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ARMENIAN SELF-PERCEPTION BETWEEN OTTOMANS AND SAFAVIDS*

A historical model of Christian-Muslim interrelation and an attempt to re-evaluate its message

Preliminary remarks

Owing to a large extent to the geopolitical position of their homeland, the Armenians, in their millennia-long history, have felt themselves almost constantly challenged to face a great diversity of peoples, cultures, and religions: Achemenids and Hellens, Romans and Parthians, Sasanians and Byzantines, Arabs, Seljuks, Italians, Franks, as well as other Europeans, plus Mongolians, Slavonians, both Seljuk and Ottoman Turks, Safavids; and in modern times, Russians and Western Europeans, to mention only the main political formations around Armenia or in close political and cultural relationship with it. To those we must add minor political entities such as, for instance, Georgia, and in recent times Azerbaijan, and some prevalently ethnic or religious-confessional groups such as the Caucasian Albanians or the Syriac. In most of those cases Armenians found themselves almost crushed between two superpowers of the moment, as it was the case with Parthians and Romans, Byzantines and Sasanians, Ottomans and Safavids, Ottomans and Russians.

Such multifarious relationships with neighbouring peoples, states and cultures caused, of course, numerous problems of very different nature, problems often extremely hard to resolve going as far as to touch the limits of survival. But survival itself has different aspects. Not always when people survive, do we see them in full possession of their linguistic, cultural, religious, and anthropological heritage. There often occurs a drastic change of religion, of language, of ancestral customs, so that in most cases survival is really a very partial maintenance of what a given community was and had earlier. Indeed, there does not exist any unchangeable ethno-cultural standard. Living people are no mummies. But this is not the question. The question is, on the contrary, in recognizing a given ethnic community in a continuity of language, traditions, religion, basic values, worldview, and so on. The more we have a dynamic continuity in those various dimensions of human life, so that we may recognize a permanent motive power under changing forms and structures, the more we may speak of survival in a fuller sense of the word. I think, Armenians represent one of those cases in which we meet a great number of permanent factors in the everlasting dialectic between continuity and change, tradition and innovation.

In the confrontation of Armenian self-perception between Ottomans and Safavids one of the main components of the question was, no doubt, the religious factor, that is the fundamental difference in religion which in technical canonical terminology of the Roman Church is *disparitas cultus.* The problem was all the more serious for the following reason: when the Armenians found themselves between the Ottoman Turks and the new Persians who were no more Sasanians but Muslims, Christianity had become for the Armenians an essential, unavoidable part of their identity in virtue of an evolution which had already almost one thousand years of history behind it. The words of Vardan Mamikonian, the commander-in-chief of the Armenian forces at the battle of Awarayr, on the night of the 26th of May, 451, the eve of Pentecost, against the huge Sasanian army invading Armenia to impose Mazdeism, present the quintessence of what will be in the course of the following centuries the backbone of Armenian Christian ideology, the Armenian Christian worldview[1]. Vardan Mamikonian said: "He who supposed that we put on Christianity like a

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[1] The term 'ideology' may have different uses according to different levels and registers of thought: political, sociological, etc. In this paper I use it in a meaning that we can define as 'anthropological-philosophical': as a whole of ideas, concepts, images, myths, in a word a whole of whatever kind of mental and imagery representation that may determine and orientate concrete options concerning the general statement of life of a community or of a person. This is, obviously, a very wide definition that embraces the whole range of mental and psychic factors, capable to play some real role and impress their own seal in the manifold manifestations of human society and man's individuality. Thus intended, 'ideology' is very close to German *Weltanschauung*. This is the basic meaning in which the term has been used by the authors of *Histoire des idéologies*, sous la direction de François Châtelet, voll. 1-3, Hachette (Paris, 1978): cf. vol. 1, 'Introduction générale', pp. 9-13.

garment, now [realizes] that he cannot change it as the color of our skin, and from this moment he will never be able to do so"[2]. If this was the case with the Armenians, there was no great difference in the Islamic religious self-perception both of the Ottomans and of the Safavids in how they both thought of themselves as the true keepers, the champions, the main defenders of Islamic Orthodoxy respectively in its Sunnī or Shī'ī forms.

A first remark to make in this regard is a strong *caveat* against a banally superficial commonplace: to consider the Armenian option for Christianity as a pro-Western option by itself, and to consider Islam as an Eastern entity. Such a misleading attitude is not only frequent among non-experts or in semi-scholarly contexts, but it is not rare even among scholars. It is not possible here to go deeper into this topic nor to enter into a thorough discussion on what such notions as East and West may mean as cultural paradigms. I have extensively touched elsewhere upon these questions[3]. At present may it be enough, for our purpose, to emphasize the following points:

a) Not only Christianity itself has deeply Oriental roots, but Armenian Christianity too, especially in its earlier phases, derived so much from the Jerusalemite and proto-Syriac Christian traditions, which certainly represent the most prominently and genuinely Oriental faces of early Christianity[4]. Furthermore, Christian Armenia kept a good deal, somehow re-baptizing them, of its pre-Christian traditions, most of which derived from the old Iranian world;

b) Islam, in its turn, even though it originated in a remarkably Oriental context, came very soon, especially in its culturally more refined currents, into an intimate contact with Western civilization and, in a very special way, with Greek thought, science and philosophy.

But while all this may be true, the point should be made that one cannot ignore all those elements in the early Armenian Church which derive from a Western source, or provide evidence for a pro-Western tendency. It would be misleading not to perceive the complexity and especially the multidimensional openness of the Armenian attitude; but it would also be a fatal error to oppose those dimensions as irreconcilable, as mutually excluding one another. Such an approach would lead us, no doubt, into a blind alley.

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[2] ELIŠĒ, History, V: cf. ELIŠĒ, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, (Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 5), Translation and Commentary by Robert W. Thomson, Harvard University Press (Cambridge, MA/London, 1982), ch. Five, pp. 154-155. I have slightly retouched Thomson's translation which reads so: 'He who supposed that we put on Christianity like a garment, now [realizes] that as he cannot change the color of his skin, so he will perhaps never be able to accomplish his designs'. Ii is misleading, I think, to translate 'perhaps', in the given context, the Armenian *t'erews* which can also mean certainly, indeed, especially in negatives closes. In fact the sentence continues as follows (in Thomson's translation): 'For the foundations of our [Christianity] are set on the unshakable rock, not on earth but above in heaven where no rains fall, no winds blow, and no floods rise'.
For a critical survey of the various philological questions on Ełišē see B.L. ZEKIYAN, "Quelques observations critiques sur le «Corpus Elisaeanum»", in *The Armenian Christian Tradition. Scholarly Symposium in Honor of the Visit to the Pontifical Oriental Institute, Rome of His Holiness KAREKIN I Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians*, December 12, 1996, ed. by Robert F. Taft, S.J., (Orientalia Chriatiana Analecta, 254), Pontificio Istituto Orientale (Roma, 1997), pp. 71-123.
For a historical introduction to the War of Awarayr or of Vardanank' (= Vardan and his companions; in Armenian it is called *Vardanants'*, the Genitive form of *Vardanank'*), see.: René Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie des origines à 1071*, Payot (Paris, 1947), pp.187-232; *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. by Richard G. Hovannisian, vol. I, St. Martin's Press (New York, 1997), pp. 95-103; Claudio Gugerotti, 'Vardan Mamikonian e l'ideologia martiriale', in Claude Moutafian (ed), *Roma-Armenia*, Salone Sistino, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 25 marzo - 15 luglio 1999, De Luca Ed.re (Roma, 1999), pp. 90-92 – the same in French in the French version of the catalogue, pp. 89-92; more concisely: B.L. Zekiyan, 'A Historical Outline of the Armenian People', in Adriano Alpago-Novello (ed), *The Armenians*, New York Rizzoli (New York, 1986), pp. 52-53 (simultaneous editions in Italian, French, German).
Even if it may appear obvious enough by the context, it would by no means be superfluous, I think, to draw special attention to one point: the Vardanants' War was not, on the part of the Armenians, a religious war in the generally accepted sense of the term. They fought it with no intention whatever of imposing a belief, nor was it motivated by any desire to implement religious discrimination or intolerance: it was no more than a revolt against forced imposition in defence of the religious freedom and identity of a people.

[3] From an overall anthropological-cultural viewpoint in: *La dialettica tra Valore e contingenza. Dalla fenomenologia culturale verso una rifondazione assoogica*, La Città del Sole (Napoli 1998), in part. Ch. II., pp. 37-82, bibliography: pp. 162-166; from a rather Armenian standpoint in: 'L'Armenia tra Bisanzio e l'Iran dei Sasanidi e momenti della fondazione dell'ideologia dell'Armenia cristiana (secc. V-VII). Preliminari per una sintesi', in *Crossroad of Cultures. Studies in Liturgy and Patristics in Honor of Gabriele Winkler*, ed. by Hans-Jürgen Feulner, Elena Velkovska, and Robert F. Taft, S.J., Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 260, Pontificio Istituto Orientale (Roma, 2000), pp. 717-744, in part. 718-723.

[4] Cf. for instance, in relation to the Syriac Christian world, Gabriele Winkler's many studies, and especially *Das armenische Initiationsrituale*, (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 217), Pontificio Istituto Orientale (Roma, 1982); in relation to Zoroastrian and Sasanian Iran: James Russell, *Zoroastrianism in Armenia*, Harvard University Press (Cambridge, MA, 1987); Nina G. Garsoïan, *Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians*, Variorum Reprints. Collected studies series (London, 1985), and especially: X. 'Prolegomena to a study of Iranian aspects in Arsacid Armenia', from *Handes Amsorya*, XC (1976), coll. 177-234; XI. 'The locus of the death of Kings: Iranian Armenia - The inverted image', from *The Armenian Image in History and Literature*, Richard G. Hovannisian (ed), Undena Publications (Malibu, CA, 1981), pp. 27-64.

The impact of the Arabs

Armenians met Islam long before meeting Ottomans and Safavids. Islam's first impact upon the Armenians was due to the Arabs, to the Arab invasions starting from the Forties of the 7th century, and then, nearly half a century later, to their domination of Armenia. The Armenian-Arabic relationship would subsequently have a long and rich history.

Differently from all earlier invaders, the Arabs came to Armenia with all their tribe-family-clan structures to settle there in a permanent way. This lead to a basic change in Armenia's demography to the very detriment of the indigenous population. As to the *nakharar* system, the Byzantine Empire, under Justinian, had already put an end to its existence as a political structure. But the *nakharar* dynasties were still alive. They were practically exterminated by the Arabs, especially during the last Armenian insurrection of the 8th century, in 774, which showed itself disastrous to all[5]. Only a few families were able to survive, among which the *Bagratid*s and the *Artsruni*s, who laid later, in the 9th century, the foundations of the last two main Kingdoms of Greater Armenia, the Bagratids in the North, in the Ayrarat-Shirak region, and the Artsrunis in the South in the region of Vaspurakan.

To sum up, two basic changes took place in Armenia as a result of the Arab domination. These changes revealed themselves fatal for the country's future destiny: *a)* a structural change in Armenia's demographic composition; *b)* the actual end of the *nakhararian* dynastic system.

Obviously there is no invasion or foreign domination in history without the shedding of blood and often vehement cruelty. Nevertheless, we cannot evaluate subsequent evolutions of those events uniquely in the light of shed blood and inflicted violence. As in many other similar cases, subsequent history between the Arabs and the Armenians has also had more than one bright moment, and above all a remarkable mutual enrichment in arts, crafts, thought, and literature, and even phases of political collaboration and alliance, as happened between the Caliph and Bagratid Armenia. This history of mutual relationship, especially in its intellectual, artistic, cultural aspects, is still almost a virgin forest for scholarly research. The Arabs were amazed at Armenia, particularly its arts and crafts. Their historians vie with each other in lauding them[6].

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[5] On Arabic domination in Armenia, in general, see: Joseph Laurent, *L'Arménie entre Byzance et l'Islam depuis la conquête arabe jusuqu'en 886* (Paris, 1919), nouvelle édition revue et mise à jour par M. [Marius] Canard, (Armenian Library of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation), Librairie Bertrand (Lisbonne, 1980); Aram Ter-Ghewondyan, *The Arab Emirates in Bagratid Armenia*, Translated by Nina G. Garsoïan, (Armenian Library of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation), Livraria Bertrand (Lisbon, 1976) – its Armenian original: *Arabakan amirayut'iwnnerë Bagratuneats' Hayastanum*, Academy of Sciences of ASSR (Yerevan 1965); Claudio Lojacono, 'Una fonte inesplorata per la più antica storia dei musulmani in Armenia', in *Atti del XIII Congresso dell'Union Eurpéenne d'Arabisants et d'Islamisants (Venezia 29 settembre – 4 ottobree 1986), Quaderni diStudi Arabi*, 5-6 (1987-1988), Università degli Studi di Venezia. Diparimento di scienze storico-archeologiche e orientalistiche, Casa Editrice Armena (Venezia, 1988), pp. 442-456. On the migrations of Arabic tribes into Armenia see also: R. Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, cited n. 2, pp. 312-337; Bernadette Martin-Hisard, 'Les révoltes arméniennes du VIIIe siècle', in *Histoire des Arméniens*, sous la dir. de G. Dédéyan, Privat (Toulouse, 1982), ch. 5, pp. 194-202, nouv. éd. *Histoire du peuple arménien*, Privat, 2007, pp. 222-230.

[6] For a review of Medieval Arabic witnesses and appreciations of Armenian crafts, see: Tachat Yartëmean (Dajad Yardemian), *Ordan karmir, 'kërmëz' kam haykakan karmir nerk* [Ordan karmir, 'kërmëz' or the Armenian red colour], *Bazmavep*, CXLVIII (1990), pp. 292-328, CXLIX (1991), 78-121, with a wide-ranging résumé in English: pp. 122-125; Nina Garsoïan, 'L'indépendence retrouvée: royaume du Nord et royaume du Sud (IXe-Xe siècles), in *Histoire des Arméniens*, cited in n. 5, ch. 6, pp. 215-268.

