around me I hummed and sang softly along with them.



Figure 10. Program for the Samatya Choir Show. Photograph of the program by the author.

Of course, this choir was a far cry from the rigorously rehearsed, highly-trained choir of Maestro, the devoted and genteel older men of *Hoca*'s weekday chorus, or even the “community choir” of the Samatya adults. In comedic symmetry, one of the tallest boys stood stoically, barely moving his lips, clearly coerced, while only a row below him a younger boy, mouth wide open, was shouting his lines with sheer joy. His screaming rendition of some of the most revered songs in both the liturgical and nationalist canon was amusing, to say the least. But the beaming faces

of parents and grandparents all around the auditorium emphasized the warmth of even the most melodramatic and tone deaf of the performers.

Samatya's concert, then, was of a familiar type. Large-scale student choral performances know no geographic or institutional bounds—I also as a child performed in district-wide choir shows that must have been objectively terrible yet proudly attended by beaming parents. Comparing the Samatya concert to this familiar type of a student choral performance illustrates two central characteristics of choir singing among the Armenians of Istanbul. First, it is a paradigmatic “community” event. This was perhaps the largest group of assembled Armenians I saw my entire time in Istanbul, it was a celebration of student achievement, and the form it took was a choir show. Second, this concert demonstrates the way in which the *vakıf* structure provides the base upon which a variety of events and communal possibilities are built. The adult choir, connected with the school but separate from it, performed with the children's choir that was explicitly connected with the school, subsidized by the school and *vakıf* funds, which are institutionally linked, performing music that comes in part from a church setting. While the *vakıf*, both institutionally and financially is necessary for all of this, the event itself activates networks of kinship and neighborhood that are not limited to the reach of a single *vakıf* as an institution.

A second concert which I attended during my time in Istanbul emphasizes the way such performances galvanize and mobilize the community, understood in specific ways. While the Samatya show assembled a community grounded in the logic of the neighborhood, there are other possible organizing features, including those that allude to liturgy and the ecclesial, even if not explicitly invoking the community as *ecclesia*. If the Samatya concert demonstrates the specific ways in which a *vakıf* is the necessary but insufficient basis upon which events are built,

the concert given by the St. Vartanats Choir “On the Occasion of the Hundredth Birthday of the Late Shnork Patriarch” is a clear example of the manner in which the individual *vakıfs* support not only their individual parishes or neighborhoods, but a larger conception of the Armenian community. While the selections included more liturgical than folk music in comparison to the Samatya concert, both concerts featured the hymn from the *Badarak*, “Amen, Holy Father.” Nonetheless, through the invocation of one of the most revered Armenian clergyman of the twentieth century, the Feriköy concert already took on a more liturgical tone.

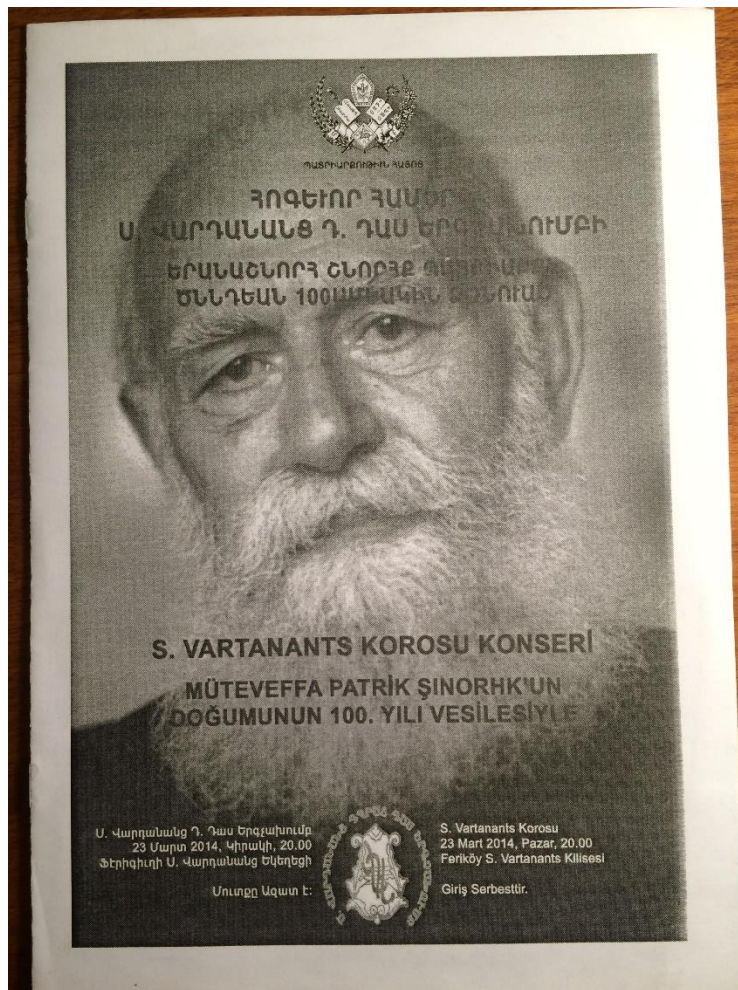


Figure 11. Program for Concert in honor of Shnork Patriarch. Photograph of program by the author.

Additionally, the setting reinforced this. While the Samatya concert took place in a civic building in the Şişli neighborhood, with the final interior page thanking the charismatic mayor of the municipality at the time, Mustafa Sarıgül, the Feriköy concert took place within the Sts. Vartanatz Church itself. Though the pews had been moved from their normal arrangement and a set of bleachers had been set up for the singers, creating a “stage” area in front of the *tas*, the lower altar, and thereby suggesting that the space had been altered and that the concert was something other than liturgy, nonetheless, the concert did take place inside the church. Looking at the selection of songs, there is really only one “folk” song, though there are, in contrast to the Samatya concert, non-Armenian songs. Tellingly, these songs are also liturgical or “religious” in nature: Handel’s “Halleluja,” the “Anonymous German Christmas Song” *Stille Nacht*, and Mozart’s *Lacrimosa*. Finally, the concert ends with the Gomidas arrangement of the “Lord’s Prayer” in Armenian.

This final song, notably absent from the Samatya concert, marks the Vartanatz performance as quasi-liturgical. While the *Hayr Mer*, the Lord’s Prayer, is sung during the *Badarak* in the later third, many churches also sing a final rendition of it²³ as a collective benediction to end the entire service. The Daily Offices all do end with the *Hayr Mer*, as do most of the Sacramental services and more informal services such as table blessings. Ending with the Lord’s Prayer, then, is a distinct marker of an event as liturgical²⁴. Both the content of the

²³ Often in the Gomidas arrangement, as at the Vartanatz performance, even if the rest of the Liturgy has been sung according to the Yegmalian arrangement

²⁴ Here, we can usefully deploy the idea of “entextualization” articulated in *Natural Histories of Discourse* (Silverstein and Urban 1996; Urban 1996). An event or performance becomes “liturgical” precisely through the textual bounding by the Lord’s Prayer. While I have emphasized ending with the Lord’s Prayer, most services also begin with the *Hayr Mer*, even if it is just silently or quietly recited by the priest.

performance as well as its structure give the sense that the Vartanatz concert was more liturgical than that of the Samatya school event.

In part, this makes sense if we consider the express purpose of performance as well as the target audience. The Samatya performance was a year-end celebration of the Samatya school directed at the denizens of the neighborhood of Samatya and relatives of students. It was meant to showcase the students. More speculatively, we can say that by having the Samatya students perform a wide range of folk songs, the performance demonstrated the continued cultural commitment on the part of the youth. By contrast, the Vartanatz show was dedicated to a revered churchman on the anniversary of his birth. While anyone was welcome, the occasion and the site (inside the sanctuary) delineates a subset or idea of the community that is expressly ecclesial in nature²⁵. That the show itself was liturgical in nature emphasizes this form of communal expression and this idea of the group. Hence, these two concerts together show how the same practice of liturgical singing, supported by the same *vakıf* system, can be mobilized in different ways, in order to support oblique or even conflicting visions of “the Armenian community.”

During my interview with Maestro, I explicitly asked about the concerts. After talking about the choir as part of the Liturgy, he turned to other choir activities, saying that they had “labored for the Armenian Community,” describing shows given around Istanbul, including on “The Island,” namely Kınalıada, one of the Princes’ Islands known for the large Armenian population that summers there. On the island, there is an Armenian Church, large “community

²⁵ Though I have written elsewhere (Sheklian 2014) about the way in which Shnork Patriarch was an important figure for all Armenians, including Hrant Dink, who wrote upon the Patriarch’s death that “the esteemed was my father” (Agos 2013).

center” and summer camp²⁶. There, he said, they labored for the Armenian community and for “Armenian Culture.”

Maestro here deploys two highly anthropological categories, culture and community. As we saw in Chapter One, there is an active debate about the Armenian community that includes selective use of terms with very different connotations. Maestro and I were speaking in Armenian, where the nuance between *cemaat* and *toplum* is subsumed under the single Armenian term *hamaynk*՝. The term delineates a subset of Armenians, usually with a geographical restriction. That is, though it would be possible to speak of “the worldwide Armenian community,” *azk* (“nation” or “people”) would more likely be used. Maestro, with his use of *hamaynk*՝, is explicitly referring to the Armenians in Istanbul, or perhaps all of Turkey. Since the *Kinaliada* community is ephemeral and made up of Armenians who normally reside in different neighborhoods of Istanbul, it is unlikely that he means simply “the Island community,”²⁷ but rather at least the Armenians of Istanbul.

Simultaneously, by in coupling the pair “the Armenian community” and “Armenian culture,” he might suggest an even broader conception of Armenian community. Crucially, though, Maestro does not discuss here the importance of concerts for *the church*, the *yegeghets*՝i, the *ecclesia*, but for a more amorphous “community.” Recalling the debates and distinctions of the first chapter, then, “community” bounds a different kind of group than the church. While liturgy is the operative category for the church, concerts refer us to “the community.” Elements

²⁶ The island (often referred to just as *g'ghzi*, “the island” in Armenian) offers a rather hermetic and “safe” space where Armenians comfortably speak Armenian on the street. The atmosphere, even more than the dense Armenian neighborhoods, encourages a kind of “village sociality.”

²⁷ Although “the island” does sometimes come to stand in, iconically, for the Armenians of Istanbul more broadly. Then a reference to “the island community” would be possible, but would also immediately point to the larger community.

of the church—songs and literature—might be of broader interest to the community, but when they are, Maestro suggests that they are as “culture.” Hence a practice such as liturgical singing might well “migrate” from its initial context, but outside of liturgy hymn singing anchors not the group as *ecclesia*, but the group as community, held together by a shared “culture²⁸.”

So, we see this concept of culture being deployed at a number of levels. First, discussed above, it is deployed internally. Maestro sees the concerts given at various Armenian centers throughout the city as bolstering Armenian culture. Culture, here, is something inwardly directed, something that can be developed, improved, and made available for a significant part of the population. In particular, this reveals the connection between the idea of a strong culture and a strong community. Educated in and saturated with “Armenian culture,” the “Armenian community” will be more active, and hence, strengthened. It is worth noting that Hoca, too, expressed a similar sentiment related to the work of Armenian choirs.

Hoca’s concerns were expressed through lament, specifically with regard to the use of the Hampartsum musical notation described below. Knowing that he regularly used the notation, which is basically extinct outside of Istanbul, I wanted to speak with him about the system. For him, one of the striking things about recent interest in the Hampartsum notation was that it was non-Armenian musicologists, rather than young Armenians singing in church choirs, who were most interested in learning about the notation. This is because the Hampartsum system was one of the first methods of notating music developed in the Ottoman Empire, and many folk and

²⁸ It is unnecessary to review the contested history of the culture concept in anthropology, but I note here that it is obvious that the “culture concept” has been taken up by many non-anthropologists for a wide variety of debates and discourses. The response to the loss of control over the culture concept has caused some anxiety, with some calls to “police” the use of the concept outside of the discipline (Hannerz 1999).

classical Ottoman pieces were first transcribed with Hampartsum notes. In our interview, *Hoca* bemoans the fact that this important aspect of Armenian life is more highly valued among non-Armenians than Armenians themselves.

From the first level of interest in liturgical singing and hymns as “culture,” the purely internal, then, we see a second deployment of the concept, one oriented towards fellow non-Armenian Turkish citizens. In this regard, Maestro’s choir and its concerts have been particularly important: in addition to large concerts in venues outside of explicitly Armenian spaces (e.g. the community center on Kınalıada), the Neighborhood Choir has performed in country-wide competitions and even shared the stage with the famed Turkish singer Sezen Arzu. Though the particular forms of deployment of culture are outside the purview of the current chapter, I would note that this kind of pedagogic understanding of culture, where Armenians are seen as enriching the “culture” and “society” of Turkey at large, is similar to the recent reception and glorification of the Armenian writer Zabel Yesayan²⁹. Her work is, among a number of people, seen as representative of a cosmopolitan Istanbul and a cosmopolitan Ottoman Turkey³⁰. As with claims to a tolerant Ottoman Cosmopolitanism, Armenian liturgical choir singing is mobilized as pedagogic exercise on the part of a minority for the benefit of the majority. Beyond these concerns within the country of Turkey, first among Armenians themselves and then as a minority pedagogic for non-Armenian Turkish citizens, there is a final level at which the concept of culture is deployed.

²⁹ In addition to recent translations into Turkish and English, there was a play staged in 2015 about her life.

³⁰ See Chapter One for more on Ottoman Cosmopolitanism and my critique of the discourse of tolerant Ottomanism.

“We want to go to Europe,” Maestro said with a pause, adding, “and why not, to America.” When I pressed him on why his Istanbul-based Armenian Church choir needed an audience beyond the Armenian centers of the city, he started with the *Badarak*, but went on, “to introduce our Armenian culture to foreign³¹ lands.” Elaborating, he suggested that many people would ask, “Who is an Armenian?” Going to Europe or perhaps even America was a way of presenting an answer to this question. In effect, then, Maestro was suggesting that the choir, through concerts in a non-liturgical setting, could serve as a kind of “cultural ambassador.” Though the choir had performed in Armenia, and twice in Jerusalem where there is a significant Armenian presence, it was the trip to Germany that stuck out to him. Likewise, he was very excited about their upcoming trip to Greece. It was in these “foreign lands” that Maestro felt the choir could make the biggest difference outside the liturgical setting.

