



Moush, sweet Moush: Mapping Memories from Armenia and Turkey

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Content

Forward	4	Ozge Sebzeci and Ruzanna Baghdasaryan	
Acknowledgments	5	Scattered Pieces	69
Introduction	6	Armenuhi Nikoghosyan and Betul Kaya	
Moush: Basic Information	11	Unreal but Alive: Real but Dying	77
ORAL HISTORY	12	Armenuhi Nikoghosyan	
Introduction	13	Fear	81
Hilal Unal and Shahane Halajyan		Atak Ayaz and Sofia Manukyan	
Imagining, Remembering:		Objects and Structures as Transporters of History	
Moush and the Armenians	15	and Memory: Interviewing Ourselves	87
Ani Poghosyan and Sercan Cinar		Ruzanna Baghdasaryan	
Those who “left” and those who “stayed”	23	Gateways in the Crumbling Wall of Silence	95
Eylem Nazli Tasdemir and Rinet Isajyan		PERFORMANCE	99
Treasure Hunt	34	Introduction	100
Rinet Isajyan		Ariadna Grigoryan, Mariam Grigoryan and Anna Poghosyan	
Denying One’s Self: Stories of Women	42	Moush Camp: Final Performance Script	106
Hazal Atay and Tatev Hayrapetyan		Ariadna Grigoryan, Gohar Hovsepyan, Mariam Grigoryan, Merve Kan, Sayat Tekir and Selin Cakar	
From a Bowl and Vineyards to Mount Ararat:		Gyumri Camp: Final Performance Script	119
Symbols of the Past and the Future	48	GLOSSARY	125
PHOTOGRAPHY	59		
Introduction	60		
Betul Kaya			
Un-bordering the past; Bringing the present back into focus: Mapmaking and Storytelling in the Era of Nation-State Borders	62		

Foreword

In 2007, when we first discussed the idea of a Turkish-Armenian reconciliation project, there was great hope that the relationship between the two countries would improve in the short term. Based on this sentiment, and reflecting on our engagement in processing history in other countries, the project Speaking to One Another (STOA) emerged. The present book has been published as the final stage of that project.

Our initiative gained momentum quickly and, during various stages, it included the welcomed participation of academicians, artists and civil society representatives. In particular, the initiative addressed young generations from both countries, and centered on the key role they play (and will play) in shaping relations between the neighboring countries in the future.

The project focused on addressing memories of ordinary individuals which is widely considered to be a valuable contribution to the process of reconciliation and to creating a more democratic society. The STOA project has helped expand the dialogue and generate mutual understanding between youth and older generations in Armenia and Turkey. More generally, the project has shown that true reconciliation is not possible without acknowledging history and without dialogue.

It is hoped that the project will contribute to creating an atmosphere in which Turkey is more able to deal openly and honestly with its own history, and one in which Armenians are able to appreciate corresponding initiatives from Turkish civil society which are often carried out under difficult circumstances.

The regional political situation has deteriorated during the implementation of the project. Many hopes were attached to initiatives such as Football Diplomacy and the Swiss Protocols and we are therefore regretful to find that the rapprochement process is all but ended at the moment. In light of these

developments, we feel it is all the more important to keep the dialogue alive between people, between civil societies in both countries and, where possible, to strengthen it. This shared conviction is the foundation upon which partners from Armenia, Turkey and Germany have pushed this project further along and even expanded it in sharp contrast to recent actions of relevant political actors.

Of course, the worsening political conditions have also impacted those of us active in the project. We realized how difficult it is to get into a dialogue, how often we stutter and hesitate when the external pressure is rising and threatens to overturn the mood of the public. Speaking To One Another was never an easy project, and it was not conceived as such — indeed, many of us specifically demanded that it shouldn't be. Despite or perhaps because of the challenges we have faced, the project has positively impacted the lives of nearly everyone involved in it. Therefore, we think it was a very worthwhile endeavor which will be important to continue with in the future.