[7] As far as the Armenian attitude vis-à-vis non-Christian religions is concerned, and especially Islam, this forms the very topic of our present investigation in the attempt at understanding better its inner dynamics. As to the Armenian attitude towards Christians of other confessions, even if the relations with the latter have not been less problematic and even more antagonistic than with Muslims, I tried to analyse it in many an earlier article. What I use to call, from a strictly theological viewpoint, the 'ecumenicity' *avant-lettre* (preferring this term to the much used and sometimes abused 'ecumenism') of some outstanding figures of the Armenian Church, is a peculiar and luminous trait that distinguishes them in the overall frame of Medieval Christianity. Indeed, the theoretical approach and practical inter-ecclesial behaviour of those figures really surpass the limits of their time and country, largely anticipating the best trends of the most recent Christian ecumenism of the 20th century. I would even add that contemporary ecumenical movement has not yet come to grasp some vital intuitions already clearly announced by the greatest Armenian ecumenical spirit, who certainly is also one of the greatest ecumenical minds of all times, St. Nerses Shnorhali. For a detailed analysis see: B.L. Zekiyan, 'Un dialogue oecuménique au XIIe siècle: les pourparlers entre le catholicos St Nersís Šnorhali et le légat impérial Théorianos en vue de l'union des Eglises arménienne et byzantine', *Actes du XVe Congrès International d'Études byzantines - Athènes, Sept.1976*, IV, *Histoire, Communications* (Athènes 1980), p. 420-441; a slightly variant version: 'St Nersès Šnorhali en dialogue avec les Grecs: un prophète de 1'œcuménisme au XIIe siècle', in *Armenian Studies, Études Arméniennes in memoriam Haïg Berbérian*, Dickran Kouymjian Editor, C. Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisboa, 1986), pp. 861-883; a wider analysis in *Hamamiwt'enakan tramaxôsut'iwn më ZhB. darun. Banakts'ut'iwnner S. Nersēs Šnorhalii u kayserakan Nuirak T'ēorianosi mijew Hay ew Biwzandakan Ekeghets'inerow miut'ean šurj* [An ecumenical dialogue in the 12th century. The negotiations between Saint Nersēs Šnorhali and the Imperial Legate Theorianos in view of the union of the Armenian and Byzantine Churches], Bibliothèque d'Arménologie 'Bazmavep', 13, San Lazzaro, (Venezia, 1978), pp. 68. See also: Paolo ANANIAN, 'Narsete IV Klayetzi', in *Biblioteca Sanctorum*, IX (Roma, 1967),

Between Christian fidelity and worldly openness

A very important point to consider while attempting to understand the Armenian religious attitude in its complex and somehow paradoxical components is, I think, the following: their stubbornly firm adhesion to the Christian faith on which no compromise was possible at all – to such an extent that, throughout the centuries,

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coll. 750-753; Ernst Suttner, 'Eine «Ökumenische Bewegung» im 12. Jahrhundert und ihr bedeutendster Theologe, der armenische Katholikos Nerses Schnorhali', *Kleronomia*, t. 7, fasc. 1, 1975, p. 87-97; Hrant Khatchadourian, 'The Christology of St. Nerses Shnorhali in Dialogue with Byzantium', *Miscellanea Francescana*, 78 (1978), p. 413-434; Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, *St. Nerses of Lambron Champion of the Church Universal. His Synodal Discourse with English Translation and Annotations*, The Armenian Prelacy (New York, 1993), pp. 12-35.

[8] See above n. 1.

[9] I use the word 'nation' in the sense of its traditional meaning in which it has been used for long centuries by the Armenians and, in more or less similar meanings, by other Middle Eastern populations. It basically differs from the meaning of the term in the framework of the Nation-State ideology, which became normative in the Western world with the political philosophy of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. We can say that it is mainly related to those realities which are expressed today in the Western world by such terms as *ethnos*, *ethnic*, *ethnicity*. For a wider consideration see: *La struttura negata: Cultura armena nella diaspora, Convegno-Seminario Internazionale*: 1, Milano, 1978, *Atti/The Proceedings*, redazione: Marc Nichanian - Remo Pomponio, ICOM (Venezia, 1979); 2, *Infrastructure de la culture arménienne* diasporique. *La culture: mouvement socio-culturelle ou structure figée?*, *Atti/The Proceedings*, redazione: Marc Nichanian, ICOM (Venezia 1981); Aghop Der-Karabetian, 'Armenian identity: comparative and context bound', *The Armenian Review*, XXXIV (1981), pp. 25-31; Viada A. Arutjunova-Fidanjan, 'The ethno-confessional self-awareness of Armenian Chalcedonians', *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, n.s., XXI (1988-89), pp. 345-363; *Identität in der Fremde*, hersg. von Mihran Dabag - Kristin Platt, Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer (Bochum, 1993); Aldo Ferrari, *Alla frontiera dell'impero. Gli Armeni in Russia (1801-1917)*, Mimesis (Milano, 2000), pp. 11-19; B.L. Zekiyan, 'L'«idéologie» nationale de Movsēs Xorenac'i et sa conception de l'histoire', *Handes Amsorya*, CI (1987), pp. 471-485; Id., 'Les identités polyvalentes et Sergueï Paradžanov. La situation emblématique de l'artiste et le problème de la polyvalence ethnique et culturelle', *Filosofia Oggi*, XVI (1993), pp. 217-231; Id., 'In margine alla storia. Dal fenomeno dell'emigrazione verso un nuovo concetto dell'identità e dell'integrazione etnoculturale', in *Ad limina Italiae, Ar druns Italioy. In viaggio per l'Italia con mercanti e monaci armeni*, a cura di B.L. Zekiyan, Editoriale Programma (Padova, 1996), pp. 267-286; Id., 'Eredità classica e componenti ebraiche in Mosé di Corene (Movses Xorenac'i)', in *Autori classici in Lingue del Vicino e Medio oriente, Atti del VI, VII e VIII Seminario sul tema: «Recupero di testi classici attraverso recezioni in lingue del Vicino e Medio Oriente», (Milano, 5-6 ottobre 1987; Napoli, 5-6 dicembre 1988; Bologna, 13-14 ottobre 1989)*, a cura di Gianfranco Fiaccadori, Presentazione di Giovanni Pugliese Caratelli: VI, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Libreria dello Stato, Roma 2001, pp. 153-160; 'Religione e cultura nell'identità armena. L'impatto col mondo islamico', in B. L. Zekiyan - A. Arslan - A. ferrari, *Dal Caucaso al Veneto. Gli Armeni fra Storia e Memoria*, Adle Ed.ni, Padova MMIII, pp. 9-35.
The scholarly debate on the notion of 'ethnicity' and related questions, initiated in late sixties, early seventies, is in full development. Cf.**:** Ronald A. Reminick, *Theory of Ethnicity. An Anthropologist's Perspective*, University Press of America (Lanham, MD - London, 1983); William H. Mcneill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History*, The Donald G. Creighton Lectures -1985, University of Toronto Press (Toronto, 1986); Hannah Arendt, *Ebraismo e modernità (raccolta di saggi sparsi tradotti in italiano)*, Unicopoli (Milano, 1986), Feltrinelli (Milano, 1993[2]); Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres. La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*, Éd.s du Seuil (Paris, 1989); James G. Kellas, *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Macmillan (London, 1991); Michel Wieviorka, *La démocratie à l'épreuve. Nationalisme, populisme, ethnicité*, La Découverte (Paris, 1993); Ugo Fabietti, *L'identità etnica. Storia e critica di un concetto equivoco*, La Nuova Italia Scientifica (Roma, 1995); Philippe Poutignat - Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart, *Théorie de l'ethnicité*, Presses Universitaires de France (Paris, 1995); Carlo Tullio-Altan, *Ethnos e civiltà. Identità etniche e valori democratici*, Feltrinelli (Milano, 1995); Charles Taylor, *The Politics of Recognition*, Princeton University Press, (Princeton, 1992), Jürgen Habermas, *Kampf um Anerkennung im demokratischen Rechtsstaat*, Suhrkamp Verl., (Frankfurt am M., 1996); on the religious and theological aspects of the qestion**:** Dietrich Mendt, 'Christsein - Bereitschaft zur Diaspora. Zur Problematik Volkskirche, Minoritätskirche, Bekenntniskirche', in *Als Boten des gekreuzigten Herrn. Festgabe für Bischof Dr. Dr. Werner Krusche* ..., herausg. von Heino Falcke ..., Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, Berlin, 1982, pp. 179-184; Maria Campatelli, I cristiani tra nazioni e nazionalismi', in *Novità della soglia. Aperture della nuova evangelizzazione*, Lipa (Roma, 1995); B.L. Zekiyan, 'Die Christianisierung und die Alphabetisierung Armeniens als Vorbilder kultureller Incarnation, besonders im subkaukasischen Gebiet', in *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus/The Christianisation of Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Albania). Referate des Internationalen Symposions (Wien, 9.-12. Dezember 1999)*, hersg. von Werner SEIBT, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, 2002, pp. 189-198.

Armenians who denied their Christian faith had nothing more to do with their community of origin – which did not mean either fanaticism or narrow-mindedness, in the current use of such terms in the sense of a basic fundamentalist closure in religious affairs[7]. Within the framework of a 'national' self-awareness, in which the perception of identity was essentially based on cultural-anthropological elements, and we must not forget that religion is one of the main cultural and anthropological factors determining an individual's and community's identity, the Armenian attitude, from a sociological and anthropological viewpoint, was simply a mechanism offering the highest guarantee of self-defence with the aim of the ethno-cultural preservation of the community. Therefore that was a problem affecting the Armenian community itself, its inner dynamics, its inner survival, and not its relationship to the others. Armenians were indeed pragmatic enough to distinguish their inner dynamics from their relational attitude to other national and religious communities, their own faith from the religious belief of the others. It is true, the qualification of 'pragmatic', applied to the social conduct of the Armenians, may somehow seem bewildering, if one considers mainly the developments of the so called 'Armenian Question' in the second half of the 19th and in the early 20th centuries, even if we have, in this case, a totally different historical and ideological context. However it may be, to avoid confusion of ideas as well as undue idealisation, the above affirmations and those which will result from our ongoing analyses need some basic methodological explanation:

i. The expressed judgements are not necessarily related to the level of practical behaviour of single individuals or single groups within the ethnic/national community. As a general rule, it would be a gross mistake to consider the concrete actions of single individuals or smaller groups, in whatever social or political context, as indications, moreover as coherent indications, of the leading ideological structure of a larger social group at issue in a given historical period. It is evident that human beings, even though guided by the best intents and highest moral principles, are always subject to exception, are never free from the risk of deviations and, even, of degeneration; their coherence with the principles or, simply, within the general framework of thought and action, is never totally guaranteed. Hence we shall try to find out some basic and general principles that lay at the foundations of the theoretical structure, of the moral and ethical principles ruling the guidelines of the practical behaviour of a given society, in this peculiar case, of the Armenian society, with special reference to the late Islamic world. In short, our attempt regards what we can call the Armenian 'ideology' or *Weltanschauung* in that very sense of these terms in which we have defined them[8] as they may result from customs, social habits, written or unwritten laws, diffused practices, general attitudes, etc.

ii. Dealing with the Armenians, our purpose is not either to judge or to evaluate their pragmatic behaviour, nor to generalize in any way, as to the good or the evil, features emerging from single cases as characteristics of a hypothetical 'national'[9] conduct. Our purpose is simply that of analysing the basic principles that lead the Armenians in their generally prevailing attitude throughout the centuries which have seen them in a close, inner, multiple contact, almost at every level of life, with their Ottoman and Safavid neighbours.

iii. Likely, dealing with the Armenians' Muslim partners, and their eventually 'benevolent' or 'hostile' attitude towards them, such categories as 'benevolence' or 'hostility' are simply and uniquely to be considered as the object of a historical description in a socio-political perspective, in order to realize the underlying ideological and political dynamics in the actions and decisions of Sultans and Shahs, and not to express a moral judgement or an ethical evaluation of them.

Facing modernity

These premises help us to understand the Armenian attitude towards Ottomans and Safavids as a consequence of their own self-perception, their own self-image. But for a better comprehension of this attitude and of the self-awareness at its basis we also have to consider the situation of Armenian culture and society in that very period of time when Armenia was divided between the Ottomans and the Safavids. To be brief, in the course of the 16th century Armenians were closely acquainted with the modernisation processes that were going on in Western Europe. They grasped them, and in most cases they realized their inner dynamics, with, indeed, only a few exceptions. One of the most important of those exceptions, and the most tragic, I think, for Armenian destiny was the almost total incomprehension, by the Armenians, of Western policies. Apart from this incomprehension, which is in direct relationship with the most awful Catastrophe of the genocide, Armenians could, in general, assimilate those modernisation processes without dramatic, divising conflicts with their traditional identity. They often offered, on the contrary, new, and to some extent original syntheses between Western modernity and Armenity, between East and West. This can be seen, for instance, in the great Armenian poetry from Romanticism to Symbolism and later, or in the musical creations of Komitas Vardapet, or in Srbuhi Dussape's both daring and balanced feminism.

In some recent studies, I have summarized the following points which are, in my view, the main dynamics and traits of Armenian modernity[10]:

a. Modernity enters into the Armenian reality at a very early stage of its own development. The second half of the 16th century can be shown as the initial period of this penetration.

b. With respect to its Western prototype, however, Armenian modernity appears, on social and especially cultural grounds, as having a slower rhythm of evolution and was rather limited in its early achievements. This limitation concerns, above all, the various fields in which modernity appears, and much less the quality of the single product. We often have, on the contrary, products of an excellent quality, sometimes even of a rare perfection.

c. A field in which Armenians knew no limitations, but were even in a worldwide leading position, was international trade and economics during the 17th century, a primacy which also left noteworthy traces in subsequent periods.

d. Armenian modernity, not differently from its European prototype, but surely by a slower process in many points, experienced a gradual evolution toward a full development and assimilation of the patterns proposed by the West in their wide variety. We can probably speak of a full development of Armenian modernity, of course, in the relative sense of any human adventure, only starting with the second half of the 19th century.