This pedagogic function, whether for the benefit of Armenians, Turkish citizens, or foreigners completely unfamiliar with Armenians, is one way the reach of a liturgical component extends from the *ecclesia*, the liturgical setting, and its particular place within the Armenian Christian tradition. Such a liturgical element as the *practice* of hymn singing is then caught up in a completely different set of concerns, such that the practice becomes an element of a culture, and the group bounded becomes not an *ecclesia*, but an amorphous community. In the final ethnographic chapter, I will offer a different way in which the practice of hymn singing might extend beyond the walls of the church. There, I will suggest that it remains more closely tethered

³¹ Using the rather common Armenian word *odar* (one of the only Armenian words I knew growing up). It can mean anything from “non-Armenian,” to “foreign.” The way it was often used in America it had the slightly pejorative connotation of a term like “gringo.” In Turkey, the pejorative seemed less emphasized, in large part because the main “other” or “non-Armenian” were Turks. Among Armenians in Istanbul, a number of ethnonyms, with a gradient of connotations, were used to designate Turks. So here, the term had no negative meaning beyond “foreign.”

to the Armenian Christian tradition, specifically through a continued engagement with the pedagogical and hermeneutic practices of the tradition. In the rest of this chapter, then, I turn to a different pedagogical aspect of the practice of hymn singing, namely the methods of learning the hymns as practiced in Istanbul.

Learning to Sing

“Your voice is fine, but you don’t have an ear,” a stern but nurturing priest told me once in Istanbul. Thinking back to my year at St. Nersess Seminary and to my time on the altar at churches in California and Chicago, I had to agree with him. As long as I have someone to follow, I can match the pitch, but if I am asked to sing by myself, it is likely that I’ll change keys somewhere before the end of the song. In part, I suspect this is a question of God-given talent. Indeed, the medieval Armenian monastic education program assumed that each novice would eventually find the form of praise and worship uniquely suited to them. While every student learned the basics of singing, manuscript copying, and canon law, not all would go on to become master copyists, adorning the pages of velum with the most expensive gold leaf, creating beautiful devotional manuscripts treasured by monks, kings, and art historians alike. But this is also a question of training. Not only have I had no formal voice training outside of the institution of the Armenian Church, but the training I have had emphasized scales and reading scores rather than note matching. By contrast, the solfege system for singing notes³², forms the basis for the musical education for every member of the cherubic host of young singers. Emphasizing pitch and ear training, an early introduction to solfege as much as a divinely inspired voice shapes the angelic voices of the choir members and deacons throughout Istanbul.

³² The “do re me fa so la ti” immortalized by *The Sound of Music*.

Beyond a grounding in the solfege system for singing notes (hardly unique to Istanbul), there are important differences in how interested Armenians learn the hymns of the Armenian Church, whether to be sung liturgically or in a concert. Some of these differences are more pronounced when compared to my own attempts to learn the hymns as a young man in America and a student at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York. Yet the same differences occur within the city of Istanbul. As with many of the other varieties of choir singing explored in this chapter, some of these differences in education and pedagogical techniques come into relief through the figures of our two choirmasters.

Maestro, born in 1955 in the same neighborhood as the Neighborhood Church, went first to a nearby Armenian Catholic School before finishing his education at the school attached to the Neighborhood Church *vakıf*. When I asked about how he became interested in singing in the choirs at all, he revealed to me that his father in fact had been a *Der Hayr*, a married priest:

“A lot started with my father. I was coming with him on Sundays. During the summer, I would be out of school. At that time, my father was at the Mother Church in Kumkapı [Across the street from the Patriarchate]. During that time, I would go with him every day. My father was the *Pokharnort*, the assistant to Shnork Patriarch and head of the Religious Council.”

I include this extended discussion of his father and the beginnings of interest in church music to highlight that despite their later divergences in education, both Maestro and *Hoca*, as with most who serve in the church, can pinpoint a person and a personal connection that kindled an interest in serving. In addition to the institutional grounding in the Armenian schools and the church itself, most people who continue to serve and sing note this kind of personal connection, often with a mentor who formed a pedagogic relationship.

After graduating from an Armenian High School, Maestro went on to continue his education specifically in music. This is where the paths of the two men most diverge. Maestro

earned a four-year degree from a State Conservatory, the “Istanbul State Conservatory” located in Çemberlitaş, in Istanbul. During that time, he was trained specifically in Western musical forms. While many Turkish Conservatory programs offer the ability to study Turkish and other Middle Eastern musical forms and instruments, Maestro’s training was thoroughly grounded in Western classical music, where he specialized in opera. One sees this today in his way of conducting and in the repertoire of the choir.

Hoca began his education in a strikingly similar way. Like Maestro, *Hoca* attended the “Special” Armenian Schools, organized legally in the wake of the Treaty of Lausanne to provide for education in Armenian. While his father was not a priest, *Hoca* also began singing in the choir at a young age. Unlike Maestro, *Hoca* has no “formal” musical education. In this case, by formal I mean a degree-granting university education, not that he was self-taught. Rather, his musical education took place squarely within the institution of the church, in the master/student relationship that he himself now cultivates with students. His *hoca* was one of the most renowned Armenian virtuosos of the mid-twentieth century. At church as a youth, he would sing on a regular basis, eventually “apprenticing” himself to the master. His credentials come, not from a diploma, but from his time spent with his own *hoca*. And while both men’s credentials and education are validated by their appointments to the heads of choirs, *Hoca*’s knowledge and expertise is marked by the informal relationships of master/student that he was trained in and cultivates.

Divergent in their formal educational histories, it is the educational differences that emerge in the teaching of the hymns themselves, the pedagogical practices operative in the transmission of the practice of liturgical singing, that are most relevant. While we can see the

differences in their pedagogical styles in part as a result of their education, it is important to note that both men deploy, at various times, all the techniques and tools described below. In addition to the grounds of authority discerned through the two terms for the teachers (*Maestro* and *hoca*), these two men teach the hymns in and out of liturgical settings, and orally and through the use of notated melodies.

As with many musical styles and traditions, hymns and other songs in the Armenian Church have often been taught orally. Different styles and inflections developed in various monastic settings, and the priests and choirmasters trained at particular locations would carry the local musical variations with them. Early in the development of the *Zhamagirk*⁶, the *Book of Hours* mentioned above, a minimalist musical notation system called the *khaz* was developed. These symbols appeared above the written text and give a basic shape to the melody. Nonetheless, the *khaz* are not exhaustive, and thus the possibility of regional variation remained.

More drastically, with the decline in the Armenian monastic system after the fifteenth century, even the most basic understanding of how these musical notes were used was lost. At the end of the nineteenth century, the great Armenian composer and ethnomusicologist Gomidas Vardapet made considerable progress in reconstructing the system, but his work was lost during the Genocide, and he lived out his days in an insane asylum in France. Today around the world some deacons and priests will tell you that they can use the *khaz* system, but this is nothing more than an *ex post facto* attribution of certain melodic movements to shapes that would suggest those movements. Some work has been done to reconstruct again the system, but it remains inconclusive (At'ayan 2013).

In this early notational system, we have good reason to reject a facile dichotomy between education through text and education through orality. Yet, the loss of the understanding of the *khaz* system led to a mode of pedagogy wherein the text was read and sung, but the melody itself was not inscribed. The teaching of hymns, of the *sharagans*, was for a long time taught through repeated singing, largely orally and aurally and in the context of the liturgy. In the nineteenth century, however, the *sharagans* were first given full melodic notation.

In Istanbul around 1815, Hampartsum Limondjian developed a system of musical notation based on the *khaz*, but entirely original, in order to help solve this problem of teaching and transmission. Now known as the *Hampartsum* notation, this was the first method of musical notation in the Ottoman Empire, and was used for folk melodies as well as liturgical purposes. Using his notation, for the first time, a full transcription of the melodies of the Armenian *Badarak* was produced and published. A revised version of this, published in 1934, remains the standard for the “Istanbul variation” of the Armenian *Badarak* (Yghetz. Yerashdasiratz Miutyun 1934). Additionally, the entire *Sharagnots*’, or *Hymnal*, was transcribed in this notation.

Around the same time, Markar Yeghmalian and then his student, the aforementioned Gomidas Vardapet, both produced Western transcriptions of the melodies of the *Badarak*. Yeghmalian also took the radical step of harmonizing the Liturgy for four voices (originally intended for an all-male choir, but easily adaptable to standard Western choral voices). Gomidas Vardapet later wrote a scathing critique of his teacher’s result and harmonized his own version of the *Badarak*. These two harmonizations, known simply by the names of each of them, are the

website of the St. Nersess Armenian Seminary Website,
https://www.stnersess.edu/uploads/2/3/7/7/23772132/dl-js-ztakavorn_parats_kreesdos.pdf.

These two notational systems, the *Hampartsum* and the Western, with their respective books, are used differentially by the two choirmasters. While Maestro sometimes does make use of the *Hampartsum* texts and though he is certainly knowledgeable about them, from education to actual singing in church, he regularly relies on Western notated versions of the hymns. In contrast, I have never, not a single time, seen *Hoca* use a Western notated version of a *sharagan* during the Daily Offices or Liturgy. During performances that draw on a wider repertoire, outside of the church setting, I have no doubt that he uses Western notation. Within the walls of the church, though, he never reads Western music.

During my time in Istanbul, I became quite intrigued by the *Hampartsum* notation. Despite being the first notation of the Armenian *Badarak*, and though the “Istanbul-style” of the Armenian liturgy has been rather prominent in Diasporan churches, I was not even aware of the notational system. In Istanbul, though, the *Teganniyatı Ruhaniye* is still at the basis of the distinct Istanbul *Badarak*,³⁴ even if the text itself with the *Hampartsum* notation is not used. It forms, that is, a distinct style of liturgical singing, a crucial marker of Istanbul’s engagement with the liturgical tradition of the Armenian Church. Though I am still not proficient in the system, I sought out the opportunity to learn it. There was discussion of having classes on the system at the Neighborhood Church, but, to the priest’s dismay, not enough of the young altar servers showed interest³⁵. After this opportunity fell through, I decided to seek out a teacher of my own.

³⁴ Often, to my consternation, I would realize the slight melodic differences in the middle of the service!

³⁵ Echoing *Hoca*’s lament that it is Turkish musicologists and not young Armenians who are interested in learning the system.

Mikael, almost the same age myself, led the weekday choir at St. Sarkis. A mutual friend had introduced us early in my time at Istanbul, and his affable (and youthful) presence was one reason St. Sarkis felt most like my “home parish.” *Hoca*’s star student, he had also studied music at the university level and taught music at a public school. Unlike many of the younger men around the city, he, following his *hoca*, sang with the distinctive nasal voice associated with the “Istanbul-style.” In my first weeks in the city, before I began serving at the altar in my capacity as a deacon and stayed in the chancel to sing with the choir, Mikael would have me sing short solos, singing the melody quietly in my ear. Later, when I had trouble with the unique Istanbul melody for a litany, he recorded it for me on my Tascam. So, when I decided to learn the *Hampartsum* notation, I turned to Mikael.

At first, he was shy about the idea, in part because he is deferentially aware of the *Hoca*’s status. When asked by an older choir member why he hadn’t been ordained a deacon, even though he clearly was capable, Mikael simply replied that *Hoca* had never been ordained a deacon, and that it wouldn’t be appropriate for him to be take an official rank higher than his teacher. Similarly, though a budding choirmaster in his own right, he was still young, and had no students of his own—anyone that might want to study with him would simply study with the *Hoca*. Though we would not develop the full, lifelong relationship of master and student that he had with *Hoca*, Mikael recognized that to take me on as a student, even provisionally and temporarily, would transform his own status. Eventually we worked out an arrangement where I would come to his family’s apartment, near where I lived, and we would have a sort of exchange: he would help me with my singing and introduce me to the *Hampartsum* notation, and I would tutor him in English.

Though the mechanics of the notational system are quite simple—Mikael was able to write them out for me in a single session—I have yet to master the use of the *Hampartsum* notes. In large part, this is due to its anchoring in the solfege method. At the same time, the handful of training sessions I had with Mikael points to a broader question of the pedagogical methods for learning the hymns of the Armenian Church. If the *Hamparzum* notation inscribes the Istanbul variation of the Armenian *Badarak* and its use stands as an icon for a specific position within the Armenian liturgical tradition, the real pedagogical difference is not the use of a specific notational system, or even explicitly in the use of a written notational system at all.

Rather, the crucial pedagogical element for the learning of Armenian hymn singing is its placement within the context and temporality of liturgy itself. This placement accompanies an emphasis on oral and aural transmission, but is not reducible to it, nor does it preclude the use of text. *Hoca* does generally operate by ear. One of the factors that makes him universally recognized as a master throughout the city is his complete internalization of the *tsyan* or modal system of the Armenian hymns and the fact that he has many of those hymns memorized, thus not relying on the texts or musical inscriptions. This *tsayn* system, described in more detail in Chapter Five, ascribes a particular mode, a patterned musical building block, to each hymn, as well as to each day. Thus, a trained expert like *Hoca*, who knows the standard melodic configurations for each mode, reads the text, but does not use *either* Western or *Hampartsum* notation. Instead, he constructs the melody from a combination of memory and knowledge of the melodic patterns constitutive of each musical mode, one of each of the eight *tsayns*.

Additionally, the *tsayn* system of the Armenian Church organizes the liturgical calendar. Days, in addition to the division into dominical, penitential, and saints' days mentioned above,

are each assigned one of the eight *tsayns*. Many of the hymns of the day are in the corresponding mode. Learning the hymns within the liturgical context, then, happens through the repeated singing of specific musical modes during eight-day cycles. Most successful in a monastic setting, we can see that the peripatetic choir grouped around *Hoca* approximates the daily repetition of the monastery. Each week, *Hoca's* choir hears the learned master sing hymns in each mode.