I alluded to the fact that Armenians, notwithstanding their many achievements in assimilating in a really positive and original way the inputs of Western modernisation, fell however short of understanding the political systems and philosophies of the West. No doubt, they were not alone in this misadventure. Almost all Oriental populations, which were subjected to foreign domination, lacking for long centuries a State structure, experience and ideology, shared this incomprehension. This is true even of the rulers of such a great Empire, as were the Safavids, who for a quite long period of their history believed in a possible alliance with the West to defeat the Ottomans. They repeatedly sent Embassies to Europe with this purpose, and very often put Armenians in their staff hoping ingenuously that as Christians they would be able to exercise a greater influence upon the European courts. Such a credulity may probably be explained, in the case of Safavids, by the interruption that took place in the Persian tradition of Empire and policy during a remarkable length of time.

In any case, such an attitude was able to take much deeper roots among the Middle Eastern Christians for the common faith they shared with 'Christian Europe'. They were firmly convinced that 'Christian Europe' would somehow help and, even, 'save' them. Thus Armenians too could not liberate themselves from their Medieval utopia vis-à-vis Europe. I have called this utopia, in earlier works, either 'Armenian millenarism' or 'Armenian Messianism', not in the sense of bringing to others salvation as in the 'Messianic' manner of Imperial powers, but as a 'Messianic' hope almost in a salvation that would come, that they would receive from the West[11]. This conception of a 'Christian West' is vividly expressed even in one of the most typical rites of the Armenian Liturgy of Hours, the *Andastan*, the blessing of the four cardinal points of the world. The 'Western side of the world' is to such an extent identified with Christianity itself that it is blessed with the following words: '... the Western side of the world and the Kingdoms of Christians'. Armenians hoped against hope that 'Christian' Europe would save them, at least would not allow them to perish. They could not realize that, certainly since the Renaissance, but even before, a 'Christian Europe' did not practically exist with respect to political theory and behaviour. Probably it did not really exist even in the era of the Crusades which may be viewed perhaps as the culmination of political Christianity in Europe[12].

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[10] B.L. Zekiyan, *The Armenian Way to Modernity. Armenian Identity Between Tradition and Innovation, Speicificity and Universality*, Eurasiatica. Quaderni del Dipartimento di Studi Eurasiatici, Università degli Studi Ca' Foscari di Venezia, 49, Supernova Editrice (Venezia, 1997); Id., 'Modern Armenian Culture: Some Basic Trends between Continuity and Change, Specificity and Universality', in *Armenian Perspectives. 10th Anniversary Conference of the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes*, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, ed. by Nicholas AWDE, Curzon, Caucasus World (Surrey, UK, 1997), pp. 322-353, Notes: 417-430; Id., 'The Armenian Way to Enlightenment: the Diaspora and Its Role', in *Enlightenment and Diaspora. The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, ed. by Richard G. Hovannisian and David N. Myers, Scholars Press (Atlanta, Georgia, 1999), pp. 45-85.

[11] See bibliography in n. 9, and also: *The Armenian Way to Modernity*, pp. 88-90; Id., 'La Cilicia armena tra «Realpo1itik» e utopia', in *Atti del II Simposio Internazionale 'Armenia-Assiria'*. Istituzioni e poteri all'epoca il-khanide, 30 maggio-2 giugno 1984, a cura di Mario Nordio e B.L. Zekiyan, Eurasiatica, 8, Editoriale Programma, (without place and date [Padova, 1988]), pp. 116-119. See also Aldo Ferrari, 'La salvezza viene da Occidente', *Studi sull'Oriente Cristiano*, 6/1, 2002, pp. 59-76, now in Id., *L'Ararat e la gru. Studi sulla storia e la cultura degli armeni*, Mimesis (Milano 2003), II, pp. 47-64; and Benjamin Braude, 'The nexus of Diaspora, Enlightenment, and Nation: thoughts on comparative history', in *Enlightenment and Diaspora. The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, cited in n. 9, p. 14.

[12] The Crusades certainly represent a very complex and, for many a reason, a paradoxical phenomenon in history. Hardly can one deny that, among many other factors that contributed to the decline and, in more recent times, to the awful agony of Eastern - geographically Middle Eastern - Christendom, the Crusades had their own place in the more general frame of the overall policy of the Western powers whose responsibility in that agony, and eventual death, can be a topic for discussion, I believe, only as to its degree and extent, not at all as to its effective reality. Even if one sould consider as overly pessimistic and exaggerated the position of Jean-Pierre Valognes, in his *Vie et mort des chrétiens d'Orient. Des origins à nos jours*, Fayard (Paris, 1994), it would be difficult indeed to deny that it basically reflects a sad and tragic reality.

On the Crusades' ideology, in general, one can see: Etienne Delaruelle, *L'idée de Croisade au Moyen* Age, Bottega d'Erasmo (Torino, 1980); Piero Bellini, '*Bellum Romanum*: sulla fondazione canonistica della Crociata in Terra Santa', in *La nozione di 'Romano' tra cittadinanza e universalità*, (Da Roma alla Terza Roma. Documenti e Studi, Collezione diretta da Pierangelo Catalano e Paolo Siniscalco, Studi II, 21 aprile 1982), Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane (Napoli, 1984), pp. 49-71; *Concezioni della pace*, (Da Roma alla Terza Roma, VIII Seminario Internazionale di Studi Storici, Campidoglio, 21-22 aprile 1988), Relazioni e Comunicazioni, 1; Carsten Colpe, *Der 'Heilige Krieg', Benennung und Wirklichkeit, Begründung und Widerstreit*, Athenäum Hain Hanstein (Anton Hain), (Bodenheim, 1994); see also the following encyclopedia headwords: 'Guerre', in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, VI/2, Beauchesne (Paris, 1920), coll. 1910-1921; 'Crusades', in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, IV, McGraw Hill Book Company (New York, … 1967), pp. 504-513; 'Kreuzzüge', in *Thelogische Realenzyclopädie*, XX, Walter De Gruyter (Berlin - New York, 1990), pp. 1-10.
One can hardly agree with Jean Richard's conclusion in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (p. 512): '... The Crusades ... had, indeed, military, financial, and economic aspects, *but above all else they can be characterized as a penitential act and as a voluntary effort in the service of God*' (underlining by B.L.Z.). Such words seem rather inspired by Christian piety than by a sufficiently critical attitude. But even, from a purely religious standpoint, such an assumption could be perhaps acceptable, if we were in some other religious context whose founder were not Jesus Christ. The problem regards – I repeat once again, also in this context, which I stated above – not the individual consciences of single Crusaders among whom there were certainly men of a distinguished virtue, but the consonance of the Crusades' ideology with Christ's message on one hand, and its effective results and consequences in history on the other. From this latter viewpoint, it is very hard to understand how the Crusades can be considered a 'success', as it is expressly affirmed in the same conclusion! Here the question is not even about Evangelic or historical hermeneutics, it is simply a fact, a historical datum that: *a)* the Crusades failed in reaching their basic goal, which was to subtract the Holy Land and Places from Muslim domination, *b)* the situation of Christians in the Holy Land and in the whole Middle East did not improve in any way subsequent to the Crusades. I am even convinced that the Crusades were the main factor in inspiring to Eastern Christians, especially those belonging to a minor group not subject to the Imperial Byzantine commonwealth, and mainly to the Armenians, to place useless trust in the Western powers which has been catastrophic for them. What I am saying of Richard's mentioned conclusion I would also repeat with respect to Pier Giovanni Donini's theoretical approach, expressed in the following statement: 'Nemmeno le Crociate portarono a conseguenze negative sulla condizione generale dei cristiani' (with regard to the Muslim rulers and their eventual reprisals), in *Le minoranze nel Vicino Oriente e nel Maghreb. Problemi metodologici e questioni generali*, Pietro La veglia Editore (Salerno, 1985), pp. 114-115; such an affirmation may have some validity only within the framework of an approach which deems Eastern Christendom as a part of the Byzantine oicumene; moreover, after the Armenians whom the author considers as the 'exception' to the general statement, so many similar cases are added ─ Copts, Syriac, Maronites ─ of people having suffered as a consequence of their trust in the Crusaders, that the question becomes unavoidable: Of which Christianity and from which standpoint are we speaking when we affirm: 'Nemmeno le Crociate portarono a conseguenze negative …'? As examples of a rather balanced and widely contextual position on the Crusades can be mentioned: Jonathan Riley-Smith, in *Thelogische Realenzyclopädie*: 'Kreuzüge, 3. Theologie', pp. 6-10 as well as Louis Boisset, 'Foi, pouvoir et violence. Une relecture de la croisade', in *Faith, Power, and Violence. Muslims and Christians in a Plural Society, Past and Present*, ed. by John J. Donohue, S.J. and Christian W. Troll, S.J., Pontificio Istituto Orientale (Roma, 1998), pp. 61-74. Summing up, one can hardly disagree, I think, on this question, from Bernard Lewis' evaluation: 'In two respects, however, the Crusades left a permanent mark. One of these was the worsening of the position of the *dhimmī*s' ('Politics and War', in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. by the late Joseph Schacht with C. E. Bosworth, 2nd ed., The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1974, p. 190).

[13] This we can see, for instance, very clearly in the reactions of the Catholicoi of Etchmiadzin, Simeon of Yerevan (1763-1780) and Ghukas of Karin (1780-1799), to the 'liberation' projects presented by some Armenian intellectuals and activists of India, especially Hovsêp' Emin, Movsês Baghramian and Shahamir Shahamirian. Cf. for a first approach: Vazken Ghougassian, 'The Quest for Enlightenment and liberation: the case of the Armenian community of India in the late Eighteenth century', in *Enlightenment and Diaspora. The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, cited in n. 9, pp. 241-264, especially the conclusion: p. 262-264.
Going back to the Middle Ages, we see even then, in the most effervescent period of the Crusades, a remarkable attitude of prudence. I would like to go therefore into some details which normally do not attract much attention, but seem to me of a peculiar significance with respect to our topic. Three Arab historians, Bahā' ad-Dīn Saddad (1145-1234), 'Imād ad-Dīn al-Īsfahānī (1123-1201) and Abū Šama (died 1267) recount that the Armenian Catholicos, Grigor IV Tghay (1173-1193), while the Crusaders were coming near Cilicia, would have got into contact with Saladin more than once by written messages and through envoys to inform him of the developments of the situation; cf. Baha-ed-Dîn, *Anecdotes et beaux traits de la vie du sultan Youssof (Salâh ed-Dîn)*, Arabic text and French translation in Edouard Dulaurier, *Receuil des Historiens des Croisades. Historiens Orientaux*, III, (Paris, 1884), pp. 161-164, 166; Abou Chamah, *Le livre des deux jardins*, *ibid.*, IV, (Paris, 1898), pp. 453-456. The editor, probably moved by the doubts raised by the Mekhitarist Father Ghewond Alishan, offers the following note: 'Mais on doit rappeler que l'autenticité de la lettre qui lui est attribuée a été depuis longtemps mise en doute' (*ibid.*, p. 453, n. 2). The term *kathoghikos*, as it sounds in Armenian, is utilized by Bahā' ad-Dīn, according to its French transcription: "*cathoghicos*"; on the contrary it becomes *caghicos* in Abū Šama. Both speak of him as *locum tenens* or 'vicar' (cf. respectively III, p. 164; IV, p. 453). Harut'iwn Kurdian defended, in Nineteen seventies, the authenticity of the letter, examining it in the primordial version of Bahā' ad-Dīn: 'Grigor Tghay ew Salah Ed-Din', *Bazmavep*, CXXXIII (1975), pp. 161-180. Non-Armenian historians and philologists, besides the mentioned Dulaurier, seem not to have doubted the authenticity: cf. Gertrude E. Slaughter (Taylor), *Saladin (1138-1193). A Biography*, with drawings by Robert H. Taylor, Exposition Press (New York, 1955), pp. 195, 214-215; Hannes Möhring, *Saladin und der dritte Kreuzug. Ayubidische Strategie und Diplomatie im Vergleich vornehmlich der arabischen mit den lateinischen Quellen, Steiner (Wiesbaden, 1980)*, pp. 109, 157-160. I think that the reasons of 'dignity' and 'convenience/decency', given by Alishan to refuse authenticity (cf. Léonce Alishan, *Sisouan*, St. Lazare -Venise, 1885, p. 447), are not convincing. In a political situation, extremely critical for the small Kingdom of Cilicia which could be crushed between the two superpowers, Barbarossa triumphantly advancing and Saladin, I do not see any reason to consider it indecent for the Armenian Catholicos to take some precautions in order to possibly prevent an eventual catastrophe, and this for more than one reason: because he could not completely trust the Crusaders, and because he could not foresee

The Armenians, indeed, paid excessively dear for their openness towards modernity, their thirst for liberty and democracy, the only time when their traditional super-Ego's control could not function adequately for a series of historical factors. This failure belongs, however, to the developments of the 19th century. Since it is evident that till the end, at least, of the 18th century that control functioned. No doubt, hope in 'Christian Europe' continued its existence almost all the time, notwithstanding the tragic deceptions caused by the Crusaders. Otherwise the missions, realized or planned, to Rome and to the European courts of important Armenian personalities, among whom even some prominent Catholicoi of Etchmiadzin as Step'anos V of Salmast (1545-1567, co-Catholicos since 1541), and especially the aged Catholicos Hakob IV of Jugha/Julfa (1555-1680, born in 1598) – who died, during his travel to Rome, in Constantinople – as well as the whole activity of Israyel Ori at the end of the 17th and in the early 18th century – however it may be judged, either as a utopian adventure, or rather misadventure, or as having some serious political basis – and many other similar initiatives, would remain without any reasonable explanation. There was, however, a big difference between the basic attitude of these mentioned figures and of others following a similar path nearly up to the last decades of the 18th century and the attitude of the leaders of a later generation.

In fact up to the end of the 1700's no open action that might rise suspicion in the dominant powers was undertaken, neither suggested, and even strongly held back by the higher authorities of the Church, until they had some real basis for their hope, some seriously reliable engagement on behalf of their interlocutors[13]. Things would change almost radically in the course of the 19th century. Among the major protagonists of this change, as far as the high ranks of the Armenian clergy are concerned, let us mention particularly the following names:

1) Archbishop Hovsêp' Arghutiants' (1743-1801), a close friend of Russian Czarina Catherine II, who was confident of Russian help and absolutely convinced concerning its efficiency; he was elected Catholicos of Etchmiadzin as a result of some intrigues of Russian policy, but died in Tiflis, in rather mysterious circumstances, on the way to Etchmiadzin, before taking effective possession of the See;

2) the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin Nersês Ashtarakets'i (1770-1857, Catholicos since 1843); he led the Armenian volunteers fighting with the Russian army against the Persians till the final conquest of South Caucasus by the former in 1828;

3) Khrimian Hayrik (1820-1907), initially a married priest who, after his wife's death, was promoted to bishop and was elected, first, Patriarch of Constantinople (1869-1874, when he gave it up) and, later in 1892, Catholicos of All Armenians at Etchmiadzin till his death.

Unfortunately we lack adequate studies to explain the inner dynamics of such a change in the high spheres of the Armenian clergy, while similar tendencies can be explained much easier with respect to the young intellectuals who had studied in European Universities, had got a superficial acquaintance with the West, including Russia, which were in those decades effervescing with romantic and revolutionary ideas; those young Armenians were dazzled by all those developments, so they began to entertain self-deceiving illusions. However, such a change was not, in any case, pacific and painless. The mournful case of Patriarch Maghak'ia Ormanian (1841-1918, Patriarch of Constantinople since 1892, deposed in 1908), one of the best and far-sighted political minds that Armenians ever had in the past three centuries, is a particular example of this. First a target of a criminal attempt in the Patriarchal Church of Constantinople while celebrating Holy Mass on the day of Epiphany when the Armenian Church celebrates also Christmas (6 January 1903); then subsequently he was deposed from the Patriarchal See, under shameful circumstances, by the young, fanatical groups of Armenian revolutionaries, devoid of any political experience, blindly confident in the bogus promises of the Young Turks, shortly after the deposition of Sultan Abd-ül-Hamid and the proclamation of the *İkinci Meşrutiyet*, the 2nd Constitution[14]. We must also add that except to some extent for Arghut'eants, both Ashtarakets'i and, especially,

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the eventual result of the conflict. I rather think that it is such a political lucidity that can be seen to be lacking in subsequent Armenian history. Moreover, Grigor Tghay acted, utmost probably, in accordance with Lewon I the Magnificent, the greatest monarch of Cilician Armenia. However, there is another difficulty from a historical viewpoint for the authenticity of the letter. After quoting the letter, Bahā' ad-Dīn says that it was written by Bacil Bar Krîkour, according to Dulaurier's transcription, who identifies this person with the contemporary bishop of Ani, in Northern Armenia ('Basile, fils de Grégoire', III, p. 164, n. 1) who from time to time bore also the title of Catholicos. Such a hypothesis is, in any case, unsustainable both for the historical context and the distance of Ani from the theatre of the events. Alishan sees in Bacil Bar Krîkour the commander of the fortress of Hromklay, residence of the Catholicos, the one who would be the real author of the letter by his own decision without some prior agreement with Grigor Tghay. That a commander might be involved in the mission should raise no problems. Some confusion of names by the Arab historians is also not to be excluded. What I would like to stress is simply the fact that the implication of the Armenian Catholicos in this matter does not seem to involve anything indecent; on the contrary it seems to be a requirement of a basic political prudence. Yet a final observation: the Arabs, in their turn, looked at the Armenian initiative with some suspicion, as it is witnessed by the same sources (cf. Möhring, pp. 158-159).

[14] The most detailed outline of the history of the Armenian Church during the 18th and 19th centuries is given by Maghak'ia Ormanian in vol. II, part III, and vol. III of his *Azgapatum* [History of the (Armenian) Nation], a monumental work in three volumes (Constnatinople, 1912, 1914, Jerusalem, 1927 posthumous). The author's notably subjective approaches on some peculiar points do not invalidate at all the exceptional value of this work as a whole.

As to the origins and early developments of the Armenian revolutionary movements, the following may be considered as some classical works in this field: Louise Nalbandian *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement. The Development of Armenian Political*

Khrimian suffered on account of a hopeless lack of experience in international affairs and, consequently, of diplomatic sensitiveness.

But, however tragic such a utopian approach toward Western policy may have been for the Armenians, the survival itself, after such an absolute Catastrophe as the Genocide, closing the most fruitful period of Armenian modernity in intellectual and social accomplishments, would not be comprehensible without that very special marriage, which I hinted at earlier, between modernity and tradition, change and identity, universality and specificity.

New Julfa and Constantinople, leading poles of the transformation of Armenian society

In all those processes and stages through which Armenians lead their way toward Modernity, they demonstrated the capability of transforming into a factor of progress even such events which could apparently be a factor of disease or really were. It is emblematic, from this point of view, that the emigration imposed by Shāh 'Abbās I to hundreds of thousands of Armenians was eventually turned to good. Of course, what we are saying is not a matter of a general statement to be applied to the whole extension of a given historical event as such. It must be stated that most of those Armenians either perished during the painful deportation or were progressively assimilated by the local Muslim population in their new settlements. It is a matter of fact, however, that some of them, under the protection of the Shāh himself, but also in virtue of some 'natural selection' or simply of luck, could survive and succeeded in founding a new city, New Julfa, which became much more than a symbol. As I have said, in a prior work, 'With its Holy Saviour monastery, theological Academy, library, its active printing press, and its legendary merchants New Julfa was to a greater extent the reality itself of exploding Armenian capital and of its cultural engagement. The city functioned all along the 17th century and somewhat further as a control and shunting point of world-wide Armenian commerce'[15].

Edmund Herzig's well balanced analysis and evaluation of the historical sources on the forced, even violent, deportation/emigration of Armenians, offers a firm point to gainsay the too ingenuous myth of Shāh 'Abbās as a 'benevolent father' for the Armenians, a myth, however, which has been largely diffused in Europe[16]. Furthermore, the objective historian cannot overlook the disastrous results of that awful deportation as the 'permanent shift in the ethnic

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Parties through the Nineteenth Century, University of California Press, (Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1963); Francesco Sidari, *La questione armena nella politica delle grandi Potenze dal Congresso di berlino al Trattato di Losanna, 1878-1923*, CEDAM (Padova, 1969); Anahide Ter Minassian, *Le movement révolutionnaire arménien, 1890-1903*, Mouton (Paris, 1973); Ead., *La question arménienne*, Éditions Parentèses (Roquevaire, 1983) – a partial English translation: *Nationalism and Socialism in the Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (1887-1912), (The Zoryan Institute Thematic Series, No. 1), Zoryan Institute (Cambridge, Mass., 1984) – the same in Turkish translation: *ErmeniDevrimci Hareketinde Milliyetçilik ve Sosyalizm, 1877-1912*, tranlated by Mete Tunçay, İletişim Yayınları (İstanbul, 1992).

[15] *The Armenian Way to Modernity*, cited in n. 9, pp. 46-47.

[16] Edmund HERZIG, 'The Deportation of the Armenians in 1604-1605 and Europe's Myth of Shāh 'Abbās I', in *Pembroke Papers*, 1 (1990), 59-71. For the whole historical context with regard specially to the Armenian commerce, see Id., *The Armenian Merchants of New Julfa, Isfahan. A Study in Pre-Modern Asian Trade*, Thesis submitted to the Faculty of oriental Studies, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford, St. Antony's College, 1991; Id., 'Venice and the Julfa Armenian Merchants', in *Venezia e gli Armeni. Dagli Sceriman a Mechitar: il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria*, ed. by Alfo Ferrari and B. L. Zekiyan, Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, in print. See also for the general historical context: François Tournebize, *Shah Abbas et l'émigration forcée des Arméniens de l'Ararat*, Imprimerie des PP. Méchitaristes, (Vienna, 1911); Vagan A. Bajburtjan, *Armjanskaja kolonija Novoj Dzhul'fy v XVII veke (Rol' Novoj Dzhul'fy v irano-evropejskih političeskih i ekonomičeskih cvjazah)*, Academy of Sciences of ASSR (Yerevan, 1969); John Carswell, 'New Julfa and the Safavid Image of the Armenians', in *The Armenian Image in History*, cited in n. 4, pp. 83-104; Vartan Gregorian, 'Minorities of Isfahan: The Armenian Community of Isfahan, 1587-1722', *Iranian Studies. Journal of the Society for Iranian Studies*, VII (1974), N° 3-4: 'Studies on Isfahan', Part II, pp. 652-680; Levon B. Zekiyan, 'Xoğa Safar ambasciatore di Shāh 'Abbās a Venezia', *Oriente Moderno*, LVIII/7-8 (1978), pp. 357-367; Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, 'The socio-economic condition in New Julfa post-1650: the impact of conversions to Islam on International trade', *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 26 (1996-97), pp. 367-396; Ead., *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver*: *The Eurasian Trade of the Julfan Aremnians in Safavid Iran and India (1530-1750)*, University of Pennsylvania Series at Scholar's Press (Atlanta, Gerogia, 1999); Vazken Goughassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese of New Julfa in the Seventeeenth Century*, Scholars Press (Atlanta, Georgia, 1998); Arda Djelalian, 'Tra chiese e moschee: Nuov Giulfa, modello di simbiosi di religioni e culture', *Annali di Ca' Foscari*, XLV, 3, Serie Orientale 37 (2006), pp. 93-112.
On *ġolām*s, with special reference to those of Georgian origin, see Giorgio Rota, 'Caucasians in Safavid Service in the 17th century' in *Caucasia between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1555-1914*, ed. by Raoul Motika and Michael Ursinus, Reiche4rt Verlag (Wiesbaden 2000), pp. 107-120. The author's affirmation: 'Briefly, Georgian *ġolām*s could not share a national feeling which was unknown even to their fellow countrymen in Georgia, and this is even truer in the case of Armenians and Northern Caucasian' (p. 110) deserves some reservations, at least as far as Armenians are concerned. The statement may eventually have some consistency in the perspective of a concept of 'nation' in line with the Nation-State ideology. In fact the author refers, in his note (n. 21), to the fall of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. But the very question is that the Armenian idea of 'nation' is not the one implied in the Nation-State ideology (see above n. 9). But even in the context of a Nation-State conception of national identity, infighting conflicts were not excluded at all.

balance in the region' in despite of the Armenian population: it affected region that extended 'from Julfa to Nakhichavān to Erevan to Erzerum to Van'[17]. Certainly the deportation decided by Shāh 'Abbās was not the only factor to determine that 'shift in the ethnic balance' of the early Armenian regions. There have also been other decisive factors, such as the state of terror and anarchy caused by the Jelali movement, the almost permanent vexations of Kurdic landlords, and a long chain of similar situations. It remains, however, true that the Abbasian policy worked as a strong factor in reducing the Armenian population in its ancestral homeland[18].

Having made these necessary explanations, we cannot however ignore the fact that it was under the Shah's protection, with his complicity, and in virtue of the privileges given by him that Armenians who survived the harsh conditions of the deportation could found a city of their own, rescuing their culture, and developing one of the most prosperous phases in their age-old tradition of worldwide commerce. It would not be excessive to consider their economical achievements during this period as a kind of 'commercial empire'. Armenian capital was acting along all the routes of the Old World from Novgorod to Hyderabad, from Ispahan to Cracow, from Bassorah to Astrakhan, from Sining to Amsterdam and London and even to various points of Africa. To give an approximate idea of this capital power, it may be enough to say that the well known family Shehrimanian (Sheriman, Sceriman, Seriman), which settled in Venice from New Julfa, is estimated to have been one of the richest families in Europe in the first half of the 18th century. The fact itself that this commercial power was reduced and overwhelmed by nothing less than an Imperial organization as was the East India Company is eloquent enough to realize its dimensions and strength[19].

Among the other reference points for the cultural renewal and mercantile flourishing of Armenian society – such as the academic training centres in Armenia itself as those of Etchmiadzin and of Baghesh, and the great commercial and printing centres abroad, such as those of Livorno, Marseilles, and Amsterdam – the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Konstantaniyye/Constantinople[20] had a special relevance, especially from the second half of the 16th century onwards. It

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[17] Herzig, 'The Deportation', pp. 67-68.

[18] On turbulences and the overpower of local landlords in the Ottoman Empire, see among others: Halil Inalcik, *Studies in Ottoman Social and Economic History*, Variorum Reprints (London 1985); Id. (ed.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. I (1300-1600), II (1600-1914), Cambridge University Press (Cambridge 1997).