Often, people practice the hymns at home ahead of time. Mikael, still, for the rococo festal hymns on major feast days, consults the *Hymnal* (usually in the *Hampartsum* notation) and practices at home the night and morning before the *Badarak*. Importantly, though, the pedagogical process, even if it involves textual consultation and extra-liturgical practice, finds its organizational logic in the context and temporality of liturgy. This, rather than written or aural, innovative or outmoded, embodied or virtual, is the crucial educational criterion. The best way to learn the hymns of the liturgy, it turns out, is to do so through the liturgy itself.

By way of contrast, I can offer the hymn classes I took while a student at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary in New York. Though there was a daily morning service offered, wherein hymns associated with the daily *tsayn* were sung, our class dedicated to learning the Armenian eight-tone system was actually divorced from liturgy. Organized simply by the eight tones, we marched from Tone One to Tone Eight, week by week, with blithe ignorance of the tone of the day or even the tone of the major hymn for upcoming Sunday. The central pedagogical distinction for the choirs is not the use of Western notated music or even the classroom setting, but the extent to which they are divorced from liturgy.

Choirs and a Liturgical Tradition

In the educational practices, in the form of transmission of the hymns, as well as in the various concerts and potential organizational models for the choirs of Istanbul, liturgy is an

operative heuristic category. Despite the fact that specific techniques and hymns can migrate from the direct context of liturgy, to school concerts where they bolster an amorphous “Armenian community,” or to classrooms where they function as a pedagogical tool to spread awareness of “Armenian culture,” it is the relationship to liturgy that anchors the choirs as institutions in the Armenian tradition. Connected to and dependent upon the support of the *vakıfs*, represented as part of the broader Armenian community in the newspapers that announce concerts, able to migrate away from the liturgy itself, choirs nonetheless anchor a set of practices, texts, and bodily dispositions to that liturgy.

Therein lies the expansive power of the concept of a liturgical tradition and its heuristic ability to offer insight into *how* people relate to the Armenian tradition. Through the institution of the choir, important and constitutive practices of the Armenian liturgical tradition travel and can provide modes of participation in that tradition. To hear hymns sung at a concert is to resonate with a *tsayn* and to hear the theologically rich text. Yet we can recognize that this context is divorced from the full pedagogical and temporal import of the liturgy. Through the choirs as an institution, the practice of Armenian hymn singing reaches beyond the walls of the church. Yet a full, embodied engagement with the hymns in the complete liturgical context remains the apex of involvement in the liturgical tradition.

It is this mode of engagement with the hymns that the choirs as an institution offer as a possibility. These hymns, as has been suggested, are theologically rich. Yet the theological potential lies not only in the text of the hymns, but in the pedagogical immersion in liturgy. Not all Armenians in Istanbul are so immersed in liturgy, but nearly all encounter the hymns sung by these choirs in some form. This encounter is built upon the institutions and practices described

thus far: the *vakıfs* as centers for organization and collective action and mobilization, the presentational logics of the newspapers, and the choirs themselves. Throughout the dissertation, we have encountered several ways of thinking about the Armenian community, and a number of potential modes of collective engagement.

In the final ethnographic chapter of the dissertation, I want to follow the thread of liturgical singing of hymns as they echo out of the walls of the church. What I will suggest is that through immersion in the liturgical tradition and sensorial engagement with the hymns in particular, a cultivated and embodied Armenian subject emerges. This Armenian subject cultivated in the liturgical tradition encounters the sensory specificity of the city of Istanbul, suggesting a form of attachment that binds minority Armenians, precisely through their minority tradition, hence *qua* minority, to the city itself.

Chapter Five: *Affective Urban Engagement and Minority Belonging*

Everyone has some opinion on the call to prayer. It serves as a shibboleth as sure as a moustache did in the political arena of 1970s Turkey, concretizing a political relationship. Someone who hates it might also have a picture of Atatürk by her bedside (or, as one friend did, his iconic signature tattooed on her arm) and will generally resent the imposition of a pious soundscape as the default one. Alternatively, if someone loves it, it's likely one has also been a Justice and Development Party voter for the past decade, and has always felt that the secularist political elite strangled her way of life. Foreigners either complain about the noise or signal their cosmopolitan outlook during their week vacation by telling every other tourist they meet how much they "just love waking up to the call to prayer." Whatever one's opinion about the call to prayer, it is ubiquitous in Istanbul.

While there are very few places in the city where it is impossible to hear the call to prayer at all, from some vantage points you have to strain to hear it. Such a minor difference could affect housing choices, but, as with an individual's opinion, the geography of the audibility of the call to prayer is read as saying something about the neighborhood¹. No one, to my knowledge, has yet produced a fine-grained map of Istanbul based off the decibel level of the call to prayer at

¹ This final ethnographic chapter depends upon earlier discussions of representation. Here, I should be clear, I am describing a set of discourses about the city. The question of demographics, representation, and their relationship to felt engagement is precisely the question of the chapter.

each point. Rather, in the same way that Eyüp, on the northern reaches of the Golden Horn, is considered to be more “conservative” by the upscale residents of Nişantaşı because they think there are more women wearing headscarves whether or not, by volume, there might be more headscarved women shopping in that “progressive” neighborhood on any day, the suggested decibel level of the call to prayer is as much about what people think about the city and received lore than actual numbers. When it comes to the soundscape of the city, a received representation often carries more weight than the immediate precept—the decibel level. So, from my little corner of Osmanbey, if I strained or was particularly focused, I could hear the evening call to prayer. At home enjoying a cigarette and a book, the solitude of evensong meant that the first strains of the declaration of God’s greatness carried all the way through the half-cracked window. In contrast, it was the club music, not the dawn prayer, which woke me up in the darkness of the early morning. And Osmanbey, it should be noted, has been the neighborhood of Greeks, Armenians, Jews, foreigners, and infidels since at least the nineteenth century. Of course, one does not hear the Islamic call to prayer in the bowels of such a neighborhood.

Such received representations of specific neighborhoods depend on sedimented representations, such as we have explored throughout the dissertation. In the chapter on *vakıfs*, we saw not only the way that some neighborhoods are described or known as “Armenian,” but also how those representations and the population densities they depend on have shifted over the years. In Chapter Three, I described how the newspapers depict an Armenian community that exceeds the neighborhoods, even while depending on other forms of presence-making and a mode of participation that resonates with the affective experience of individual neighborhoods as a kind of village-within-the-city. In the choir chapter, we saw how strongly tethered

organizations and people are to neighborhoods: the parish church organizes around a neighborhood, even when people come from different parts of the city. And I alluded to the classic comedic depiction of the different Armenian neighborhoods by Hagop Baronyan. At the outset of this final ethnographic chapter, then, I begin with the tension between a received representation of different neighborhoods—Kurtuluş as Armenian, Nişantaşı as materialistic and secular, Eyüp as conservative—and the lived sensory experience of these specific neighborhoods. Through these specific neighborhoods, we will move to how the city of Istanbul itself is conceived. Despite and through these representations of neighborhoods and the city, the sensory response to the city offers a different conception of minority belonging. In particular, for the Armenian nurtured in the liturgical tradition of the church, who has sung hymns throughout the city, there is available a form of liturgical engagement with the city, a way to find an embodied, sensorial connection to Istanbul grounded in the Armenian tradition, and hence *as a minority*.

Thus, the call to prayer in its representational logic maps out a landscape both interior and exterior, such that the perception of the reach of the call to prayer suggests something about both neighborhood and the one who lends an ear. Response and reach each suggest levels of religiosity, secularity, cosmopolitan character, or religious identification. Even if certain “gavur mahalle” (“infidel neighborhood”)² are represented as beyond the auditory reach of the Islamic call to prayer, rare is the part of Istanbul where it is entirely absent. So

² This is the title of a famous book by the Armenian author Mgrdich Margosian, which humorously describes the life of Armenians in Diyarbakir in the middle of the twentieth century.

pervasive, then, the *ezan*³ becomes more than political shibboleth or fodder for tourist blogs. In its auditory reach, it defines the cityscape itself. Representationally, Istanbul becomes a Muslim city through the very sonic reach of the call to prayer. It is not that we must actually hear the call to prayer in every corner of the city, but that other than the exceptions that prove the rule (the *gavur mahalleleri*), people talk about the city, represent it as through the *ezan* stretches to every corner, making Istanbul a Muslim city.

Of course, I can hear my young leftist, atheist Turkish friends protesting already. But the point is that while the cry of the *simitçi* (Simiiiiiiiiit, as the smell of the warm bread wafts into the window and sesame seeds scatter on the ground to be picked up by gulls), the din of construction, or innumerable other sounds of the city might actually contribute more to the decibel level of the megalopolis, it is the call to prayer that is identified as the singular sound of the city. Likewise, it is not that Istanbul is more Islamic than other huge cities where, chasing the border between sunlight and streetlamp at sunset, the loudspeaker crackles first from one minaret, then the next, then the next, but that, as much as visitors to Amman or Cairo find the call to prayer the overwhelming auditory presence, it is likewise in Istanbul. Decibels aside, the *ezan* blankets the entire city, declaring “God is great” in Arabic. Even if one ignores it or becomes desensitized to it, the most identifiable sound in the city is an Islamic one. By extension, the city, as though reciting the *shahada*, declares itself a Muslim city.

In this final chapter, I explore a number of Armenian reactions to the call to prayer as a way of interrogating the affective forms of attachment minority subjects feel towards the urban

³ The Turkish version of the Arabic *adhan*. As with most Islamic terms throughout the dissertation, I use the Turkish version unless otherwise noted.

environment in which they live. The forces and institutions described in the previous chapters are integral to this affective form of minority belonging, in that they do more than bolster political and legal forms of attachment; they also create the possibility of an affectively attuned body, disciplined within an Armenian tradition that is shaped in large part by the Armenian Church, that can experience a distinctive form of minority urban belonging. We will see the ways in which a specifically minority or Armenian urban sensorium is built on the edifice of the *vakifs*, choirs, and newspapers. This sensorium and the political potentials which arise from it *need* the support of the buildings, the collective pursuits of the choirs, the central practices of the Armenian tradition, and even the representational logics that describe parts of the city as more or less secular. Without those representations, the vibrancy of the potential minority response is lost.

Moreover, this sensorium, built upon the institutional grounds that sustain the Armenian liturgical tradition which we have explored throughout the dissertation, is crucially a sensorium cultivated in and through that Armenian liturgical tradition. In the previous chapter on the choirs, I described a degree of embeddedness within the Armenian liturgical tradition that depended upon both the near-daily participation in the liturgy as a form of participation in the Word and, crucially, by using the liturgy itself educationally. By the end of this chapter, we will see how one response to the call to prayer depends upon a high degree of embeddedness within the liturgical tradition. A cultivated liturgical subject hears, sees, and can be made present in the city in a liturgical mode that extends beyond the walls of the church. It is this affective response of participation in the city by the cultivated liturgical subject that is at the heart of the affective, urban belonging of the Armenian minority.

In a world where the secular legal forms of minority attachment to the state often feel strained, I suggest that this affective form of minority belonging is consummately important for thinking about shared forms of life in the contemporary world. To make this argument, I begin by describing the urban environment of Istanbul as one where the forces of minority *exclusion* are powerfully lived and felt. From there, I unfold different ways of engaging with the affective urban environment, such that the very forces that seem exclusionary can lead to complicated forms of attachment on the part of the minority subject. These forms of attachment often work against the very representations of the city that would make it feel exclusionary.

Istanbul as an “Islamic City”

If the *ezen* is the dominant auditory (and perhaps even sensory *tout court*) experience of the city, then Istanbul offers up a fundamentally Islamic sensory experience. To what extent, though, does this sensory experience make the city itself “Islamic,” or, more provocatively, a “Muslim” city? There important differences between calling Istanbul an “Islamic city” or a “Muslim city,” and, with regard to the idea of an “Islamic city,” a long and problematic genealogy of the concept. First, Muslim properly refers only to a subject, one who has “submitted” and declared themselves a believer in the One true God and his Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). In the previous paragraphs, my usage purposefully plays on this: describing Istanbul itself as reciting the *shahada* is meant to think about the city as a character or subject itself. Treating the city as subject helps to open up multiple conceptualizations of the urban geography and minority belonging.

Islamic, however, is the proper adjectival descriptor. Unless we place Istanbul itself in the subject position, “Islamic city” would then be the correct adjective⁴. The idea of the Islamic city has a history that spans the twentieth century, and has been scrutinized and reformulated many times. Janet Abu-Lughod’s 1987 piece still stands as a good introduction to the Orientalist history of the concept “Islamic city.” In a move that deserves further attention, she suggests that “historiography takes the same form as the traditions of the Prophet” (Abu-Lughod 1987, 155), using the idea of *isnad* or a chain of citation and authenticity to discuss a few formulations of the Islamic city. She traces a few of these *isnads*, one which focuses too narrowly on the Maghreb (Fez in particular) and another centered on Aleppo and Damascus. She concludes:

“In each case, a very tentative set of place-specific comments and descriptions appears. These enter the literature and take on the quality of abstractions. With each telling, the tale of authority grows broader in its application. Forgotten is the fact that only a handful of cities are actually described. Forgotten is the fact that only certain legal codes-on which the Islamic form of city is presumed to be based-have been studied. Forgotten is the fact that Islamic cities have evolved over time and that the sociopolitical system in Damascus and Aleppo in the 14th century under Mamluk rule cannot possibly provide a convincing description of how Islamic cities *sui generis* were governed!” (1987, 160)

After this critique, she suggests that focusing on the processes that make the city, rather than the resultant forms themselves, can more usefully describe an Islamic city. In the end, however, her suggestions focus too much on isolating the religious, falling trap to some of the same essentialist pitfalls she sees in the Orientalist formulations.