[19] On Armenian commerce, besides works cited in n. 15, see also: Charles-Dikran Tékéian, *Marseille, la Provence et les Arméniens*, Institut Historique de Provence (Marseille, 1929), pp. 12-67; Mesrovb J. Seth, *History of the Armenians in India* (Calcutta, 1937); Roberto Gulbenkian, 'Philippe de Zagly, marchand arménien de Julfa, et l'établissement du commerce persan en Courland en 1696', *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, VII (1970), pp. 361-399; Roland W. Ferrier, 'The Agreement of the East India Company with the Armenian Nation, 22nd June 1688', *ibid.*, pp. 427-443; Id., 'The Armenians and the East India Company in Persia in the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review*, 2nd s., 26 (1973), pp. 38-62; *Hay zhoghovrdi patmut'iwn*, Academy of Sciences of ASSR, Vol. IV (Yerevan, 1972), Part II, pp. 297-432; Jean Dauvillier, 'Les Arméniens en Chine et en Asie Centrale au Moyen Age', in *Mélanges de sinologie offerts à M. Paul Demiéville*, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, XX, II (Paris, 1974), pp. 1-17; Kegham Kévonian, 'Marchands arméniens au XVIIe siècle - A propos d'un livre arménien publié à Amsterdam en 1699', *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique*, XVI (1975), N° 2, pp. 199-244; Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe-XVIIIe siècle*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1980, t. 2, *Les jeux de l'échange*, p. 131-133; Philippe D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Studies in Comparative World History, Cambridge University Press, (Cambridge, 1984), ch. 9: 'Overland trade of the seventeenth century: Armenian carriers between Europe and East Asia', pp. 179-206; Michel Aghassian - Kegham Kévonian, 'Le commerce arménien dans l'Océan indien aux 17e et 18e siècles', in *Marchands et hommes d'affaires asiatiques* (Paris, 1987); Shushanik Khach'ikyan, *Nor Jughayi hay vacharakanut'iwnë yew nra arewtratntesakan kaperë R·usastani het XVII-XVIII darerum* [The Armenian commerce of New Julfa and its economical ties with Russia in the 17th through 18th centuries], Academy of Sciences of ASSR (Yerevan, 1988); Vahan H. P'ap'azyan, *Hayastani arewtrakan ughinerë mijazgayin arewtri olortum XVI-XVII dd.* [The ways of the Armenian commerce in the context of international commerce in the 16th through 17th centuries], Academy of Sciences of ASSR (Yerevan, 1990). For further bibliography see: Curtin, cit., bibliography to ch. 9; P'ap'azyan, cit., pp. 181-189.
On the Shehrimanian (Shehriman, Sceriman, Seriman) family, in particluar, see: Guglielmo Berchet, 'Del commercio dei Veneti nell'Asia' (Venezia, 1864): estratto dagli *Atti dell'Ateneo Veneto*, serie II, vol. I (1864); Donald Maxwell White, *Zaccaria Seriman, 1704-1784, and The* ***Viaggi di Enrico Wanton****. A Contribution to the Study of the Enlightment in Italy*, Manchester University Press (Manchester, 1961), ch. 1, pp. 3-20; Charles Dédéyan, *Les Dédéyan*, San Lazzaro (Venice, 1972), pp. 57-61; Claudio Gugerotti, 'Una famiglia emblematica: gli Sceriman tra Isfahan e Venezia', in *Gli Armeni in Italia*, ed. by B.L. Zekiyan, De Luca Ed.re (Roma, 1990), pp. 108-109; Claudia Bonardi, 'Il commercio dei preziosi', *ibid*., pp. 110-114. Besides the many interest-free or low-interest loans that the Shehrimans granted to the Serenissima, they still contributed to her finances on different occasions by sunk capital gifts, whose total amount was nearly two million gold ducats. If we consider that the Shehriman family expended four thousand ducats simply to buy their palace in the neighbourhood of Santi Apostoli in Venice, the amount of two million ducats should be evaluated in today's currency at something around 15 billion Euros.

[20] The city is often named, in modern studies, Istanbul in reference to the Ottoman era. However, its official name also during the Ottoman Empire was Konstantınıyye/Konstantaniyye. This was changed into the 'vulgar' Istanbul, most probably of Greek etymology itself, only after the foundation of the Turkish Republic (1923) in the context of a general policy of 'turkifying' toponymy that lasted for decades (See: B.L. Zekiyan, 'Da Konstantiniye a Venezia', in *Studi Eurasiatici in onore di Mario Grignaschi*, a cura di Giampiero Bellingeri e Giorgio Vercellin, Euarasiatica. Quaderni del Dipartimento di Studi Eurasiatici, Università degli Studi di Venezia, 5, Libreria Universitaria Ed.ce (Venezia, 1988), pp. 17-31, in part. p. 24, n. 13.

was in fact the ethnic ‘capital’ of the Armenian *millet*, since the Armenian Patriarch of the Imperial city had a larger number of direct subjects both for his spiritual and civil jurisdiction than the Catholicos himself of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin, not to mention the Catholicos of Cilicia which was practically reduced in those centuries to the rank of a local, almost diocesan hierarch. Starting from the late 17th century the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople increased to such an extent that normally no candidate could be crowned as a Catholicos of all Armenians, if he did not enjoy the Patriarch’s *placet*. This relevance of the metropolitan city had a continuous ascent covering all the fields of social and intellectual life, and reached its climax in the second half of the 19th century. This extraordinary cultural, educational, and literary blossoming spread from Constantinople all over the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire as far as the most secluded regions of Eastern Anatolia, and reached even the Armenians beyond the Ottoman boundaries, in the Russian Empire and elsewhere[21]. But this process was abruptly halted by the Genocide in 1915.

We have already restated the question on Shāh ‘Abbās’ benevolent attitude toward a group of Armenian refugees, even though if this was but a minority among the total number of the deportees. We also made the point on his complicity in that Armenians could lay the foundations, under his reign, for such a financial empire as they succeeded in creating and operating for more than one century. A likely benevolent attitude toward the Armenians was also nourished by the Conqueror of Constantinople, the Ottoman Sultan Fatih Mehmed II. To counterbalance the Christian Greek population of the capital, he encouraged the emigration to Constantinople of many Armenians from different regions of Anatolia and from Crimea. Moreover, he took care to organize, both on religious and social grounds, the quickly growing Armenian community of his new capital. He brought there his old and close friend Hovakim, the Armenian Bishop of Bursa, the early Ottoman capital, appointing him as the bishop of Constantinopolitan Armenians. According to the current traditional opinion, Fatih gave Hovakim even a Patriarchal dignity as the head of the Armenian *millet*. Fatih's remarkably benevolent attitude toward the Armenians would be generally continued also by his successors, and especially by the greatest of them, Süleyman the *Kanunî*, Soliman the Magnificent[22].

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[21] The cultural exchange between Armenians in different countries and states was rather active and, often, strong. To give only one yet significant example, the greatest actor of the Armenian stage of all times, Petros Adamian, was ‘at home’ both in Constantinople and in Tiflis (today’s Tbilisi) where he achieved the greatest successes of his career. Tiflis was the cultural metropolis of Russian Armenians in the 18th through 19th centuries, a parallel to what Constantinople represented then for the Ottoman Armenians.

[22] On the overall question of the origins and early developments of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople the most recent and exhaustive study is now Markus Rahn, *Die Entstehung des armenischen Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte, Bd. 20, LIT Verlag (Münster, Hamburg, 2002). The author reconfirms with convincing arguments the traditional viewpoint, transmitted by the Mekhitarist Fr. Mik‘ayēl Ch‘amch‘ian, in the 3rd volume of his monumental *Patmut‘iwn Hayots‘* [History of Armenians], San Lazzaro (Venice 1786) and contested from the fifties of the last century by scholars such as Franz Babinbger, Haïg Berbérian, and others (cf. Rahn, pp. 24-25).
On the Ottoman *millet* system in general and on the Armenian *millet* in particular, see among others: Frédéric J. G. van den Steen de Jehay, *De la situation légale des Sujets ottomans non-musulmans*, O. Schepens & C.ie (Bruxelles, 1906), par. 3, ‘Les Arméniens-Grégoriens’ (Ermeni Mil’leti), in part. pp. 62-63 - on the Catholic Armenians: pp. 244-265; on the Protestant community: pp. 218-226; Avedis Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion*, ch. II, ‘The Armenian Millet under Ottoman Dominion’, Harvard University Press (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 31-45; Speros Vryonis, Jr., *A Critical Analysis* (of Stanford J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern* Turkey, vol I, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1976), offprint from *Balkan Studies*, 24, 1 (1983), (Thessaloniki, 1983), pp. 88-112; Yavuz Ercan, *Kudüs Ermeni* Patrikhanesi [The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem], Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi (Ankara, 1988); Pars Tuğlacı, *İstanbul Ermeni Kiliseleri - Armenian Churches of Istanbul - Istanpuli Hayoc' ekełec'inerð*, Pars Yayın, İstanbul, 1991, Ch. 4, pp. 49-74; Matthias Kappler, ‘L’Impero ottomano e la società greca’, in Gianroberto Scarcia [and others], *L’Impero ottomano ed Europa*, Centro Culturale Al Farabi (Palermo, 1993), pp. 37-55; Vincenzo Poggi, Millet, *Da religione a nazione*, in *Umanità e nazioni nel diritto e nella spritualità da Roma a Costantinopoli a Mosca*, Rendiconti del XII seminario, Campidoglio, 21 aprile 1992, a cura di Pierangelo Catalano e Paolo Siniscalco: Da Roma alla Terza Roma. Documenti e Studi, Collezione diretta da Pierangelo Catalano e Paolo Siniscalco, Herder Editrice e Libreria (Roma, 1995), pp. 43-53; Salâhi Sonyel, *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman Empire*, Atatürk Supreme Council for Culture, Language and History. Publicatons of the Turkish Historical Society, Serila. VII - No. 129, Turkish Historical Society Printing House (Ankara, 1993), pp. 22-60. I would like to call attention to the absolutely groundless statement of S. Sonyel: ‘There is no doubt that Sultan Mehmet II, for the first time in their history, gave the Armenians the opportunity to practice freely their religion, language, tradition, customs, and professions, as an organised community’ (p. 47). I see no need at all to confute such a statement which, at the best, should be ascribed to ignorance of Armenian history. Such an absurdity, however, does not invalidate Sonyel’s general treatment concerning the Armenian *millet*. As to the foundation date of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, he puts it under Mehmed the Conqueror, an opinion that I find more plausible, especially after Rahn’s detailed study.

[23] See Pars TUĞLACI, *Armenian Churches of Istanbul*, cited in n. 18, p. 50. The miniature is from the 16th century and belongs to a *Hünername* conserved in the Library of the Topkapı Palace Museum.

[24] See the critical edition in Arak‘el Baghishets‘i, XV d. [15th century], A study, critical texts, and notes of Arshaluys Ghazinian, Editions of the Armenian Academy of Sciences (Yerevan, 1971), pp. 222-237.

There is the well known case of an Armenian clergyman, most probably the above mentioned Bishop Hovakim himself, who, in an Ottoman miniature painting of the period, is depicted in the gesture of cheering the Sultan on while this latter is seen shooting an arrow at the Serpentine Column in the Hippodrome of Constantinople, after the conquest of the city[23]. Of course it would be an oversimplifie, undue generalisation, to think that all Armenians or most of them shared the same feeling. Arak'el Baghishets'i's *Oghb* (Elegy), for instance, for the fall of Constantinople cannot be forgotten[24]. It is there to witness how eagerly a lot of Armenians felt this fall, in the name of common Christian solidarity, notwithstanding the secular religious and political pressures, even persecutions, and the many, and heavy, deceptions suffered from the Byzantine Empire. On the other side, we also cannot easily pass over the fact that Fatih repaid Hovakim's sympathy, making of him, certainly, the bishop of the new, dreamed capital of his Empire, and most probably, also a Patriarch, a *milletbaşı*, with remarkable power[25]. With Fatih's conquest of Constantinople the Armenian presence in this city experienced a new growth and vitality. This laid the foundations for that magnificent blossom of Armenian finance, print, art, and culture which would make of this city from the 17th through the 19th centuries one of the main centres of Armenian progress and modernity along with New Julfa, Venice, and Tiflis[26].

What we have been saying and recalling, however restricted and limited it may seem in comparison with the centuries-long history of Armenian-Islamic relations, is quite enough, I think, to show us how multi-sided, complicated and, often, paradoxical, even contradictory, those relations were. Therefore it would be only a partial and unilateral, and even factious approach, insufficient at all to explain the very entangled dynamics which led Middle Eastern Christianity to its present sufferance and agony and, according to some comments, to the death throes in which it seems to be, to lay the blame of this long historical process either wholly upon the Islamic dominion and its misdeeds, or upon the indifference and threads of Western Christianity, or upon the politico-strategic mistakes of the Eastern Christians themselves. Probably all these, and yet many other factors influenced that process, while some specific terrible events, such as long-term wars, pogroms, massacres, and genocides delivered the 'coup de grâce' to achieve it. Indeed, historical developments of such a complexity deserve a more attentive, deepening, and balanced study than it have been carried out up to today. As I pointed out in the preface to the Turkish translation of my *The Armenian Way to Modernity*[27], the vehement shock of the Genocide's trauma, generally speaking, prevented the Armenians from having an unbiased approach of those relations; thus they could only see in the whole prior history nothing but oppression and persecution; on the other side, the obsession of negationism pushed the Turks, in general, to present the Seljukid and especially the Ottoman dominions over Armenians as nothing less than as the achievement of an ideal, earthly paradise for them[28]. Unfortunately such a partisan approach is not only a bias of people who are directly involved in the history they are studying because of their ethnic roots or their national citizenship; factious attitudes, so far as Middle Eastern issues are concerned, are much more frequent, indeed, than one should expect also among Western scholars. I would like, however, to avoid mentioning names and titles, since the main effect of a confrontal polemics would be, I think, to push factious-minded people to develop even more their factious attitudes. As to the approach and the study of the Armenian-Turkish relations, I think that little will change in the above mentioned situation until the wall of official Turkish negationism is demolished. It seems, at present, that we still need to go a long way before being able to emerge from this blind alley.

Turning back to the relations themselves, if Armenians received real profits and even privileges both from the Safavids and the Ottomans, the point must be also made with emphasis that they repaid what they received, widely contributing in a very singular, almost exceptional way to the welfare and progress of those societies and Empires in almost every field of life, from economics to politics, from crafts to arts, to music, theatre, literature, and so on. There is a wide literature on the role of the Armenians in these various fields. The Ottomans even called them *milleti-i sadıka*, the 'loyal nation'[29].

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[25] Cf. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities*, cited in n. 22, pp. 32-45, 100-101, 228-229.

[26] The most exhaustive work, though in an almost colloquial style, on the Armenian Constantinople and its place in the Armenian culture is Hakob Siruni's *Polis ew ir derë* [Constantinople and its role], in four volumes: I-II, Mesrop (Beyrouth, 1965, 1970; the first volume was first published as a series of articles in *Etchmiadzine* between 1962-64), III-IV, Catholicossate of the Great House of Cilicia (Antelias, Lebanon, 1987, 1988).

[27] See n. 10. Turkish translation: Boğos L. Zekiyan, *Ermeniler ve Modernite. Gelenek ve Yenileşme,Özgüllük ve Evrensellik Arasında Ermeni Kimliği*, Aras Yayıncılık (İstanbul, 2001, 2nd ed. 2002).

[28] *Ermeniler ve Modernite*, 'Türkçe basıma önsöz' [Preface to the Turkish edition], pp. 9-10.

[29] On the Armenian contribution in the Safavid Empire and, in general, in Persia, see bibliography in nn. 16 and 19; for the Armenian contribution in the Turkish States of Anatolia, and especially in the Ottoman Empire, we have to mention first Pars Tuğlacı's [Parsegh T'ughlachian] monumental production on several aspects of this contribution as, for instance: *The Role of the Balyan family in Ottoman architecture*, Yeni Çığır (İstanbul, 1990); *The Role of the Dadian Family in Ottoman Social, Economic and Political Life*, Pars Yayın (İstanbul, 1993) (both in Turkish and English versions); a recent work on the role of the Armenians as forerunners of photography in the Empire is due to Engin Özendes, *Abdullah Frères, Ottoman Court Photographers*, translated from Turkish by Priscilla M. Işın, Yapı Kredi Culture, Art, Publicatons (Istanbul, 1998). On the Armenian contribution in creating Turkish theatre a fundamental and exhaustive work is Metin And's, *Tanzimat ve Istibdat döneminde Türk tiyatrosu, 1839-1908* [The Turkish Theatre at the age of Reforms and of Dictatorship], Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 118 (Ankara, 1972); see also And's following

This is not the right place to go deeper into this topic of Armenian loyalty in the Ottoman Empire. I do not think, however, that the large majority of Armenians, as a national community, have ever betrayed this loyalty, even in the latest age of the Empire that led to the Genocide. In this respect I would like to mention a few, namely four, special issues bearing witness to this:

a) Some years ago (it was probably in 2002), in a recent transmission of TRT Int. (Turkish Television International), aiming to deny the factuality of the Armenian Genocide, was said, almost in these same words, that four hundred bloodthirsty Armenians were spreading terror and death all through Anatolia. Now, even in the most minimalist hypothesis of the Armenian pre-genocide demographic makeup in the Ottoman Empire, averred by official Turkish propaganda, of about 1,4/1,2/ million people, four hundred persons are really an extremely insignificant minority, even though if there may be no doubt that the effect and impact of terrorist action is not proportional to the number of its agents. Patriarch Ormanian's caution to Sultan Hamid, immediately after the famous assault on Babı Ali on the 6th August 1897, aimed at killing all government members gathered for a reunion: 'Apply all legal punitive measures on the perpetrators, I shall not protest, but you will not touch innocent people' was, in the given case, understood and accepted by the Sultan[30], notwithstanding his renown as a 'red' Sultan, while the same principle of basic justice and equity was totally ignored and trampled on by the Young Turks of the Ittihad and Terakki Party.

b) Enver Pasha, one of the pillars of the Ittihad and Terakki and one of the main masterminds of the extermination project of the Armenians, hence a person who must be considered above any other as not being suspect of party-spirit in their favour, in his letter to the Armenian Bishop of Konya, dated February, 1915, soon after the awful defeat of the Ottoman Forces by the Russians at Sarıkamış, writes: '*… die armenischen Soldaten der ottomanischen Armee ihre Pflichten auf dem Kriegstheater gewissenhaft erfüllen, was ich aus eigener Anschauung bezeugen kann*'[31].

c) The touching witness, one among hundreds and thousands, of the Armenian Catholic Bishop of Ankara, Mons. Krikor Bahaban, in his memoirs[32]. The bishop writes: '*Notre brave peuple comptait parmi les sujets les plus*

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works: *Meşrutiyet döneminde Türk tiyatrosu, 1908-1923*, [The Turkish Theatre at the age of the Constitution], Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 108 (Ankara, 1971); *'Osmanlı tiyatrosu' - Kuruluşu - Gelişimi - Katkısı*, Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Cografya Fakültesi Yayınları, 258 (Ankara, 1976). The author concludes his first quoted book with the following words: 'Türk dilinde tiyatronun gelişmesinde içten çabaları için Ermeni sanatçılara ne türlü teşekkür etsek azdır' (Anyhow we may thank the Armenian artists for their sincere efforts in the development of theatre in the Turkish language, it will not be enough: p. 450). Certainly, such a statement is at once an example of a high standard of scholarly approach to the subject.

[30] See *Azgapatum*, cited in n. 14, vol. III, par. 3002, col. 5086-5088.

[31] Cf. Johannes Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes. Bericht über das Schicksal des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei während des Weltkrieges*, Vierte Auflage, Missionshandlung und Verlag (Potsdam, 1930, 1st ed., Potsdam, 1916), p. 162: Lepsius, after having mentioned the satisfaction expressed by Enver, for his Armenian soldiers, to the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople in February 1915, after his return from the Caucasian front, and his ‚liebenswürdigsten' reply to the written greetings to him of the Armenian Bishops, continues: 'Dem Bischof von Konia erwiderte er auf eine Adresse, die jener im Namen der armenischen Gemeinde eingereicht hatte, nach dem Osmanischen Lloyd, der deutschen Zeitung von Konstantinopel, vom 26. Februar 1915'; see also *Les mémoires de Mgr. Jean Naslian sur les événements politico-religieux en Proche-Orient de 1914-1922*, vol. I (Beyrouth-Vienne, 1951), pp. 12-13: Enver's letter is dated here 26th January 1915. As to the value of the documents quoted by Lepsius' and to his reliability in publishing them − a question raised also recently by Şahi Ali Söylemezoğlu, *Die andere Seite der Medaille, Hintergründe der Tragödie von 1915 in Kleinasien. Materialen aus europäischen, amerikanischen und armenischen Quellen*, Önel Verl. (Köln, 2005) − I would like to quote one of the best specialists of German archival material regarding the Armenian issue, Wolfgang Gunst. He writes: "Lepsius hat mit den allermeisten Änderungen in seinem Dokumentarwerk nichts zu tun, denn das deutsche Auswärtige Amt gab ihm die Abweichungen von den Originalen in den zur Verfügung gestellten Kopien vor. … Allerdings sollten die türkischen Spezialisten für 'die andere Seite der Medaille' einmal die Manipulationen genauer studieren. Dann würden sie merken, dass von den Kernaussagen im Lepsius-Buch von 1919 zum Völkermord selbst so gut wie nichts korrigiert werden musste" (Review of Söylemezoğlu's book: '"Wir haben nie die Natur des Problems verstanden"', *Armenisch-Deutsche Korrespondenz*, Nr. 138, Jg. 2007 / Heft 4, p. 68).
As to Enver's letter to the Armenian Bishop of Konya, it seems a normal question to be asked why and under which circumstances there existed such a special relation between the two? Dr. Shabuh Gedik, a physician living now in Nice, born in Konya in 1915, shed light on the question during a conversation in Nice, in early July 2006, while we touched upon various aspects of the Genocide. Some days later he wrote me, on July 10, the following lines in Armenian which I transcribe here in English: "When Enver, after his defeat at Sarıkamış, went through Konya, the Armenian Bishop of Konya was Karekin (Garegin) Srbazan Khatchadrian (Khach'atrian), who was then ill in bed. He [the Bishop] asked however Stepan Gedikian (Step'an Kētikian; Dr. Shabuh's father) to write, on his [Bishop's] behalf, a letter to Enver and to deliver it to him personally. It is Enver's reply to this letter which was published in the issue of January 26, 1915, of «Osmanischer Lloyd» of Constantinople". Dr. Shabuh Gedik goes on giving an Armenian version of Enver's letter, and adds: "I would like to add that, in 1925, ..., when at the age of ten years I was trying to learn to ride a bicycle, helped by some Ashot of Partizak, on the sidewalk of the Vatican's huge building [the seat of the then "Delegation" of the Roman See) which was opposite to our house, this Ashot used to repeat often, with some pride, that it was he who had brought Enver on his shoulders at Sarıkamış...".

[32] Mgr. Grégoire Bahaban, *Une page sur mille du témoignage chrétien d'un peuple*, ed. by G. [Garabed] Amadouni, Saint Lazare (Venise, 1976). Bishop Bahaban wrote his memoirs in Turkish, in Armenian characters. The manuscript is kept in the Archives of the Mekhiratist Congregation in Venice. The French translation and edition were made by Mons. Garabed Amadouni, the first Apostolic Exarch of the Armenian Catholic Community in France. It was the great desire of Mons. Amadouni, born himself in Ankara, to

fidèles qui n'avaient jamais failli à leurs devoirs sacrés vis-à-vis de l'État; au contraire sa soumission, son attachement et les multiples services qu'il avaient rendus étaient reconnus et estimés par les autorités, en particulier le dévouement et l'activité de nos braves enfants dans leur service militaire, les largesses généreuses de toutes les classes de notre peuples pendant cette guerre'[33]. These are words which need no further comment.

d) The witness of a late Senator of the Turkish Republic Sadi Koçaş: 'They [the Armenians] are hard-working people, persistent in love, loyal, open to friendship. They have a superior capacity of adaptation to the ambiance. They are not fanatic of their language and religion, but they are attached and faithful to their beliefs and convictions as to their friendships. For this reason, even if it was at a price of great privations and sufferance, the great majority of them did not change their religion and confession notwithstanding pressures that lasted for centuries'[34]. If the author of these words were not a Turk, it would be an easy temptation to ascribe them to a pro-Armenian faction. The author, however, as he strives to prove that no intentional mass murder happened to the Armenians, probably does not even realize that such words are by themselves an implicit confession of the awful destiny reserved for the Ottoman Armenians – an instance of a great interest, however, which reveals the deep ambivalence and ambiguity, in many a case, of the Turkish attitude vis-à-vis the Armenians and the Armenian issue.

Islamic *dhimma*/Ottoman *millet*

As we know, Islamic society was basically formed by the *umma*, that is by the people of the Muslim faith while the followers of the great Biblical religions, Jews and Christians, called the people of the Book (*ahl al-Kitab*), which is the Bible, were considered as *dhimma* (the community) or *dhimmī*s (the persons), whıch means 'protected'. The Ottoman socio-political concept and the corresponding juridical system of *millet* – from Arabic *milla* meaning originally a group, a sect – was based on the Islamic ethno-religious conception of *dhimma* which is brought by the former to its fuller formulation as a basic element in the composition of Islamic political society[35]. In fact, the original

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publish these memoirs, which present a comprehensible language for today's Turks, in the new Turkish alphabet, and to distribute it in Turkey's political and intellectual circles as a witness of both the tremendous tragedy and of the Armenian loyalty. Indeed, the author bears witness to a great sense of loyalty towards the Ottoman State and country, notwithstanding the grim accents of an awful tragedy emanating from his narration.

[33] Bahaban, cited, p. 41.

[34] Sadi Koçaş, Senatör, *Tarih boyunca Ermeniler ve Türk-Ermeni ilişkileri* [Armenians and Turkish-Armenian relations along history], Altınok Matbaası (Ankara, 1967, 2nd ed. 1967), p. 45, under the title '*Ermenilerin hususiyetleri*' (Characteristic traits of the Armenians): "Çalışkan, vefakâr, sadık, dost temayüllü insanlardır. Muhite intibak kabiliyetleri fazladır. Din ve dil'de mutassıp değillerdir. Fakat dostluklarına olduğu gibi inançlarına ve itikatlarına da sadık ve bağlıdırlar. Bu yüzdem büyük eziyetler ve mahrumiyetler pahasına bile olsa, büyük bir ekseriyeti, asırlar boyu devam eden baskılara rağmen, dinlerini ve mezheplerini değiştirmemişlerdir".