One way to avoid these pitfalls is to retreat to a conception of an Islamic city solely as a representation. That is, the historiography or *isnad* of the Islamic city is exactly what makes an

⁴ See Hodgson (1977) for a different distinction between Islamic and Islamicate, an attempt to grapple with elements that are “cultural” rather “religious.” While this work has been incredibly influential, the possibility of peeling off the pure “religious” element is, from my theoretical vantage point, doomed from the outset.

“Islamic city.” The semiotic or literary representation of the city demands that we read or interpret the outlines of the minarets on the horizon over the Golden Horn and the call to prayer as signs of an Islamic city. Yet this largely begs the question—the city is represented as Islamic because of the existence of a single sensory sign. The question, the tension I have identified, is that while the call to prayer bolsters the *representation* of the city as Islamic, denizens of the city relate to the call to prayer as more than a sign, which thereby opens up the possibility for a form of belonging that does not depend on this representation of the city—even if the representation holds a powerful imaginative sway.

Abu-Lughod is aware of the auditory and the importance of sound in creating a sense of place, noting that “it seemed that the decibel level of sounds was higher and more animated in Muslim quarters, of which the call to prayer was only one of the added elements” (161), but she still privileges both the visual and the representational. In passing, it is worth noting that her need to separate the call to prayer as only one element in the decibel level suggests that she is aware of the dominance of the call to prayer in the representation of a city as Islamic. Deemphasizing it is already a recognition that for others, describing the “Muslim quarters” as noisier would first of all invoke the call to prayer. In other words, she complicates the representation of the city as Islamic by deemphasizing the actual sensory role of the call to prayer. Yet the extent of her interest in the auditory is to complicate the representation.

This representation of a city, here the representation of Istanbul as an Islamic city, is indeed a powerful factor in in the lived experience of the city. Though my atheist friends demonstrate that not everyone will agree with such a declaration or such a representation, nonetheless, the representation influences actions and practices of both those who would agree or

disagree that the city itself is somehow fundamentally Islamic. Despite the protests of agnostic or secularist Turks against such a representation, it is often they who most uphold it: they are often the ones who are first to comment on how obnoxious the call to prayer is, or that they have moved to a particular neighborhood to avoid it. In other words, they act as though Istanbul's soundscape is pervasively Islamic, even if they would deny the characterization of the city as such. Here we see one powerful way in which representation and sensory experience align, even when the reality of the representation is denied or inspires protest.

It is not the self-declared secularists, though, for whom the representation is most problematic or for whom the soundscape is most imposing. If we follow İçduygu et al (1999) these Turks are still easily assimilated into the Turkish nation. He suggests that even while ethnicity was posited as the basis of the Turkish nation in the early years of the Republic of Turkey, there was an active effort to “Turkify” anyone within the borders who was (Sunni) Muslim. In other words, the Muslim citizens of Turkey were grouped together for a new Turkish grounding of the Republic. Muslim and Turk became entwined. And while the notion of “cultural Islam” is itself problematic, from the legal perspective, almost all of these Turks will be identified “Muslim” on their identity cards. Rather, it is from the perspective of the non-Muslim or the “heterodox” Muslim, that the *ezan*, as the defining feature of an Islamic soundscape, becomes utterly exclusionary. Here we remain within the realm of a coincidence between sensory experience and representation. Indeed, as with the secularists or atheists who uphold the representation while denying that Istanbul is fundamentally Islamic, Armenians too let a sensory experience define the representation. And the representation in turn influences the emotional

response and the lived experiences. Though my Armenian friends insist they have a place in the city, Istanbul often does continue to *feel* Islamic to them.

Alaaaaaaaahu Akbar...! God is Great! Five times a day. Of course, for the Christian, a strong monotheistic statement of faith is utterly agreeable. On the most brilliant of April days, crisp but not yet hot, with the sun twinkling on the Bosphorus, I would often find myself nodding in agreement. “Indeed, God surely is great.” While the Arabic might already suggest a divergence of opinions about how to consider the greatness of God, the opening lines of the *ezan* are not disagreeable theologically to the monotheist. The statement continues, “I testify that there is no God but God.” Still a generically monotheist affirmation, even if perhaps originally conceived against the Trinitarian theology of the Christians of the Arabian Peninsula. Then, “I testify that Muhammed is the Prophet of God.” As the call to prayer continues in the particular wavering style associated with Turkey⁵ and perhaps Istanbul itself⁶ the statement of faith becomes specifically Islamic.

Alaaaaaaaahu Akbar...! But most likely, the non-Muslim (or, for that matter, even the Muslim) listener has not contemplated this far anyhow. Even if the first lines of the *ezan* only express a strong monotheism, the *ezan* itself, as suggested, is seen as one of the quintessentially Muslim activities. Thus, the chance of my Armenian Christian friends listening attentively to the opening message of monotheism is low. Immediately, the microtones of Turkish modal *makam* music, sung from tops of minarets, reverberate in a particular way. Prior to the words,

⁵ See Eve McPherson’s detailed study analyzing the frequency and length of different vowels used in the Turkish *ezan* to describe its differences from the way the call to prayer is recited elsewhere (McPherson 2005).

⁶ The “Bolis” (Literally “the City,” a name used by Armenians for Istanbul. See below.) style of singing is known throughout the Armenian Church as being particularly nasally and wobbly.

irrespective of the meaning, despite theological commonalities, the *ezan* communicates to everyone who does not practice Islam, and perhaps even a certain state-sanctioned form of Islam, that they are occupying a space that is acoustically Muslim.

The Question of Armenian Belonging in Istanbul

This strikes to the heart of how a minority population “belongs” to a city, and ultimately larger political polity which they call home. For years, among Diasporan Armenians, the post-Genocide Armenian community in Turkey was an anomaly for precisely this reason: it was clear that Armenians were not wanted in Turkey, how could they stay in land of the perpetrators? One of the first questions I often receive from Diasporan Armenians when I talk about my research is something to the effect of, “How do the Armenians feel in Turkey? Do they feel safe?” The question reaches beyond any desire to know about the statistics of hate crime in Turkey, to the realm of perception and how affect. How do Armenians in Turkey *feel*? Behind the question lurks the spectre of belonging. Do Armenians in Turkey belong there? Do they feel like they belong there?

My Armenian friends in Istanbul, of course, come to the question from a completely different place. For them, Istanbul is home. While many of the older Istanbul Armenians were born in Turkey’s Eastern provinces, or perhaps are the first generation to be born in the city, there is still a sizable number of “old” Istanbul families. Whether heirs to wealthy *amiras*, notables of the nineteenth century, or descendants of orphans who came to the city after the Genocide, Istanbul Armenians insist Istanbul is home. One of my closest supporters and friends in the city, Deacon Jirayr, first befriended me after he found out we went to the same church in Chicago. For almost thirty years, he ran a successful limo company in the city. But when it came

time for retirement, he and his wife moved back to the only city they truly knew as home: Istanbul. In fact, in Armenian, the city is referred to as “Bolis,” a shortening of the Armenianized version of Constantinople, “Contantinopolis.” In effect, by using simply the Greek ending “polis” as the name of the city, Istanbul is *the* city in Western Armenian imagination. Bolis is the only home, defended with a fierce loyalty, many of my friends and informants have ever known.

And this comes with not only a loyalty, but a pride. In many ways, Istanbul is analogous to New York: the self-perceived center of the universe. The comparison continues in size, variety of people, immigrants, cultural and financial activities. Moreover, suggesting that Istanbul is like the rest of Turkey is as ludicrous as suggesting New York is like the rest of America. Quintessentially Turkish, it is, at the same time, its own beast. So to be from such a city carries with it a number of emotional responses. Many are irrespective of religion or ethnicity. A number of these responses, however, are articulated within certain subject positions, such as the “Armenian of Istanbul.”

One of the clearest divides became apparent during a trip, a pilgrimage, made by about fifty Armenians from Istanbul to the Republic of Armenia during the summer of 2013. The way in which Istanbul Armenians moved through the post-Soviet Republic of Armenia, their concerns and emotional responses, is indicative of the kinds of attachments they felt with the city. Many of these must be placed in the context of a longer and larger Armenian history which has divided a Western Armenia from Eastern Armenia for centuries. Divided between geopolitical entities, Western Armenia was centered on the Armenian Highlands in Anatolia, what is present-day Turkey. These Armenians were the subjects of first the Roman and Byzantine Empires, and then the Ottoman Empire. To the East, which includes the present-day

Republic of Armenia, Armenians were in the Persian and later Russian Empires, with seventy years of Soviet rule until the proclamation of an independent Armenia in 1991. Geographic, linguistic, culinary, and historical differences result in sometimes tense relationships between Armenians whose lives have been shaped by strikingly different forces.

In addition to linguistic differences, perceived and actual, I noticed a tendency in the *Bolsets'is* with whom I was travelling to find fault with the old Soviet infrastructure, buildings, and generally poorer quality of life in Armenia. Coming from the great cosmopolitan city of Istanbul, Yerevan, with a population hovering around a million people, seemed the provincial backwater. At dinner one night, comments abounded concerning the service. The lack of variety offered one day at lunch was evidence of a lower level of cultural attainment, rather than merely one businessman's attempt to make serving lunch to 50 people as easy as possible. All of this detour is to say that, for Istanbul Armenians, not only is Istanbul home, but it is one of the world-historical cities, somewhere one is proud to be from.

Bolsets'is mark their inclusion linguistically when referring to the geography of the city. Many of Istanbul's neighborhoods are former villages dotting both sides of the Bosphorus. Üsküdar and Kadıköy, for instance, were essentially separate cities for many years. Modern Kadıköy is the Byzantine town of Chalcedon, where the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church took place. Further north, many of the current neighborhoods were small fishing villages. Hence, many of the place names, like Kadıköy, end in the Turkish word *köy*, meaning village. When speaking in Armenian, many *Bolsets'is* will translate the Turkish ending into the Armenian word for village, *kyugh*. Thus, Kadıköy becomes Kadikyugh. At the linguistic level, the use of the Armenian ending and the changing of Turkish toponyms into Armenian ones

signals a level of participation in, belonging to, and perhaps even ownership over the city of Istanbul. It locates the Armenians in the landscape of the city, and demonstrates that they engage with it on their own terms.

Nonetheless, whether it is Kadıköy or Kadikyugh, and whether one is standing inside a church yard or on the street, the *ezan* still bellows out the reminder that the space is first and foremost an Islamic one. Various reactions to the *ezan* by my Armenian informants demonstrate this to be true. Drinking tea one day, someone simply repeated “Allaaaaahu Akbar” in a mocking tone. In a comment most shocking for me, a priest—one whom I respect very much, who is one of the most ecumenical and tolerant I knew— said to me during the call to prayer shortly after performing a church service, “I can’t wait until the Second Coming, then we won’t ever have to listen to that again.” His words clearly describe the call to prayer as an imposition on the auditory landscape, what might be called “noise pollution.” Moreover, while the statement suggests there is an aesthetic reason for disliking the call to prayer, that the sound itself somehow becomes grating or irritating, the priest uses religious language in two ways.

First, the Second Coming, the moment in Christian belief when Jesus Christ will return to Earth to judge the living and the dead, is explicitly a moment of reckoning, of Truth. From the priest’s perspective, there is no question that the Christian religion is the true and right faith, and in the fulfillment of time, the Truth will be revealed. Here, Christian faith and truth, as well as Christian *practice* overcome other religious traditions and their practices. The truth of Christianity will be revealed through the ending of Muslim forms of worship. Presumably, singing heavenly hosts of angels and church bells make up the soundscape of heaven, not the Islamic call to prayer.

Second, the religious language mobilizes an explicit boundary-making project. The first person plural recruited and identified me, as an Armenian Christian, to the side of truth. At the same time, it suggested that the aesthetic evaluation would be shared. Thus, the aesthetics of the religious auditory landscape are seen to be communal. As an Armenian Christian, my opinion on the call to prayer is assumed. As a boundary-making project, the priest's offhand remark also reaffirms my assertion at the beginning of the chapter: the call to prayer marks Istanbul as an Islamic space. In the courtyard of the church, walled off from the streets, in what is marked explicitly as an Armenian Christian space, the call to prayer still penetrates the acoustic environment, and reminds the Armenian precisely of the exceptionality of the churchyard. Though, in these closed spaces, people speak Armenian freely, it is in fact only in such spaces that the minority subject feels complete ownership over the space.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, most Christian churches are constructed as part of a compound that includes a hall, office building, and sometimes a school. These compounds are closed off from the street by huge walls that open into vast courtyards. For instance, the Holy Trinity Church is tucked behind a wall off *Balık Pazar*, the "fish market" street that is one of the most crowded tourist locations in Beyoğlu. During the day, trinket sellers' stands sit in front of the entryway, a looming metal door with a way in on either side. Thousands of people walk by the nineteenth century church every day without the slightest knowledge that it exists. Once you knowingly step through the gate, the courtyard is massive, and a tall, beautiful church stands in front of you.

I don't want to make too much of this separation, and a thorough treatment would look in building codes in Ottoman Istanbul. In fact, many ancient mosques are built with a similar sense

of being a full compound including madrassa and other administrative buildings. Winding, narrow streets in old parts of Istanbul or in Diyarbakır are all demarcated by walls, with apartment buildings, mosques, or churches all behind these walls. Thus, the Christian churches in Istanbul are built as much according to a certain architectural style as due to the desire to separate the non-Muslim population from the public eye or perhaps as a sense of safety. Despite the potential reasons for the way in which these compounds have been built, in the contemporary moment, they serve as demarcated, exceptional and safe spaces where Armenians congregate liturgically and socially.

Often, these are the only places where Armenians will speak Armenian with each other. One particularly telling ethnographic example suggests the degree to which the inside of these church compounds were thought of as “safe” Armenian space. At one little church where I regularly attended liturgy, we would take group pictures, especially during the period when we had “visiting clergy.” These photos would make their way to Facebook. On one occasion, when almost our entire weekly group was present and we were all looking quite dapper, the church’s acolyte printed out that week’s photograph to distribute to all of us. I took mine, and strapped it to my Kindle case while we ate lunch in the courtyard. Partway through lunch, my friend Deacon Jirayr told me to “turn it around.” At first, I thought he meant that I shouldn’t have the picture strapped in the way that I did, that I would bend it. When he repeated the injunction just before we were to leave, I realized he meant something else: flip the picture over so that the back, and not the picture itself, is visible. As my eyes widened in recognition, he continued, “You don’t want the Turks on the street or bus to see it.” Nodding in agreement, another friend added an expression commonly used to denote defeatism in the face of political difficulties: “Burası

Türkiye,” “This is Turkey.” Inside the walls of the church of the grounds, Armenians can worship as they will and speak Armenian freely. Outside, this conversation suggests, Armenians should hide the fact that they are Armenian, and try to discreetly blend in, to pass in Goffman’s term, as much as possible.

To recap thus far, while the use of Armenian toponyms for some neighborhoods of Istanbul suggests that Armenians feel some level of belonging or ownership in and over Istanbul, for the most part, the open and vibrant life of the Armenian exists only behind closed doors. Identifying markers, most especially language, are sequestered in the compounds that make up the churches and other Armenian institutions, such as hospitals. On the streets and in public places, Armenians feel a degree of exclusion from the city. Perhaps the most constant reminder of this exclusion is auditory: the call to prayer blankets the auditory space of the city; though not in any legal or explicit sense, the soundscape makes the city feel like a Muslim city. This reminder is felt by all—secularists, atheists, tourists—but is most acute in the case of non-Muslim minorities. Even in the sequestered spaces of open Armenian existence, walls do not keep out sound, and the reminder that Istanbul is a Muslim city forces its way past high walls into Armenian courtyards.

Alternative Modes of Belonging

Of course, there are other ways of conceiving both the walled space of Armenian churches and institutions and the auditory regime. One of the most striking alternatives comes from a little church on the Asian side of Istanbul. Kuzguncuk is a neighborhood known for its harmonious inter-communal living. A small book akin to many of the books popping up around the United States about individual neighborhoods bills Kuzguncuk as “the neighborhood of three

religions.” In addition to the Kuzguncuk Armenian Church, there are two Greek Orthodox churches, a synagogue, and a mosque, all within about five minutes walking distance. One of the small villages of the Ottoman era, today it is a fashionable neighborhood on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, the main street stretching uphill from the water, dotted with cafes and boutiques between the more established cardhouses where I sometimes played backgammon after church services. In Kuzguncuk, the mosque is the latecomer, built in 1952.

However, it is not merely the presence of the three religions that articulates a different sense of space for the non-Muslims there: the latecomer mosque was built right next to the Armenian church. In fact, it shares a wall with the church. According to the Edip, the current head of the Kuzguncuk *Vakıf*, the church actually helped with the construction of the mosque. Here, unlike other churches I attended, the noon call to prayer that usually happened sometime after the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy (or, sometimes, if the priest was long-winded, during the sermon), passed without comment. Once, going over some of the distinct Istanbul melodies for the end of the service with my friend and teacher Mikael, the call to prayer sounded. In the recording, Mikael continues singing as though nothing was happening.

Despite the fact that many of the choir members travelled around the city, and thus are the same actors, the same people hearing the call to prayer, something always felt different at Kuzguncuk. It was as though the simple fact of sharing a wall meant that the space itself was conceived of differently. Obviously, as Deacon Jirayr’s statement about the picture demonstrates, there is still a sense in which the interior of the church compound is the “safe” space, the complaints or comments about the call to prayer were fewer. In terms of the soundscape, at Kuzguncuk the call to prayer was less an imposition, an unwelcome reminder, and more the

inevitable fact of coexistence. When the walls are shared, there is already an expectation of hearing the call to prayer. The imagination of the soundscape is different, and the *ezan* takes on a markedly different resonance than it did in other neighborhoods.

Kuzguncuk, then, presents at least the possibility that the soundscape of Istanbul, even if still explicitly Islamic, nonetheless offers different modes of engagement for the Armenian minority. It does not have to be solely a stark reminder of religious difference, second-class citizenship, or oppression. Rather, it can resound with the harmony of interfaith living. It can even remind the Armenian minority of privileged, if not stereotypical positions such as artisan or financier. When told from the perspective of the benevolent, wealthier church that helped build the contiguous mosque, the call to prayer resonates with the Christian message of love of neighbor. While these messages are often drowned out by louder overtones of oppression, the potential for a different engagement with the soundscape exists.

Sipping tea in the Sister's room of the Hospital in March after *Badarak*, the noon call to prayer began from a local mosque. "Is that *Tah-Gen*?" the Sister asked? Listening, the *Hoca* replied that it was, in fact, and elaborated slightly. The Sister's question and the *Hoca*'s response refers to the modal system at the heart of the Armenian hymnography. This system connects the music and calendrics, as each day is assigned one of eight modes, known in Armenian as *tsayn*. *Tsayn* translates most directly as sound, but it also means voice. In the liturgical sense, *tsayn* refers to one of eight tones or modes. In Western musical theory, a mode is a scale (a set relationship of notes) coupled with certain typical melodic patterns. At its simplest, a mode is simply a slightly different building block than a scale for music. Often, in modal systems of

music, each tone or modal pattern is associated with certain emotions. In Armenian liturgical music, hymns are given in set modes.

Additionally, each day of the Armenian liturgical year is assigned one of the eight *tsayns*. Without wading too far into the complexities of liturgical calendrics, eight tones for seven days of the week fits with a beautiful cosmology of renewal where the eighth day is seen as the “new first,” a form of repetition with difference. Thus, if Monday is in Tone 1 (“Ayp Gen”), the following Monday will be in Tone 8 (“Tah Gen”). This “*tsayn* of the day” dictates a number of liturgical variables throughout the different services, usually the main hymns sung in each service. No matter where I have served in the world, the first question of the day when arriving in church is always, “What’s the *tsayn* today?” This modal system lies at the heart of Armenian liturgical life, influencing the mood of the hymns and organizing time itself.

One of the striking things about musical systems, like color, is a fascinating set of questions raised about “representation and reality.” As Berlin and Kay have shown with respect to color, between languages with vastly different words for colors and different degrees of variation, there are certain important overlaps (Berlin and Kay 1969). For instance, no matter what color words are available, if there is a word for “red,” speakers will designate a remarkably similar hue as the “true” or “best” red. In other words, there is a certain visual experience that corresponds to “red” in a number of different languages. Something similar happens with music: exact frequencies correspond to different notes, no matter how one describes them. This is why, in the “well-tempered” Western musical system, many modal systems are described as using “quarter” or “semi” tones: even though the Western musical system does not recognize them as notes on a scale, the frequencies of the tones are recognizable and can be placed “between”

established Western notes. Building from this, we can see that the same is true of scales and modes: the arrangement of certain patterns of notes and tones into scales describes something that corresponds to an experience outside of the system used to notate it. Open any English language book about the Middle Eastern modal system for folk music and you will find each *maqam* transcribed onto a Western scale, albeit with modified notation for half and quarter tones. The underlying frequencies and relationships between them can be notated in different ways, much as the recognition of the “best case” of “red” for the most part holds between “red,” “*rojo*,” “*garmir*,” or “*kırmızı*.”

Armenians in Turkey who are trained in the singing of Armenian hymns often translate between two different modal systems, analogous to describing a color in multiple languages. Here, however, the two systems have overlapped and existed in the same space for centuries. Although there is historical overlap here that makes the translation less surprising, the modal *tsyan* system of Armenian hymnography and the modal *makam* system of Turkish folk and Ottoman “art” music are nonetheless differently instituted musical systems. In the same way that a classically trained Western musician could recognize the *makam Ajem* as the Ionian (Major) scale, usually the C major scale (and thus the first *makam* I learned while taking oud lessons), it is possible to describe a *makam* as a *tsayn* and vice versa.

I first noticed this while singing at the hospital. *Hoca*, the premier teacher of hymns in the city of Istanbul whom we met in the previous chapter, has a number of students. As detailed in Chapter Four on the choirs, many of his students follow him from church to church during the week. Some are Turkish speakers with little knowledge of Armenian outside of the liturgy, such as Barkev. Perhaps in this context it is not surprising that he would use the Turkish *makam*

names, but it still struck me as a very salient moment of translation. Even as a young man serving in the church, knowing almost no Armenian, I always referred to the *tsayn* names in Armenian, although there is a numerical system (Just “Tone One” through “Tone Eight”) used in some English texts. Although Barkev has studied music outside the church, it would still surprise me he would ask “Bugün Hicaz mı?” (“Is Today Hicaz,” using the *makam* name) instead of using the Armenian. This usage, however, is simply convenient translation; it speaks to the fact that for many Istanbul Armenians, their first language is Turkish and their various kinds of education, musical included, are in Turkish. At the same time, it was my first realization that these two musical systems were translatable. Based in the same general region with a shared history, the same musical modes were common in Turkish folk music and Armenian hymns.

Yet the Sister’s question after hearing the call to prayer struck me as different from Barkev’s use of the *makam* name in church. First, it was not a simple matter of training or translation borne out of the practical setting of the liturgy; the question seemed almost lackadaisical, like a yawn. Or perhaps more like an exam question. I remember calling my friend and fellow deacon (and much stronger musician) in America that evening to tell him: “How cool is that? How incredible to know the *tsayns* so well, to have such a well-trained ear!” When the Hoca first corroborated the Sister’s identification, I felt a tinge of jealousy. Despite a class on the *tsayns* while at St. Nersess, listening and singing several days a week around Istanbul for nearly two years, and some training in the *makam* system during my on-again-off-again oud lessons, my ear just wasn’t that good. For some time, I put the whole issue to the side, seeing it as an interesting anomaly, a little tidbit: not only was it possible to translate between *tsayn* and *makam*, but a well-trained ear could identify a *tsayn* in other musical contexts.

Eventually, however, I realized I had it backwards: less a trivia game, the Sister's question was a method of practicing the *tsayns*, and, ultimately, it was a mode of engagement with the city itself. One rare morning when I actually heard the call to prayer from my apartment in Pangaltı, a warm spring morning near the end of my two years of fieldwork, it dawned on me that I had missed an incredible opportunity. As I listened to the morning call to prayer, I clicked through *Vikipedia*, the Turkish Wikipedia, to figure out in which *makam* each daily *ezan* was sung. The morning prayer was in a *makam* I had learned during my brief attempt at learning the oud, the Middle Eastern unfretted double-stringed folk instrument and "cousin" of the lute, namely *Sabah*. "Sabah" is also the Arabic and Turkish word for morning. Suddenly, it dawned on me that the *makam* name surely must have derived from its association with the morning call to prayer. Then, the Sister's question revealed its true purpose: not a boast or an exam question, but a way of practicing, a rehearsal. Knowing that the morning prayer was always sung *Sabah*, and that the *makam Sabah* is the same as the *tsayn* "Kim Gen," there was a daily lesson in the modulations, melodies, and patterns of that particular mode. All one had to do was listen attentively, engage with the soundscape of the city in a particular way. In fact, I had missed a two-year daily lesson in five of the eight Armenian *tsayns* I so desperately wanted to learn.

Not everyone, nor every Armenian, would be able to learn from the call to prayer in exactly this way, of course. When I first told my aunt this story, she insisted that she would never have heard that, or even thought to listen in such a way. I insisted that she, too, would be able to recognize certain patterns of song from the *Badarak*, the Armenian Mass, but she seemed unconvinced. First, as my aunt's response suggests, to be able to hear *Tah-Gen* in the noon call to prayer as the Sister did, one has to cultivate a certain mode of attention. No one ever

commented to me about the call to prayer while we walked down İstiklal, talking about something else. Even negative comments about the intrusion of the call to prayer came in quieter moments sitting in a courtyard or a café. Moreover, even if the average Armenian could hear the haunting strains of the penitential “Lord Have Mercy” hymn sung every Sunday in the evening call to prayer, a certain amount of training is necessary to hear specific *tsayn* equivalences. At the very least, as I realized much too late, it would be necessary to memorize the five daily equivalences and then pay careful attention when the first *Allaaaaaaaahu Akbar* crackled over the loudspeaker.

Affect and the Cultivation of the Senses

Charles Hirschkind has recently help attune anthropologists and theorists of religion to the modes and ethics of listening (Hirschkind 2006). Beautifully, he has shown how affective structures and the cultivation of a rich sensory life undergirds both ethical and hermeneutical possibilities. Without modes of engagement that work on the senses, without being able to listen in particular ways, texts and other “standards” of religious life are mute. This work on the senses is itself an ethical project, Hirschkind argues. Thus, cultivation of the attuned ear is both an ethical project in itself and the basis upon which further ethical practices can be built. Otherwise, the heart is sealed and it is impossible to hear or to comprehend religious precepts.

This is the connection between ethics and hermeneutics that Hirschkind points to: understanding itself becomes an ethical project. Proper interpretation of a text is preceded by the proper training of the body and mind. Although Hirschkind’s project explores the contemporary moment of Islamic piety in Egypt and is thoroughly immersed in Islamic theological endeavors, tracing an intellectual history of Aristotelean concepts and countercurrents such as the famous

Eleventh Century theologian Al-Ghazali to arrive at the present, his work speaks to the Armenian minority situation in Turkey at two levels. First and foremost is the conception of listening as an ethical project of a corporeally attuned subject. At another level, many of the intellectual currents Hirschkind draws together are shared between Islamic and Armenian philosophies; some classical texts, such as from the pen of Philo of Alexandria, are preserved only in Armenian, for example.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the intellectual cross-pollination of Armenian and Islamic theology, my goal is to follow Hirschkind in his notion of the soundscape as something different from Shaffer's, as an acoustic environment which supports an ethical project. By using some of his insights, my goal is to think an "ethical soundscape" as also helping to produce a minority geography of a city. After over a decade of work on the senses, affect, and alternate histories to the supposed primacy of the visual, my goal is not merely to further develop an affective topography of the urban experience. There is, I believe, a fruitful connection between work on affect and work on the senses that can be further developed. In what follows, I first try to explore some of these potential connections using the material above. However, my ultimate goal in the chapter is to use the affective basis of the auditory dimension of a minority religious tradition in order to specify some of the ways minority belonging occurs in the city.