[35] Among a great variety of titles, and in addition to literature cited in n. 22, see also: Pierre Rondot, *L'Islam et les Musulmans d'aujourd'hui. La communauté muslmane: ses bases, son état present, son evolution*, ("Lumière et Nations"), Éditions de l'Orante (Paris, 1958), pp. 159-166; Mario Grignaschi, 'L'Impero ottomano e le minoranze religiose' in *Studi in onore di FRANCESCO GABRIELI nel suo ottantesimo compleanno*, a cura di Renato Traini, 2 vol.s, Studium Urbis (Roma, 1984), vol I, pp. 413-422; Pier Giovanni Donini, *Le minoranze nel Vicino Oriente e nel Maghreb*, cited in n. 12, pp. 103-117; Christian W. Troll, 'Der Blick des Koran auf andere Religionen. Grunden für eine gemeinsame Zukunft', in Walter Kerber (Hrsg.), *Wie tolerant ist der Islam? Isslamwissenschaftler nehmen Stellung*, (Fragen einer neuen Weltkultur, Bd. 6), Peter Kindt Verlag (München, 1991), pp. 47-69, in part. 51-53; Bat Ye'or, *Les chrétientés d'Orient entre Djihâd et Dhimmitude. VIIe-XXe siècle*, Les Éditions du Cerf (Paris, 1991) – English translation: *The Decline od Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude: Seventh-Twentieth Century*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Presss (Madison-Teaneck), Associated University Presses (London, 1996); *Der Islam in der Gegenwart, Entwicklung und Ausbreitung Staat, Politik und Recht, Kultur und Religion*, ed. by Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach in collaboration with Michael Ursinus, C.H. Bech'sche Verlags Buchhandlung (Oscar Beck), (München, 1984, 3rd ed. 1991); Pinelopi Stathis (ed.), Η Παρουσια Των Εθνικων Μιονοτιτων Στην Κονσταντινουπολι Των 19. Εωνα, (Athina, 1997) – Turkish Translation: 19. Yüzyıl İstanbul'unda Gayrımüslimler, translated by Foti and Stefo Benlisoy, (Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 87), Istanbul, 1999; Robert Benedicty, 'La formation politique théocratique. Essai de définition', in *Faith, Power, and Violence*, cited in n. 12, pp. 49-53; Giorgio Vercellin, 'Islam: dalla tolleranza delle origini alle moderne tendenze d'intolleranza', *Studi Storici*, 3 (2001), pp. 745-767; Maria Pia Pedani, *Dalla Frontiera al Confine*, (Quaderni di Studi Arabi. Studi e Testi, 5), Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità e del Vicino Oriente, Herder Editrice (Roma, 2002), pp. 96-98, 103.
I would like in particular to point out that Bat Ye'or's treatment seems rather to grasp only the negative, oppressive aspects of *dhimmitude* I would also express some serious reservations on the following statement of R. Bendicty: '… la classification des couches de la population selon leur appartenance ethnique et religieuse a œuvré contre la cohérence interne de la société ottomane. En effet, la loyauté des sujets non-musulmans envers le sultan a été supplantée par leur loyauté corporative envers leur millet …' (p. 52). This seems to be a superficial approach to the subject. I shall not repeat what was already said of the unanimously celebrated Armenian loyalty. As to other Christian 'nations', the Greeks especially, the question is much more complicated than it may seem: cf. Arnold J. Toynbee, *Mankind and Mother Earth*, Oxford University Press (Oxford, 1976) – Italian translation: *Il racconto dell'uomo. Cronaca dell'incontro del genere umano con la Madre Terra*, Garzanti (Milano, 1977, 1987), pp. 555-556, 575-576. This does not mean, in any case, that an aspiration towards their own statehood was absent from those populations as it is evident in the case of the

dhimmī system was used to distinguish between the non-Muslim subjects accordino to their religion, such as Jews and Christians. When it took into consideration other elements defining a communitarian identity, as the factors linked to ethnicity and to the living culture of a people, this was in function of geography – as was normally in the practice of empires, from ancient times – with relation to the ancestral territory of the subjected countries and of their peoples, considered as a political administrative unit of the Muslim Empire. The Ottoman *millet* system, on the contrary, recognized, according to established criteria, the communitarian identity of the various ethnic groups, at least of some of them, as Greeks, Armenians, and Jews in particular, even if not 'territorial', that is also outside of the borders of their ancestral territories. This recognition had a limit, however: the members of those ethnic groups, or non-Muslim *millet*s, were somehow subjects of the State at a second degree, with limited rights in comparison with the Muslim *umma*, in so far as they did not enjoy the same rights enjoyed by the Muslim subjects[36]. Although similar to some extent to the imperial law system of ancient Rome where non territorial ethnic elements were also recognized – this is known, for instance, with regard at least to the Jews – the Ottoman *millet* system, as in general the Muslim law systems, differed from it for discriminations between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects. In ancient Rome citizenship could be acquired, and not all the subjects of the Empire were *ipso facto* citizens; all citizens, however, were equal before the law[37].

The development that led from the *dhimmī* to the Ottoman *millet* needs still further investigation and explanation as to its basic rationale and its interior dynamics. Since it was Mehmed II Fatih, the Conqueror, its great conceiver, who had a very close friendship with the above mentioned Armenian Bishop of Boursa, I would like to propose here as a pure hypothesis, to be investigated and ascertained indeed, that in his re-interpretation of the *dhimmī* system, the Conqueror was perhaps inspired by the traditional Armenian model of conceiving the *ethnos*, that is the 'nation' (*azg*, in Armenian) in the sense of ethnicity. A conception that was far from perceiving ethnicity as a simple folkloric notion or as something belonging to a quasi-ethereal sphere that might function as a substitute for frustrated

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Armenians since the mid-16th century (cf. Zekiyan, *The Armenian Way*, cited in n. 10, pp. 62-65 with relative bibliography); and such an aspiration does not necessarily imply vice-versa lack of loyalty in performing the basic duties as citizens. The contradiction between both attitudes rises rather in parallel with the increasing prevalence, in the course of the 19th century, among the Ottoman subjects of the Nation-State ideal according to its Western model affirmed and diffused with the French Revolution. Indeed, the Nation-State ideology, in its rigorous formulation cannot acknowledge any adequate place for ethnic identities different from the one defining the "nation" which is the State. As to Macit Kenanoğlu's extensive study, this aims, as it is expressly declared, to present a general vision on the *millet* system which, both from a theoretical and a practical viewpoint, may go beyond the 'myth'. The fact is that, the impact of a conception inspired by the Nation-State ideology, even if not declared, lets itself be felt, all through the book, both in the approach to the subject and in the conclusions drawn. That "the state must not be deprived of its authority" or that there is no reason to speak of such an 'autonomy' that might cause a similar conditioning, doest not mean that the 'millet' system, must be regarded as lacking any "serious and sufficient" argument (p. 395). The *Millet* system consisted essentially in that a communitarian or, with a more precise expression, an ethnic-religious identity was officially acknowledged at the highest level of the state's legal structure, without being necessarily connected to a territory having belonged to that ethnic unit in that given area. This is the basic principle lying at the foundations of the *millet* system.
In Persian the term *mellat*, from Arabic *milla*, did not come to the same peculiar juridical development as the concept of *millet* by the Ottomans. It was rather used to designate a group bound by ethno-religious and linguistic ties in a meaning near to that of 'nation'; and in more recent times it has been used as corresponding to the term *umma* in expressions like *umma 'arabiyya*.

[36] On the legal restrictions suffered by the non-Muslim subjects, see: Rondot, cited in n. 35, pp. 163-166; *L'Islam oggi*, Edizioni Dehoniane (Bologna, 1993; translation of *Der Islam in der Gegenwart*, cited in n. 35), pp. 27-28, 66-67; a much more detailed description of such restrictions as well as repressive measures can be seen in MARKOSYAN 1968, pp. 119-153. There is, however, I think, some unilateral emphasis in the latter's presentation, in that the reverse of the coin is not taken into consideration (cf. what I said above concerning most of Armenian and Turkish historiography).

[37] On Roman citizenship, see: Biondo Biondi, *Il diritto romano*, (Storia di Roma, vol. XX), Licinio Cappelli Editore (Bologna, 1957), pp. 262-267; *La nozione di 'Romano' tra cittadinanza e universalità*, cited in n. 12, in part. Jean Gaudemet, 'Les romains et les «autres»', pp. 7-37; id., 'La condition juridique des Juifs dans les trois premiers siècles de l'Empire', *Augustianum*, XXXIII (1988). *XVI Incontro di Studiosi dell'Antichità Cristiana. Cristianesimo e Giudaismo: eredità e confronti*, Istituto Patristico 'Augustinianum' (Roma, 1988), pp. 339-365.
Saint Paul's case, as related by *The Acts of the Apostles*, offers an outstanding example of what Roman citizenship meant for its possessor. St. Paul had a perfect self-awareness of his Jewish identity and is absolutely proud of it. He writes: "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee" (*Philippians*, 3, 5). But when he is bound to be scourged, he asks the centurion: "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (22, 25). The result is that not only is Paul not scourged, but "the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman" (22, 29). Furthermore Paul, the Hebrew and the Pharisee, claimed to stand at Ceasar's judgment seat, as any *civis romanus*, any Roman citizen had the right to claim. Such an opportunity offered to the citizen would be enviable even in our modern democratic systems.
Contextually to these considerations, I would like to call attention also to the fact that not every component of an imperial system is *ipso facto* a part of negative imperialism. Imperialism is a degeneration, perhaps unavoidable, of the Empire, as nationalism, in its negative meaning, is a degeneration of nation. However it may be, if history is really a teacher of life, every reflection on history should have as a primary task to distinguish carefully, in the indefinitely various forms of human cohabitation, the systems as such from their degenerations, at least from a theoretical viewpoint, in the framework of a rigorously scholarly approach.

ambitions, but rather as a real and concrete factor defining a community's identity and serving as its *Weltanschauung*, as I have tried to show in several prior studies (see above notes 9 and 10).

One of the most awful aspects of the privation of equal rights, in Islamic societies, for non-Muslim subjects were the periodic persecutions which often ended in martyrdom and mass executions. Similar discriminations existed however almost everywhere in earlier centuries, even if in different measures and according to different modalities. Apart from this extreme cases which prevailed rather more in times of turbulence, war and invasions, it is evident enough that those forms of statehood and governance were basically of a theocratic and absolutist, consequently of a dictatorial nature, even if moderated by a strong sense of law as it was the case in the Roman Empire. Such features were indeed common traits, even though, as already said, in different forms and degrees, of almost all the various regimes of the pre-modern era in human history. We must not fail, however, to evaluate all those restrictions either according to contemporary European standards, which would be a grave anachronism, or on the basis of unique criteria or one-sided viewpoints. This general rule of historical hermenutics must be applied with special care with respect to the great Islamic Empires, mainly the Safavid and the Ottoman Empires, which are at issue, since their remarkable differences from the Western models of State absolutism, with which we are better acquainted, can be easy temptations to overemphasize some particularly despotic aspects. A special caution and balance in judgement are all the more necessary for the following reasons that I would like to point out here, to which others eventually could be added:

a) The prohibition, for instance, to bring arms and to become soldiers or warriors, applied to Christians and Jews, in Islamic societies, pushed the members of both these groups to develop mercantile skills which guaranteed many of them a higher standard of living even *vis-à-vis* the larger strata of Muslim population.

b) Exception to the restrictive rules were sometimes made by Shahs or Sultans, if not theoretically, certainly on practical grounds. For instance, some privileges conceded by Shāh ‘Abbās to the Armenians offered these latter better opportunities than those enjoyed by many Muslims.

c) A very special status of exception was represented by the *Khoja*s in Persia and the *Amira*s in the Ottoman State, some of whom reached top positions as counsellors and administrators of Shahs and Sultans[38].

Notwithstanding the aforementioned limits of both the general Islamic and the Ottoman systems – limits that absolutely cannot be ignored or minimized, however contextualized they might be in their epochal *Sitz im Leben* – if we make a comparison of those rules with the current Western system of the Nation-State as such, in its rigorous and coherent formulation, it is only fair to admit that this latter is capable of realizing only two kinds of identity: either the one consisting in citizenship, or the one that derives from belonging to a territorial minority, intending with this term such minority groups that are basically linked to and recognizable in a well defined territory as are, for instance, the Basques in Spain, the Magyars in Transylvania, the South-Tyrolean peoples in Italy, etc. In all other cases, which offer

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[38] On one of such periodic persecutions that brought to collapse the family of the Shehrimanians and greatly dimmed the Armenian presence and commerce of New Julfa, see the recent article of Giampiero Bellingeri, ‘Sugli sugli sceriman rimasti a giulfa: devozione agli ultimi safavidi?’, in *Venezia e gli Armeni*, cited in n. 16.
Khoja (Iranian: lord, master) was, among Armenians, a title given to upper class merchants, both in the Persian and Ottoman Empires, who soon acquired a top aristocratic status; they lived their ‘golden age’ in prestige and authority during the 17th century and in the first decades of the 18th. In Constantinople they had to face a hard struggle against the somewhat earlier aristocracy of the *Chelebi*s (Turkish *çelebi*). *Amira* (from Arabic *amîr* = superior, commander, governor) was a title that became distinctive for the top Armenian aristocracy in the Ottoman Empire after the mid-18th century, following the decline of the *chelebi*s and *khoja*s. See: Hakob Anasyan, ‘ZhÊ dari azatagrakan sharzhumnern Arewmtean Hayastanum’ [The liberation movements in West Armenia in the 17th century], in *Manr Yerker*, Published by the American Armenian International College (La Verne, CA, 1987), pp. 533-552; Manuêl K. Zulalyan, *Arewmtean Hayastanë XVI-XVIII darerum* [West Armenia in the 16th-17th centuries], Acad. of Sc. of ASSR (Yerevan, 1980); Avedis Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria*, cited in n. 23, pp. 36-39; Hakob Barsoumian, ‘The Dual Role of the Armenian Amira Class with the Ottoman Government and the Armenian *Millet* (1750- 1850)’, in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. by Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, 2 vols., Holmes & Meier Publishers (New York, 1982), vol. I; Dickran Kouymjian, ‘From Disintegration to Reintegration: Armenians at the Start of the Modern Era – XVIth-XVIIth Centuries’, *Revue du Monde Arménien Moderne et Contemporain*, I (1994), pp. 219-229; Baykar Sivazliyan, *Scambi culturali, economici, amministrativi tra gli Armeni e l'impero ottomanno nel XIX secolo, con presentazione. Analisi e traduzione delle fonti inerenti armene ed ottomane*, San Lazzaro (Venezia, 1985), pp. 23-28; Onnig Jamgocyan, *Les finances de l'Empire Ottoman et les financiers de Constantinople, 1732-1853* (Sorbonne, 1987, doctoral dissertation, yet unpublished); Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity. Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*, Columbia University Press (New York, 1989), pp. 13-72.
The decline of the *amira*s began by the mid-19th century. They left their place to a new ascending bourgeois class, the *aghas*: see Siruni, *Polis ew ir derë*, cited in n. 26, vol. III, pp. 418-419. Erukhan’s famous novel *Amirayin aghjikë* [The Amira’s daughter], a masterpiece of its kind, offers a vivid picture of this decline.