Affect, then, can help us develop a genuinely novel epistemology, one that perhaps resonates with other discursive traditions, religious traditions, or forms of knowledge. This possibility is elided if the dichotomy of reason/affect stays intact. Hirschkind's ethnography offers a different epistemological potential (Hirschkind 2006). He is clear that he is not suggesting that Islam is *actually* a rational religion instead of the Orientalist depiction of it as an

emotional one; the point is rather that for his informants, cassette-sermon listening was part of an ethical project that worked through and on the emotions in order to allow for propositional content, “rational” modes of religion to exist at all. Without an “open heart,” described emotionally, rational propositional content, the stuff of reason, is impossible. The Quran says that God seals the hearts of unbelievers so that they cannot accept the truth. In a parable in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus likens the Word of God to seed sown in many different places, some of falls among the weeds, some on the path where it cannot take root; only some seed falls on fertile soil. Both the Quran and the Gospel suggest that rational belief is part and parcel of emotional receptivity. Hirschkind thus establishes two important points: first, the epistemology of various religious traditions is not so easily divided into rational/irrational; second, ethics is not a matter of reason alone (*contra* Kant’s categorical imperative).

In the chapter on the Armenian press, I explore more fully the connection between epistemology, semiotics, and representation in depth. Here, I return to a problem briefly addressed at the outset of the chapter, namely that much of the acoustic geography of the city depends upon a second-order representational conception of sound. Specifically, even though many historic mosques exist near the commercial center of Istanbul, Taksim, and therefore the *ezan* is often heard clearly, Beyoğlu is never described as an Islamic part of the city. If “seeing is believing” is a fundamentally epistemological axiom about proof and vision characteristic of a particular empiricist tradition in the sciences, here, among many of my informants and friends describing the call to prayer, we could say that “hearing marks the believers.” Except that, just as we know a (visual) confrontation with (theoretically-assumed-non-theory-laden) facts does not

automatically lead to the desired knowledge, hearing or not hearing the *ezan* seems to be irrelevant to the depiction of the city. Here, we see representation as an epistemological question.

Affect literature has often wanted to dispense with the epistemological level entirely. Can we not talk about moving about the city and embodied responses to the call to prayer without invoking what we know about it? Perhaps, but this would be a limited and less useful conception of epistemology. The affective ways in which we know about the city, what our (un)trained senses tell us about the city is already a question of epistemology. These cultivated, ethical, embodied ways of experiencing the city are the backbone upon which a knowledge about, a representation of the city is built. This representation then becomes the base for further affective responses. The *ezan* is not grating unless I think of it as an imposition, unless I know it to be a form of Islamic dominance over the soundscape. I become angrier when I think about the restrictions placed on the ringing of church bells, when the sounds recall distant memories, the Book of Revelation and Judgement Day, or collective trauma. In Proustian fashion, sensory engagement works through memory, itself some form of mediated representation. This is not to deny autonomic responses or evolutionary instinct, but rather to assert that engagement with the multi-sensory (often overstimulating) urban environment does not separate affect from knowledge, but plays on, echoes, improvises on preexisting representational structures. The urban environment itself offers us the sort of the epistemological world Hirschkind describes, one where ethically trained senses offer the base for knowledge about the city.

But this is where epistemology and representation again butt heads. Our affectively grounded knowledge nonetheless often does not coincide with the received representation of a neighborhood. I often heard the *ezan* in Taksim, and simply because of the time of day my three

visits to Eyüp occurred, I almost never heard it there. The bursting through of the call to prayer simply *feels* Islamic, just as, as I write, the tolling of the bells in the Montpelier, Vermont still transports me to an imaginary rustic Medieval Christian village, even though I recently learned the bells are tolled from City Hall and none of the five churches in town⁷. This is not the violence of representation plastering over my affective experience, this is a received and perceived representation coloring my embodied response even as it confronts it.

Sitting under vines in early summer outside the church of Kuzguncuk, the space itself, especially for an American where such spaces are so few, *feels* Armenian and Christian. Armenian words flit past my ears even as I have to strain to understand them. Inside, the church's acolyte practices swinging the *purvar*, the censer, and a few wafts of the distinctive myrrh smell my grandfather hated so much waft out the heavy gray metal doors. When the call to prayer begins at the adjoining mosque, I am reminded of Kuzguncuk as the "three-religions neighborhood," not of Istanbul as the Islamicizing city where the mayoralty has yet again recently been captured by the ruling Justice and Development Party. My affective response is governed by previous representations, confronts others, and acts independently of them all at the same time. I am in the heavenly Jerusalem, Yetttem, California, the "three-religions neighborhood" with the cute boutique shops and the stern priest, steps from the Bosphorus, in the megalopolis I have come to love and hate, all at once. Every affective experience of the city must be similarly multiple, but for the minority citizen, especially so.

⁷ Alain Corbin's detailed and delightful *Village Bells* (1998) has been an important influence on this chapter, with the careful attention to sound and space in the book and the mode of analysis serving as an important model for how I have tried to think about the call to prayer, church bells, community, and space in this chapter.

The Minority (Liturgical) Subject Affectively Attuned to the City

For the minority citizen, as the various responses of my Armenian friends to the *ezan* suggest, the auditory experience of the city, indeed the entire sensory experience of the city and the affective response of the cultivated urban sensorium, compounds the multiplicity of evocation and representation inherent in urban sensual life. Specific evocations of persecution, small reminders of “second-class” existence, or a stifling awareness of language and surrounding colors the minority response to the city. And this works both through the ethical/affective sensorium and through multiple representations. The *ezan* grates at a physical level while it simultaneously represents the entirety of a five-hundred year-old regime of separate and unequal. Conditioned affective responses and the shifting multiplicity of representations of the city work through different traditions and channels for the minority citizen-subject.

The textured account in this section of the liturgical subject cultivated within a liturgical tradition while simultaneously aware of and influenced by representations of the city differs, I would insist, from a “phenomenological” account of the city. Not simply a walking tour of Istanbul in the tradition of either the Benjaminian flaneur or de Certeau (1984), what I describe is less an abstract individual’s encounter with the city as a way of describing the city, but an individual embedded in a collective tradition who encounters the city through that tradition. Hence, I am less interested in describing the city through a mode of phenomenological engagement, such as Christopher Tilley offers as a mode of archaeological knowledge about sites and ruins (1997) than I am in exploring how the city offers itself up to an embedded, cultivated, minority subject. The focus is on the mode of engagement and belonging on the minority subject immersed in a tradition rather than the city itself.

By attending to these two related dimensions of sensory/affective and representational, thinking them together specifically for the minority subject, I want to suggest that we can confound and refine how we think about (minority) politics more broadly. First, while affect theory has pushed back on rationalist theories of the political, there is less ethnographic work that has been done to show how political belonging actually can occur. The example of the Armenian Christian response to the *ezan* in Istanbul offers a specific example of how political belonging and exclusion works. If we are careful in our analysis, it will become clear that this is not identity politics, but at the same time it offers a “fleshing out” of attention to the legal dimensions of political belonging. More broadly, the example suggests ways in which the political both depends on and shapes specifically urban forms of belonging.

As the chapter on the history and role of the *vakıf* demonstrates, the specifics of property law in particular shape the possibilities both for communal belonging and broader political engagement for the minority populations of Turkey. Within the city of Istanbul, these *vakıf* properties provide the material means for as diverse projects as minority education and church choirs. At the most physical level, the law on Community Foundations dictates the architecture of the city: domes and renovations must all be cleared. Here, I want to emphasize that the material possibility of sound such as the call to prayer or a church bell is intimately connected to legal basis on which a new bell-tower or minaret is constructed. Larger political calculations influence the physical basis of the sensory environment which then allows for affective attachments to the city.

Urban politics, of which property law is perhaps *the* paradigmatic instantiation, holds a privileged place in political theory more broadly. Politics, of course, takes its root from the

Greek *polis*, the city-state. From this genealogical and etymological level, politics is an entirely urban endeavor. Western political theory introduces and reiterates this: Aristotle's *Politics* takes the city as the only political community, and sees the *polis* as the highest form of community. Subsequent theorizing about both the political and the urban reinforce this seeming identification. Weber's classic study of the city argues against a purely economic urban theory whereby the city's peculiar characteristic is the market, instead insisting that "the additional concepts required for analysis of the city are political" (80). While Weber can envision forms non-urban forms of politics, it is clear that the city is essentially a political formation.

Weber goes on to specify the ways in which the city is a political entity. Some form of law independent from the law of the larger government, and "at least partial autonomy" with representation by the burghers is essential (89). Particularly, the law deals with the urban property of the burghers in a unique way: "the kinds of regulations of land-owning, is customarily different from rural land-owning forms" (81). Property law, then, is central to Weber's conception of the city. From the other side of the politics/city equation, we can recall that for John Locke (and hence an incredibly enduring and influential strain of political thinking), protection of property is the *raison d'être* of politics.

Thus, while it is possible to wrench political theory from the city, for the dominant strain of political thought that sees politics as coextensive with the *polis*, one of the central tendons of that connection is a unique urban law, specifically property law. As the chapter on the *vakıfs* demonstrates, legal regimes of property are essential not only for the politics of the city generally, but the politics of community (in the city). What the Armenian response to the *ezan* and an integration of affect theory shows is that this legal understanding of property and the city

is insufficient for understanding minority (community) politics of the city. *Vakıf* law might give a material grounding for the ringing or silence of church bells, but it falls flat when it tries to make sense of how individuals and communities experience these property regimes. Attachment to space and property, too, is an aspect of urban politics.

Much as the more nuanced uses of concept of affect are not interested in simply flipping the dichotomy, my argument is not that legal property regimes or lived experience of that property are more important than the other. Each depends upon the other: without the material basis for communal activity and the physical space offered by the *vakıfs* and described in Chapter Two, a sensory, embodied, locatable experience of the city is not possible. Likewise, without exploring the lived, and more specifically affective, response to such legal regimes, we lack a complete understanding of the political. While such an incomplete picture is always theoretically impoverished, for minority communities it is outright damaging.

For this reason, I want to return to the Sister's identification of the Armenian *tsayn* in the noon *ezan*. If the broad theoretical point is that politics itself is impoverished when we ignore the multiply resonant levels of the legal and lived urban experience, the ethnographic example offers a first swipe at reconfiguring one of the most pressing political problems today: religious minorities in urban settings. As outlined earlier in the chapter, the experience of religious minorities and their relationship to cities is understood as exhausted by the extremes of the ghetto or paranoia. Either religious minorities are sequestered (or self-sequester) in distinct neighborhoods, or else they must invariably feel their exclusion constantly.

Ghettoization has been the received wisdom on Ottoman cities. Concurrent with separate legal regimes came a spatialized application of those laws. In recent years, both the story of pure “communal” legal autonomy and separation, as well as distinct religious neighborhoods has been questioned⁸. Again, the issue is in part a question of representation. Just as Kuzguncuk is the “three-religioned neighborhood,” Eyüp is the most “conservative” neighborhood in the city, and Kurtuluş is an “Armenian” neighborhood. Demographics support this to some degree, but the affective portions of such representations are rarely borne out demographically. Am I more likely to run into an Armenian I know in Kurtuluş than in the crowded streets of İstiklal where the entire city comes to shop? Probably. Do I constantly hear Armenian spoken on the street and church bells ringing? Certainly not. The point is that representational descriptions of neighborhoods as distinctly religious ignore fluid populations for stereotype. Affective responses to the city both color and are colored by the representational stereotypes more than experience. A nuanced understanding of the affective urban attachment of minority citizens cannot depend upon demographic facts of densely populated Armenian neighborhoods, and they certainly cannot depend upon the representational stereotypes of a “*gavur*” neighborhood.

At the same time, we have to be aware that such representations influence affective response. Paranoia, while felt viscerally, immediately, and perhaps even physiologically, nonetheless is in part learned behavior. It depends upon history, memory, stories, previous and shared experiences. The elderly Armenian deacon who told me to hide the picture of us in liturgical garb did not come to be paranoid in a vacuum. Unfortunately, this part of the representational experience has become the other standard tale of the urban minority experience.

⁸ See, in particular *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire* (Greene 2005).

In this “just-so” story, urban minorities might not necessarily live in ghettos, but they do in fact live their paranoia constantly (although these two conditions are not mutually exclusive). In other words, if they leave the ghetto, they immediately find themselves confronted with their condition of non-belonging. Either feel at home in the ghetto or experience exclusion throughout the larger part of the city. While my ethnographic data suggests that these are certainly possible affective responses (indeed, Kurtuluş is one of the few places people speak Armenian openly on the street, and on the bus outside of Kuzguncuk a sense of paranoia about openly displaying pictures of us in Armenian liturgical garb held sway), these stereotypical representations do disservice in a number of ways.

First, as already mentioned, they leave us with a paucity of explanation for how minorities live in the cities they call home. Clearly constantly felt exclusion or complete ghettoization are not the only possibilities for urban minority existence. Second, at a theoretical level, they tend to find common ground with identitarian explanations for political problems. While the ghetto is often described as a legal problem, the idea that an Armenian cannot speak Armenian on the street is easily theorized as a question of “suppressed identity.” However, without any law against speaking Armenian on the street, we are left with identity as a loose, undertheorized, emotional, and supposedly obvious aspect of politics. When property is expropriated, newspaper editors are slain in the street, and people leave the country in droves, it seems to me that it is not some ethereal identity that is suppressed, but rather concrete and specific legal and physical aspects of life—that nonetheless may be attached to or a result of what we call “identity.” Affective belonging, I argue, is precisely *not* this kind of “touchy-feely” identity politics. As I use it, affective belonging is grounded in the legal conditions of urban

experience, representational politics within the community and at broader levels, and various traditional knowledges. A more nuanced description of affective belonging in the city helps us to grapple with all of these aspects of politics simultaneously. Finally, the binary option of ghettoization or constant exclusion plays into a dangerous “clash of civilizations” rhetoric with disastrous policy consequences. “Protecting minorities” has been an excuse for military intervention and colonial policies for centuries, but the recent false dichotomy between theocratic Islamism and autocratic secularism leaves religious minorities in the Islamic Middle East as the pawns of a civilizational discourse to which they themselves rarely subscribe. As many of my Armenian Turkish friends suggest just through living their daily lives, they belong in the urban fabric in a much more complicated way.