[39] Again *mutatis mutandis*, the situation was likely also in the former Soviet Union. One of the great losses for the system of international law, due to the end of the Soviet Union, is, I believe, the disappearance of a ‘modern’ political system with deeply Western roots which distinguishes in a very clear way between citizenship and ethnic identity and recognizes this distinction as a constitutive element of its own. Moreover, ethnic identity was conceived according to personal rather than to territorial parameters. Despotism and dictatorship that prevailed for decades in the Soviet Union must not darken the positive aspects of its socio-political, educational, and legal system from which there is something to learn. It is to be hoped that once we have absorbed the euphoric exhilaration caused by its fall in its own citizens and in the ‘free world’, we shall be able to dig out from its ruins at least some of its positive teachings.

a remarkable multitude of typologies, based on differences of ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, and similar peculiarities, the identity of minorities is recognized, in public life and institutions, at a lesser or greater degree, according to circumstances, than in the *millet* system. In the latter system, being an Armenian or a Greek or a Jew, within the Ottoman State, was not a kind of 'added value', expressible at best in forms of an association; such identities were realized in and expressed through typical, and exclusively functioning institutions which were linked to the very existence of the community itself, independently from any contingent personal or group initiative. The same was true, *mutatis mutandis*, in Persia[39]. If we would like to express this in legal terminology, we must say that there was in those systems, notwithstanding all the limits and defects we have already pointed out, a recognition of 'non-territorial' ethnic groups, whereas such a recognition, as a principle, is lacking in the modern Western law system. At a conference organized in Venice in 1985 by the Lellio Basso International Foundation on the 'Armenian Question', this lack was reported in strong terms by François Rigaux, one of the foremost specialists in international law.

Only the socio-political and anthropologico-philosophical reflection of the last decades, and especially the developments of the theory of ethnicity, could offer some theoretical bases to recognize a non-territorial ethnic group. This concept, however, has not yet found its due place in international law. It is certainly not by chance that the Nation-State system was born in France, a country that had already achieved, even long before its Revolution, that system which was an almost absolute cultural and linguistic homogeneity of its components. Let us mention the significant title of an article in *Le Monde* in the late Seventies when the debate on ethnicity was first taking shape in Europe: "*Cette culture bretonne que nous avons tuée*"[40].

Both the general Islamic *dhimma* and the peculiar Ottoman *millet* systems can cast light on another very important reality of a topic interest for our time: fundamentalism was alien to the traditional, classic Islam. This is clear in so far as *dhimmī*s and *millet*s had their own law and procedures which did not coincide with the Islamic rule or *sharī'a*. This does not at all mean that there was no fanaticism in traditional Islam, as there certainly was, even if in different measures and according to different modalities, elsewhere. The fact is that fundamentalism is not simply fanaticism. Neither is fundamentalism synonymous of 'integralism' which also is an attitude of a literal and most rigorous interpretation of religious law, but remaining in the inner sphere of a given religion and of its community of faithful without conditioning other religious groups; nor is fundamentalism synonymous with classical Medieval theocracy which occurred, as we have said, both in the Muslim and Christian worlds and is rather a peculiar theological view of society, state, power, sovereignty, law and related concepts. Fundamentalism, on the contrary, is a modern and technical concept to denote those cases in which some religious law must be applied to all the members of a given political community whatever their religion may be[41]. In this technical sense, fundamentalism supposes a conception of law as a pure form which is a typically Western conception, and has known its most remarkable developments in the modern era, especially in the culture of Enlightenment and of Kantian philosophy.

Even if the origins of modern fundamentalism are related mainly to religious contexts supposing some typical philosophical background, yet fundamentalist forms of thought have had a large diffusion also in other domains of life, as for instance in education, the conception itself of the secular state, and not least in economics. Thus it is possible to speak of a 'market fundamentalism'[42].

As a religious trend, the origins of fundamentalism lay in some peculiar forms of Christian Protestantism that developed, especially in the New World, through the Nineteenth century and thereafter. Normally, except in cases of local violent persecution or institutional prescriptions imposing Islamic faith, as in the case of the *devşirme* (the forced recruiting of adolescent boys to raise them as future janissaries and officials of the Empire), neither Ottoman Sultans nor Savafid Shahs imposed, as a rule, Islamic law, the *sharī'a*, upon their non-Muslim subjects. Sometimes fanaticism lead them or their representatives, their high officials, to attempt to convert those subjects by force or simply to persecute them, as already mentioned. But it is evident that this did not happen either universally or constantly. Hence fundamentalism, injected into modern Islam by Western models, in a strange dialectics of contrasting and at the same time emulating the West, its models, its achievements, sets out on a path that, both historically and ideologically, seems not to be lined up with the basic attitude and the world vision of classic, traditional Islam.

What I am positing is not even denied by the Armenian Genocide, a catastrophic tragedy that goes, in any case, beyond the limits of the historic period taken into consideration in this present paper, since it came about in the Ottoman Empire much later than the dawn of the Safavid era. I would like, however, to point out that its conception and

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[40] On this recent debate on ethnicity see literature in n. 9.

[41] On fundamentalism, as a category and structure of religious thought and action, see: Jürgen Moltmann, 'Die Politik der Nachfolge Christi gegen christliche Millenniumspolitik', in *Mystik und Politik. Theologie im Ringen um Geschichte und Gesellschaft, Johann Baptist Metz zu Ehren*, ed. by Edward Schillebeeckx, Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag (Mainz 1988), pp. 19-31; Hansjörg Hemminger (ed..), *Fundamentalismus in der verweltlichen Kultur*, Quell (Stuttgart 1991). *Oecuménisme. Le fondamentalisme, défi œcuménique*, ed. by Hans Küng & Jürgen Moltmann: *Concilium*, Revue Internationale de Théologie, N° 241, 1992.

[42] Kensei HIWAKI, "The enrichment of culture", in *Journal of BWW* [Bibliothèque World Wide] Society, *The Journal of Global Issues and Solutions*, <www.bwwsociety.org>, vol. I, N° 6, Nov.-Dec. 2001.

execution were due mainly to the Panturkic/Panturanic nationalistic ideology of the Westernizing movement of the *Union and Progress* party whose ideology was inspired and clumsily copied from Western, and especially French models. The Sultan Abd-ül-Hamid, known as the 'red sultan', during his long reign of more than thirty years, although he ordered or tolerated the execution of several local massacres of non-Muslim populations, he did not think about exterminating the whole *millet*, at least certainly he did not try to achieve it. It is very difficult, indeed, to imagine that the traditional theocratic Islamic ideology could conceive such a universal target, unless in its more primitive form, common to all radically aggressive, devastating action, of 'not leaving stone upon stone'. But this latter form of action was typical of intense contexts of war or invasion; moreover, it happened, and normally on regional dimensions, in concurrence with the advancement of huge waves of migrating populations or invading and destroying armies. Such was not the historical context at all in Anatolian Turkey towards the end of the 19th century. Nevertheless, the Westernizing pioneers of the *Union and Progress* were able to project and execute a mass murder, the murder of a *millet*, in an exemplary way[43] in a relatively much shorter time than Abd-ül-Hamid needed for his local massacres. We also know that the Sheikh-ül-Islam of the time opposed, himself, the decision of 'deportation' of all the Armenians on the basis of eventual, conjectural imputations, judging such generalized measures against innocent people contrary to the Islamic faith and law which allowed punishment only to those whose guilt was proved, but not to the whole innocent people[44].

Some conclusions

We can summarize in the following points what has been said above, drawing some conclusions which are, I think, of topical interest both on a general theoretical ground as well as from a practical viewpoint of their application, with a special regard also for some urgent contemporary problems:

1. The Armenian adhesion to the Christian faith is certainly one of the firmest witnesses to Christianity given by a nation or by any ethnic group that we have ever seen in history. This steadfastness went as far as to not accept in the company of the community those Armenians who have denied their Christian faith. This steadfastness, in any case, did not represent a radical incompatibility with a peaceful coexistence with other religions, and with Islam in particular, within an Islamic society, even under Islamic dominion; on the contrary, Armenians were distinguished for their sense of loyalty contributing broadly to the enrichment and progress of the societies, both Christian and non-Christian, in which they used to live. As far as the catastrophic tragedy of the Armenian Genocide is at issue, its conception and execution were due mainly to the Panturanian nationalistic ideology of the modernizing and Westernizing movement of the *Union and Progress* party whose ideology was inspired and clumsily copied from Western models.
2. Religious fundamentalism, which is to be accurately distinguished from simple fanaticism, intolerance, and even from religious 'integralism', and which forms one of the major and most awful concerns of our days, does not derive from the inner nature of Islam as such. It certainly did not exist, in its current theoretical, universalistic forms of our days, either in the Safavid or in the Ottoman Empires, which were, without any doubt, theocratic Islamic entities based on *sharī'a*. As a rule, however, except in cases of local violent persecution or institutional prescriptions imposing Islamic faith, as in the case of the *devşirme* (the forced recruiting of adolescent boys to raise them as future janissaries and officials of the Empire), neither Shahs nor Sultans thought to impose, as a rule, Islamic law upon their non-Muslim subjects.
3. The Islamic *dhimma* and, later, the Ottoman *millet* systems, although limited in their conception of human rights, so that non-Muslim subjects were somehow considered as 'subjects' of a secondary degree, counterbalance, however, this limitation by their explicit recognition of a distinct group identity, which is only religious in the former case, and is of a mixed ethno-cultural-religious nature in the second case. In the ancient classical West the Roman Empire offered a similar prototype in which, however, all those who had got Roman citizenship enjoyed equal rights regardless of their ethnic origin which was, all the same, recognized, even independently from an immediate territorial bond. This we can state at least when Jewish communities were concerned.

As a final conclusion of this inquiry on the Armenian Christian self-consciousness between the Ottoman and the Safavid Islamic worlds, I would like to close by suggesting that further explicit reflection is required so that a synthesis between the best of the classical imperial, 'cosmopolitan', communitarian systems and the modern conception of human rights and full citizenship, regardless of any eventual factor of discrimination – as taught and practiced in the Nations-States of the Western model – may be achieved. Such a synthesis seems not only theoretically possible, but

[43] *Un génocide exemplaire* is the title of a book by Jean-Marie Carzou, Flammarion (Paris, 1975); Verviers: Marabout (Paris 1977); Calmann-Lévy (Paris, 2006).

[44] See Johannes Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes*, cited in n. 31, p. 234. Cf. Aram Sisakian [B.L. Zekiyan], '«Questione armena»? Per puntualizzare la situazione attuale: schizzo di una sintesi storica', *Oriente moderno*, LI (1981), p. 29.

also actually feasible[45]. It can offer a highly appropriate path to break out of the blind alley in which we seem entrapped today with respect to inter-cultural and inter-religious relations following the big bang, at global extensions, of migratory movements and inter-ethnic conflicts.

Both the Armenian and the Islamic historical experiences, and especially the Armenian concept of 'national' identity and the Ottoman 'millet' system go far beyond the boundaries of single nations or communities, and present universally valuable aspects of their own to be integrated in and brought into a new synthesis with Western views and experiences, to establish a wider frame for today's cohabitation of different, and often conflicting cultures, ethnicities, religions, and confessions. A necessary, and indeed not easy, cohabitation which may lead to excellent results and mutual enrichment, if duly orientated and integrated; otherwise it will create new problems, worst complications, and even total disasters.

History we dealt with is the bearer of teachings, patterns, and paradigms of a universal value going far beyond the religious-communitarian boundaries both of Islam and of Christendom.

[45] On the basis and in the framework of a theory of ethnic identity as I tried to develop it since early eighties as to its constitutive elements and inner dynamics and to its relationship to citizenship, as well as to its acknowledgement by the State through law, I also tried to formulate an initial distinction between the concept of the classical Nation-State and the one of simply a 'national state'. It is true: the terms 'Nation-State' and 'national State' are normally used as synonyms, while a distinction between them is possible and would be suitable both at a conceptual and practical level. Terminological assonance or semantic affinity must not prevent us from defining and elaborating those necessary distinctions which can only aid in avoiding cultural and political monolithism. Apart from historical experiences and patterns we have been widely dealing with, also Western reflection of the last four decades and especially the developments of the theory of ethnicity, whose first elaborations came from the USA, offer some theoretical bases, even if yet at an initial level, for an adequate distinction between the two concepts. While the first cannot recognize any other identity but the one identified with the nation that forms the state, the second, on the contrary, may remain open to accept the existence of different ethnic identities within the framework of the State's national identity, whose culture functions then as a vehicular link between the various ethnicities living together, and not as an instrument to impose an absolute linguistic and cultural homogeneity, reducing and finally cancelling all diversities deriving from the ethnical factor. Besides the writings cited in footnote 9, which elaborate a rather theoretical framework of thought, a more pragmatic approach to the question I have tried to deal with, can be found in the following papers: "An attempt for a restatement of interethnic questions", *The Journal of the BBW* [Bibliothèque World Wide] *Society, The Journal of Global Issues and Solutions*, vol. II, N° 5, Sept.-Oct. 2002: www.bwwsociety.org; "Models of cross-cultural communication between loss of identity and 'differentiated integration'. Remarks for a multidimensional identity'", *ibid.*, vol. IV, N° 5, Sept.-Oct. 2004; "The case of a special Meeting between Islam and a Christian nation. A survey from Islamic *dhimma* through the Ottoman *millet* with a special regard to the Armenian experience of living together with Islam", *ibid.*, vol. VII, N° 4, July-August 2007; "«Polis» vs. community: an irreducible antagonism?", a paper presented to the XXIst World Congress of Philosophy, of which an abstract has been published in *XXIst World Congress of Philosophy*. *Abstracts*, August 10-17, 2003, Istanbul, pp. 438-439; "Potere e minoranze, il sistema dei millet", *Oasis – Nakhlistan – Alwaha*, anno III, N° 5, 2007, pp. 45-48.