When the Sister uses the *tsayn* terminology from the Armenian hymn system to identify the *makam* of the Islamic call to prayer, she is doing exactly that. Rather than merely drowning out her thoughts or reminding her of her exclusion, the call to prayer offers her an opportunity to find her own place in the life of the city. Contemplative and kind by nature, perhaps the Sister’s response is as indicative of her own affective disposition as of any larger question of political belonging. But the discussion that ensued, between the *Hoca*, the Sister, and other deacons and choir members suggests otherwise. These were, after all, liturgical subjects deeply embedded in the liturgical tradition. Indeed, in a later interview with my young hymn teacher Mikael, when I told him about the Sister’s identification of the *tsayn* in the call to prayer, we recalled when the call to prayer sounded in Kuzguncuk. Sometimes, Mikael added, the *tsayn* of the day would align with the *makam* of the call to prayer, and the two musical modes of the two religious traditions would harmonize for a moment during the singing of a hymn. Even in sensory domination or

symbolic reminder of second-class-citizenship, the religious minority subject can find complicated ways of engaging with and belonging to the sounds and other senses of urban life.

At one level, this is “translation”: the Sister uses the Armenian terminology to translate the *makam* to the *tsayn*. As metaphor for cultural engagement, it is a tired explanation. As metaphor for minority belonging it is best incomplete. Certainly, the Sister can translate the dominant urban experience into her own, and thereby find comfort in the “mother tongue.” But such linguistic metaphors (as well as the often patriarchal domestic metaphors on which they rest) suggest that the feeling of (political) belonging can only happen snuggled in the warmth of homogeneity. They bolster both the logic of the ghetto and the nation-state.

Moreover, the Sister did not first say, “Is this the *makam Ushak*” and then translate to *tsayn Tah-Gen*. Rather, she asked directly, after hearing the modal strain of the *muezzin*’s voice, what the *tsayn* was. In other words, the process was not: sensory input -> Turkish *makam* -> Armenian *tsayn*. “Translation” did not actually take place. It is more akin to Berlin and Kay’s discussion of color mentioned above, such that a certain sensory input can be either “red” or “rojo,” where the range of each lexical item might be slightly different, but they are at least centered on a similar range of activation in the cones and rods of the eyes. Likewise, the modal arrangement that the Sister heard does not need to be translated through a *makam*, but can be understood immediately as a *tsayn*. Of course, it is a *tsayn* out of context, part of another religious tradition, resonating through the city rather than sequestered inside the church.

Therein lies the power of the Sister’s observation. The actual resonance of soundwaves through the air and in the ear is experienced and understood as part of the Sister’s own liturgical

tradition. Perhaps this could be understood as the polysemy of the auditory sign, its possibility as being “read” as either *makam* or *tsayn*. However, it is not just the semiosis that concerns us here. The mode resonates with the Sister. She can know that what she is hearing is the call to prayer. She could even, as with others I know, think of the coming of Jesus Christ and her conviction in the Truth, being reminded of the place of her religious tradition within the urban fabric of Istanbul. Yet the mode still resonates in her body, she can feel the same shiver that medieval Armenian theologians suggested certain modes should cause. In the sensory world of the city, the minority subject is often attune to possibilities of belonging that exceed the cognitive knowledge of citizenship.

Conclusion:
***Christology, Hermeneutics, and Minority
Engagement with the City***

Attuned to the city through her deep engagement and embeddedness within the Armenian liturgical tradition, the Sister is in many ways the liturgical subject par excellence. Through this embodied attunement, she is able to experience a city suffused with a different, majority tradition through her own minority tradition, feeling emplaced in it. Rather than hearing the call to prayer as an exclusionary reminder of the dominance of the majority tradition and the often precarious position of Armenians in the Republic of Turkey, the liturgical subject can attune herself to that majority tradition and the city itself. The arc of the dissertation has moved us through the institutional and conceptual apparatuses which uphold the cultivation of a minority liturgical subject. Along the way, we have seen how these same institutions and concepts support other forms of collective action, how they ground often competing visions of the Armenian community. Our deeply embedded liturgical subject attuned to the city alerts us to the possibility that a minority subject, precisely through cultivation in her tradition, can nonetheless relate to or be present within the city and perhaps the larger polity through modes of engagement which do not directly invoke the state¹ or depend on modern secular representation.

¹ Though, as we have seen, there is an explicit dependence of the minority tradition—indeed even its very instantiation in the present is thus dependent—on conceptual, legal, and institutional factors shaped by the state. Thus, the argument is not that these minority modes of belonging are completely “outside of state power,” but that, though shaped by the state, their forms of address and the prospects for feeling present in the polity are not fully encompassed by the state.

This insight, I suggest, holds beyond the case of the Armenian minority in Turkey. Buildings used for multiple purposes by different groups of people, for instance, work in a similar manner. The point is that embedded practitioners of a minority tradition, cultivated through that tradition, will have available different sensorial, affective, and embodied possibilities open to them. Cultivated in a minority tradition, the minority subject of different traditions will have unique and often surprising ways of mounting forms of collective action and of being emplaced in a city. The Armenian liturgical subject, exemplified in the Sister in the last chapter, offers a textured account of how this process, which I suggest is generalizable, is possible. Hence, the dissertation has demonstrated a mode of minority urban attachment through the grounding and cultivation in a minority tradition.

At the same time, the Miaphysite Christology, the exegetical practices, the centrality of liturgy to the Armenian Christian tradition, among other aspects of Christianity, point to the specificity of this encounter. Throughout the dissertation, I have hinted at the possibility that the rather unique articulation of Miaphysite Christology in the Armenian Apostolic Church might actually suffuse the practices and concepts of the entire tradition. My suggestion is that in this Miaphysite Christology and its development, we might have not only an interesting semiotic ideology that has an uncanny resemblance to dominant Western (Christian) conceptions of the sign, but we might also be able to discern the sets of practices around different forms of presence-making, participation, practices, and forms of action that accompany this semiotic ideology. In this, though Webb Keane's productive expansion of language ideology to semiotic ideology (Keane 2007) points us toward an understanding of the Miaphysite semiotic ideology, I am inclined to suggest that much of what is happening is not captured by the notion of ideology.

In part, the liturgical subject I have described participates in what I would call instead a “semiotic mode” with a conception of the human subject quite different than what an ideology might imply.

By way of a speculative conclusion, I would like to explore some of the Armenian hermeneutic and exegetical practices at the heart of the liturgical tradition. As a conclusion, it does three things. First, it suggests the strongest possible connection between the Miaphysite Christology of the Armenian Apostolic Church and a set of practices that resonate out from the church walls and how this Miaphysite Christology might function as a semiotic mode. These possibilities open the door to further interrogation of the relationship between theological concepts, semiotic ideologies, and the specific conceptions of person and action made possible through different semiotic modes. Second, these hermeneutic practices of the Armenian liturgical tradition reiterate the textured forms of belonging available to a cultivated subject embedded in a minority tradition. Finally, I offer the compelling insights of the Armenian hermeneutic practice as a possible way of thinking about the liturgical subject’s ability to be attuned to the city through her tradition while simultaneously living with the awareness of the marginality and precarity of the minority citizen.

Liturgical Hermeneutics and Multiple Resonances

The hymn, *Ashkharh Amenayn*, “O, Whole Gathering,” written by the famed eleventh-century Armenian Catholicos and theologian St. Nerses Shnorhali, is found in the Night Service².

In fact, the hymn follows shortly after the epigraph of the chapter detailing the choirs. After monks, cherubim, children, and anthropologists have arisen to sing the antiphonal *Zart ‘ik’*, there

² A full translation of the hymn by Dr. Roberta Ervine is included as Appendix 3. Many, many thanks to Dr. Ervine for her tireless work and her generosity.

is a long litany by the deacon, a short prayer, and then, depending on the day, one of two hymns, both written by the eleventh century saint. On Sundays, other dominical days, and saints' days, the hymn is *Arawōt Lusoy*, "Morning Light." On penitential days, it is "O, Whole Gathering."

The exegetical mastery of Nersess' hymn is first apparent in its multiple interpretative possibilities. From the very first word, *ashkharh*, we can tread along at least two separate interpretations via the starting point of lexical variation. Ervine translates *ashkharh* as "gathering" to highlight the polyvalence of the term, but the first and most common "dictionary definition" is "world," so that the first two lines would read "The entire world [which is] gazing at me." If, then, we begin our journey³ from a conception of *ashkharh* as world, the interpretative path continues along as a broadly penitential hymn of lamentation where the singer confesses sins with the whole world looking on. Along this road, we encounter at the end of the second verse the word *boghok 'el*, which we would hear as "to protest" or "to complain," such that the verse ends, "I complain to myself" or "I protest against myself."

Yet we can, from the very first word, set out along a different path: *ashkharh* also has a technical legal meaning we could translate as "assembly." For the learned listener, perhaps a monastic student who has recently finished a course on canon law, including readings by Vanakan Vartapet's teacher Mkhitar Gosh, the realization that this penitential hymn can have a more restricted interpretation, replete with the visual image and embodied experience of standing before the assembly in judgement⁴, leads to a different set of associations and exegetical

³ One of the words used for the act of exegesis in Armenian, *meknel*, also means "to set out."

⁴ Many of architectural terms for the Armenian church are identical to the language used to describe courts, such that the monastic listener aware of this connotation of *ashkharh* could quite easily incorporate the courtroom language describing his physical position in the church to the way he apprehends and experiences the singing of the hymn.

possibilities. On this route, when we encounter *boghok'el* in the second verse, we hear not “I complain to myself,” but “I accuse myself,” since the word can be used likewise in a technical legal sense as “to accuse.”

In offering these two variants, I want to stress a few things that might help distinguish Armenian hermeneutics from other ideas of hermeneutics. First, this is not a question of translation—the terms under consideration have this full range of connotation in the Armenian. Moreover, the two interpretations offered⁵ arise not simply from the “polysemy of the sign.” That is, it is not merely that *ashkharh* and *boghok'el* can mean either “world” or “assembly” and “to protest” and “to accuse,” respectively. Instead, what I might call the “broadly penitential” and the “technical legal” interpretations work through the resonances within the given interpretations. *Boghok'el* strikes us as a legal term only in juxtaposition to *ashkharh* as assembly. Each interpretation articulates and depends upon prior knowledge, educational background, and an entire worldview articulated with terms in concert.

This proliferation of resonances extends beyond the textual to liturgical and more broadly lived elements. Architecturally, the inside of an Armenian church has similar elements to a courtroom (see note 4 above). So, the “technical legal” interpretation articulates with the spatial arrangement of the church itself. Spatial and other sensorial aspects are incorporated into hymns such as St. Nersess’, as well as other texts and commentaries. The liturgical elements that enter into this full set of resonances are most explicitly explored in the genre of commentaries *on* the liturgy⁶ (e.g. Anjewac’I 1992). In this genre, the scent of the incense, the jangle of the censor, the

⁵ There are others. Ervine suggests that one possible reading of the hymn depends on the personal life of St. Nersess and his close, dependent relationship with his older brother, who preceded him in death.

⁶ This genre, though not unique to the Armenian Church, is rare among other Christian traditions.

spatial arrangements, and the movements of the deacons and priest are all interpreted. They pass into the set of potential resonances through which other hymns are interpreted.

Within several verses⁷, liturgy itself, helps to interpret the hymn *Ashkarh Amenayn*. Recall that the hymn is only sung on penitential days—which are also fasting days. Liturgical time is embodied as a reminder of the character of the day, and hence primes the worshipper to appreciate the penitential character of the “pain” of the first verse, and the admission of having “sinned furtively” as appropriate to the liturgical day. More subtly, the recognition of self-sabotage in the third and fourth verses (“[I] invented my own destruction,” “I betrayed myself”), the light and dark contrast in the fifth, and, more explicitly, the reference to the lamp that has gone out in the eighteenth verse all recall the parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Luke 14. This same parable is the context for several verses in the song *Zart ‘ik’*, sung only moments earlier. Nersess’ hymn *Ashkarh Amenayn* is more fully intelligible through the resonances with the previous hymn in the liturgical context. Liturgy then, frames and helps to interpret the hymn.

At the same time, the hymn frames and interprets—indeed it actually *intervenes* in—the daily experience of the vocalist. In a fundamental way, what makes the day a penitential day is the singing of penitential hymns. Above I noted that the categorization of the day as penitential primes us to interpret *Ashkarh Amenayn* as a penitential hymn. Yet this works simultaneously in both directions: we arise with the cherubim who daily prompt us in our praise of God, and when we know it is a penitential day we meditate on the foolish virgins mentioned in the *Zart ‘ik’* chant rather than the wise ones; yet the full necessity for expiation and the daily patterns that

⁷ As with many of St. Nersess’ songs, the hymn is written as an acrostic, with each verse consisting of three lines, each of which begins with the respective letter of the alphabet.

accompany a fasting day only emerge through the variables, the singing of *Ashkharh Amenayn* rather than *Aṙawōt Lusoy*. St. Nersess' hymn of repentance is part of what instantiates the day as penitential, framing the interpretative possibilities for further hymns, the penitent's actions during the day, and enacting the conditions for those actions.

Such a robust form of hermeneutics differs even from the expansive variant of philosophical or phenomenological hermeneutics of the late twentieth century. Hermeneutics, defined narrowly, is often used synonymously with exegesis for the interpretation of texts. However, at least since Dilthey in the late nineteenth century, hermeneutics has broadened to a more general "science of understanding." The introduction to the *Hermeneutics Reader* goes so far to assert that, "Instead of a method or the method of understanding, hermeneutics should better be conceived of as a logic of the humanities and the human sciences, which would complement the notion of a logic and theory of the natural sciences" (Mueller-Vollmer 1988, 46). Yet the emphasis on understanding obscures the possibility of a specifically practical understanding or practical knowledge, the *phronesis* of Aristotle. Hence the expansion of hermeneutics to interpret "life" has been accomplished through a fixing of life or action as text (Ricoeur 2008, 146), a project that accompanies a reduction of understanding to a mentalist conception of the human subject⁸. Hermeneutics, the project of interpretation, reduced to a "science of understanding," where that understanding is itself merely the ability to discern meaning as an object in the human mind, depends on conceptions of the human subject and forms of action that are far removed from this Armenian exegesis.

⁸ Not to mention a project that has usually depended on an impoverished and undertheorized notion of text (Silverstein and Urban 1996).

Instead, we must place Armenian hermeneutics squarely within the Armenian Christian tradition, and indeed within the context of the liturgy. There, we see not only the promise of an alternative form of hermeneutics, a different “science of understanding” that undergirds a different subjectivity and different conceptions of (meaningful) action. We also find a constitutive practice of the Armenian Christian tradition, itself a way of identifying and framing meaningful action. Armenian hermeneutics offers a detailed mode of textual exegesis, but it also articulates a relation between liturgy and life, between text and action (rather than action as text). It operates as a mode of reasoning in its own right, where the use of text, hymns, and liturgy itself inculcates a subject with distinct modes of engagement with the world.

The manner of doing hermeneutics I have sketched here, largely through its instantiation in Armenian hymns, articulates a form of belonging emergent from the Armenian theological tradition. For practitioners of the Armenian theological tradition, who have cultivated the ability to hear the hymns and who can potentially interpret in this Armenian mode, the city emerges in sensorial plenitude. Engaging in the city through the Armenian tradition grounds an alternative form of belonging that suggests possibilities for minority life in contemporary urban centers.

Appendix 1: Selections from The Book of Questions by Vanakan Vardapet

On Matthew 24:41¹

Translation by Dr. Roberta Ervine

Q. The verse, *Two grind at one mill; one will be taken, and the other left.* [Mt 24:41]

A. First, the statements of the saints are clear that the *two* may [both] be poor persons; *one will be taken*, as was Lazarus, *and the other left*, like the person who did not even have a wedding garment, and like the one who did not have enough oil for the lamp².

[Secondly,] *two . . . at one mill* is similar to [the verse] “*Once* has God spoken, and *twice* have we heard this” [Ps 61:12].

Or [thirdly,] it is like the symbol received from a single shepherd ; for *one* person, “like a nail,” and for *another* “like an ox goad” [Eccl 12:11].

[Fourthly,] *two grind . . . at one mill.* [From one mill come] chaff and flour; the chaff is the Law, and the fine flour is the Gospel. [This is] in line with what [the Gospel] says: “First the blade and then the ear; then the flower, and then the full corn in the ear” [Mk 4:28]

[Fifthly, one may by extension understand that it is]—for this reason, a corn of wheat falling to the ground and dying, produces much fruit. [Jn 12:24]

[Sixthly, one may consider that] *the mill* is the mouth. *Two grind at it* signifies [that one mouth may produce both] “milk” for the “babes in Christ” and “solid food” for the “mature”.³

[Alternatively,] *one* mouth speaks *two* understandings: divine knowledge and human knowledge.

[Seventhly,] *two grind at one . . .* means⁴ *one* is acceptable and *the other*, not so; like Peter and Judas.

[Eighthly,] *two grind at . . .* is like, when grinding good flour, first there is whole grain, and then fine flour: [to extend the metaphor further,] the Law is an “unprocessed sheaf”; the Gospel is

¹ Thank you to Dr. Roberta Ervine for the incredible translation, her teaching related to it, and the use of the translation here. The rest of the footnotes in this Appendix are Dr. Ervine’s.

² An allusion to the parable of Mt 25:1-13.

³ An allusion to 1 Co 3:1-2. Compare Clement, *Paed.* 1.35.2 on this verse: “It is possible that the word “as”, which indicates a comparison, emans something as follows and that the passage should be read: ‘I gave you milk to drink in Christ’; and then, after a little pause, we should continue ‘as little children’, in order that by this pause we might understand the words in this way: I instructed you in Christ with simple, real, and natural spiritual food.” (Translation of Annewies van den Hoek, “The ‘Catechetical’ School of Early Christian Alexandria and Its Philonic Heritage,” *Harvard Theological Review* XC.1 (January, 1997), 59-87; here, 68.)

⁴ MM 1764 adds “two mouths speak one thing, and commune at one table;”

“cleaned wheat”; the Apostles are the “cracked wheat”; John⁵ and the others grind that into fine flour; while contemporary *vardapets* bring it to the table.⁶

⁵ Presumably John Chrysostom.

⁶ The metaphor on which Vanakan builds here is also to be found in Gregory of Nyssa’s introduction to his comments on the Song of Songs: Gregory to promote the allegorical interpretation of scripture. He defends this choice in the introduction to his homilies on the Song of Songs: “It is possible to collect thousands [of] citations from the rest of the prophets, to show the necessity of an insight into the sense of the words. If such an interpretation is rejected, as some prefer, the result seems similar to me to what would happen if someone were to serve unprocessed grain as food at a meal for men, not grinding the ears, not winnowing the chaff from the grains, not thrashing the wheat on the threshing floor, nor preparing bread in the usual manner for use as food. Just as unprocessed grain is food for beasts, so someone might say the divinely inspired words unprocessed by winnowing insight are food for the irrational, rather than for the rational. This is true not only of the Old Testament, but of much of the gospel teaching.” (translation from Bart D. Ehrman and Andrew S. Jacobs, *Christianity in Late Antiquity: 300 – 450 C.E.*, Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 464.)

Appendix 2: Relevant Articles from The Treaty of Lausanne

SECTION III. PROTECTION OF MINORITIES. ARTICLE 37.

Turkey undertakes that the stipulations contained in Articles 38 to 44 shall be recognised as fundamental laws, and that no law, no regulation, nor official action shall conflict or interfere with these stipulations, nor shall any law, regulation, nor official action prevail over them.

ARTICLE 38.

The Turkish Government undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants of Turkey without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion.

All inhabitants of Turkey shall be entitled to free exercise, whether in public or private, of any creed, religion or belief, the observance of which shall not be incompatible with public order and good morals.

Non-Moslem minorities will enjoy full freedom of movement and of emigration, subject to the measures applied, on the whole or on part of the territory, to all Turkish nationals, and which may be taken by the Turkish Government for national defence, or for the maintenance of public order.

ARTICLE 39.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities will enjoy the same civil and political rights as Moslems.

All the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of religion, shall be equal before the law.

Differences of religion, creed or confession shall not prejudice any Turkish national in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, as, for instance, admission to public employments, functions and honours, or the exercise of professions and industries.

No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings.

Notwithstanding the existence of the official language, adequate facilities shall be given to Turkish nationals of non-Turkish speech for the oral use of their own language before the Courts.

ARTICLE 40.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein.

ARTICLE 41.

As regards public instruction, the Turkish Government will grant in those towns and districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Moslem nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language. This provision will not prevent the Turkish Government from making the teaching of the Turkish language obligatory in the said schools.

In towns and districts where there is a considerable proportion of Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities, these minorities shall be assured an equitable share in the enjoyment and application of the sums which may be provided out of public funds under the State, municipal or other budgets for educational, religious, or charitable purposes.

The sums in question shall be paid to the qualified representatives of the establishments and institutions concerned.

ARTICLE 42.

The Turkish Government undertakes to take, as regards non-Moslem minorities, in so far as concerns their family law or personal status, measures permitting the settlement of these questions in accordance with the customs of those minorities.

These measures will be elaborated by special Commissions composed of representatives of the Turkish Government and of representatives of each of the minorities concerned in equal number. In case of divergence, the Turkish Government and the Council of the League of Nations will appoint in agreement an umpire chosen from amongst European lawyers.

The Turkish Government undertakes to grant full protection to the churches, synagogues, cemeteries, and other religious establishments of the above-mentioned minorities. All facilities and authorisation will be granted to the pious foundations, and to the religious and charitable institutions of the said minorities at present existing in Turkey, and the Turkish Government will not refuse, for the formation of new religious and charitable institutions, any of the necessary facilities which are guaranteed to other private institutions of that nature.

ARTICLE 43.

Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities shall not be compelled to perform any act which constitutes a violation of their faith or religious observances, and shall not be placed under any disability by reason of their refusal to attend Courts of Law or to perform any legal business

on their weekly day of rest.

This provision, however, shall not exempt such Turkish nationals from such obligations as shall be imposed upon all other Turkish nationals for the preservation of public order.

ARTICLE 44.

Turkey agrees that, in so far as the preceding Articles of this Section affect non-Moslem nationals of Turkey, these provisions constitute obligations of international concern and shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. They shall not be modified without the assent of the majority of the Council of the League of Nations. The British Empire, France, Italy and Japan hereby agree not to withhold their assent to any modification in these Articles which is in due form assented to by a majority of the Council of the League of Nations.

Turkey agrees that any Member of the Council of the League of Nations shall have the right to bring to the attention of the Council any infraction or danger of infraction of any of these obligations, and that the Council may thereupon take such action and give such directions as it may deem proper and effective in the circumstances.

Turkey further agrees that any difference of opinion as to questions of law or of fact arising out of these Articles between the Turkish Government and any one of the other Signatory Powers or any other Power, a member of the Council of the League of Nations, shall be held to be a dispute of an international character under Article 14 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Turkish Government hereby consents that any such dispute shall, if the other party thereto demands, be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice. The decision of the Permanent Court shall be final and shall have the same force and effect as an award under Article 13 of the Covenant.

ARTICLE 45.

The rights conferred by the provisions of the present Section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory.

Appendix 3: Text of the Hymn “O, Whole Gathering”¹ by St. Nersess Shnorhali

Translated by Dr. Roberta Ervine

Hymn for the Night Office

St. Nersēs Shnorhali

U O, whole gathering
Gazing at me;
Share in my pain!

Ⲣ I open my lips;*
I speak with my tongue;
I accuse myself.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Ⲓ I sinned furtively,
Invented my own destruction,
Dug a pit for myself.*

Ⲓ I betrayed myself,
Did myself treachery;
I built a trap [for myself].*

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

¹ Again, my thanks and appreciation to Dr. Roberta Ervine. The rest of the footnotes in this Appendix are Dr. Ervine's.

⋄ Once upon a time I was light;
Now I'm darkness
And the shadow of death.

⋄ How shall I relate
The number of my sins?
For they are very many.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

⋄ Heaven and earth,
Come, lament
My deplorable self.

⋄ I selected evil,
I willingly entertained
A host of sins.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

⋄ I am wallowing in the mire²
I am weltering in sin;
I cannot shake it off.

² 2 Pt 2:22, quoting Pr 26:11.

♄ Filled with stinking disease
For a long time
I became a pestilence.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

♃ I separated myself
From holy thoughts,
From good deeds.

♌ My soul thought it better
That the light go away,
To be with darkness.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

♋ The thoughts of the evil one
Deceive my soul;
They submerge it.

♎ Through their abysses they cover me;
They laugh when I lose my footing;
They mock at me.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

♉ I bent myself down willingly;

With my hunched self
I am unable to stand straight.*³

⋈ The burning fire of sin
Incinerated all
The spiritual good within me.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Ω I was scourged by sin;*
Those who saw me made fun of me.
My soul was sick of it.

Ϛ Bitter bile
Poured over my heart.*
My lamp went out.*⁴

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

∂ By tasting sin
I ate death;
I who was rich became poor.*⁵

U I am dead in spirit;

³ This recalls the woman mentioned in Lk 13:10-17

⁴ An allusion to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, told in Mt 25.

⁵ 2 Cor 8:9 gives this stanza a hopeful cast.

I have gone astray in my thoughts;
I stand in body only.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

⊖ Into the death-trap
Of the hunter I fell;*
I was defeated by disease.

⊗ I became a target
For the enemy's arrows;⁶
I am ever wounded anew.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

⊘ Many dogs
Have gathered around me;⁷
They are smeared with my blood.

⊙ I became the evil one's prey;
He hunted my soul
With the net of sin.*

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

⁶ He is perhaps thinking of Ps 119:4

⁷ Ps 21:16

Q My soul suffers
From its terrible wounds;*
I have no rest.

Ŋ I who had been conquered by sin
Found myself liable
For the debt of my transgressions.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Ω I attempt to repent;
Once again I take fire;
I am ignited by sin's flames.

Ω I have been called "Teacher";
[But] through my vulgar behavior⁸
I am named a "fool"*⁹

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

U My heart is smitten*
With the love of pleasure,
[And] of terrible anger.

ϸ My soul is lacerated*

⁸ Vulgar here has the sense of "common".

⁹ Nersēs may be thinking of Lk 12:20.

By the stripes of my sins;¹⁰
I wander aimlessly.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Ⲥ Evil things have controlled me;
They have carried me away
From the Lord's embrace.

Ⲓ Foolish person that I am,
I have not heeded the joyous voice
Of the Good Teacher.¹¹

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Ⲩ The desire for evil things
With its tempting visage
Has caused my eyes pain.

Ⲓ My soul is exhausted
By the dense thicket*
Of interwoven passions.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

¹⁰ Here Nersēs combines the story of the Good Samaritan, in Lk 10 with the salvific imagery of Is 53:5.

¹¹ The wider context of this stanza is found in Mk 10:17 / Lk 18:18.

Φ Hasten, O my soul,
To flee evil
[And] desire good.

Ⲡ Recognize that death's sleep
[And] the examining Judge*
Are ever near you.

Lord, have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Through the intercession of the Theotokos, Remember [me], Lord, and have mercy.

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