We are pleased that this book we are able to present is yet another fruitful product from this difficult undertaking. The book is a collection of students' essays from the two countries based on their research and personal experiences in Moush, Turkey and in the villages populated by Armenians of Moush origin in Armenia. The publication ties the story of the two places — Moush, a city the Armenians were expelled from, and villages, where some of them found refuge from the genocide — to bind together the old and new, in order to stimulate a dialogue about what is common to both and what divides them.

We are very grateful to all who participated in this project and who in one way or another contributed to the creation of this book.

*Nazaret Nazaretyan
Matthias Klingenberg
Ulrike Pusch*

Acknowledgements

The authors of this book would like to thank everyone who contributed to its development. Our utmost gratitude goes to the German Foreign Office for their generous financial and programmatic support throughout the project period. We would like to particularly thank the following individuals at the Ministry for their involvement and consistent support: Dr. Christine Althaus, Hans-Jochen Schmidt, Petra Dachtler, Semjon Pauker and Karsten-Erich Hammer (deceased).

Our colleagues at *dvv international* were likewise tremendously supportive. We are especially grateful to Ulrike Pusch, who monitored the project from beginning to end, checking in on our whereabouts and reminding us about deadlines. Matthias Klingenberg and Nazaret Nazaretyan who first conceived of the project in 2009 have followed it closely throughout the ups and downs of its implementation. The project and the book have come to fruition largely thanks to their enormous energy and faith in our work. We would also like to thank Erdem Vardar for his involvement and successful mediation efforts.

We are deeply indebted to the following experts whose contributions were highly valued and very much appreciated. Our gratitude goes to Prof. Leyla Neyzi from Sabanci University in Istanbul for her oral history trainings (in Moush and Gyumri), and to Dr. Anush Hovhannisyan from the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia for her local history lectures (in Moush and Gyumri), and for her advice on various drafts of this book. Dr. Alper Kırklar from Istanbul Bilgi University delivered valuable training course in photography, supported photography students in their practice and provided constructive feedback on their essays. Shoghakat Galstyan and Tsolak Galstyan provided expertise to the performance group and worked closely on the performance trainings, fieldwork, script writing and staging.

We would also like to thank our partner organizations in Turkey and Armenia for putting so much of their time and efforts into making this project so successful. Special thanks to Ragıp Zik,

Tamar Nalci, Meltem Aslan and Osman Kavala at Anadolu Kultur, and to Dr. Harutyun Marutyan, Dr. Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan and Victoria Asatryan at Hazarashen. Not only did the partners manage to successfully implement this complicated project, but they offered reliable support for book-and content-related input.

Many local partners, organizations, guides, journalists and members of local government in Armenia and Turkey played a part to help make this project as successful as possible. We have tried to name as many as possible here. In Turkey, Salih Yüce and Fatih Argun from the Youth Accumulation Association and Ridvan Aktas from Young Steps Association helped with various local arrangements; Sahin Sahin, a local journalist, accompanied us and helped us locate village contacts; Hayrettin Tas, our local guide, was our gatekeeper in Moush and helped us find our way to people who might not otherwise talk to us; Deniz Sinan Bulakçibasi and the Damla Center for Arts and Culture provided a rehearsal and working space to our performance group; Veysel Semercioğlu, Ahmet Akın, Bilal Bulakçıbaşı, Murat Sümer and Dilan Aykut (members of Damla) who became a part of the performance group in the process and performed on stage with us.

In Armenia, village mayors and other groups helped us explain our work to locals and thereby gain the trust of villagers. James Muradyan in Voskehask, Gurgen Zaçaryan in Suser, Gor Grigoryan in Tsamakasar, Ashot Hovhannisyan in Katnaghbyur, Paruyr Sargsyan in Zartonk, Albert Khachatryan in Taronik villages, as well as Moushegh Gevorgyan, School Principle in Dashtadem village were all particularly helpful in this regard. In addition, we would like to thank Hayk Hovhannisyan, head of the House of Culture in Oshakan, where we staged our final performance.

Our English language editor was Ruby Chorbajian.

Finally, no words can fully express our gratitude to those individuals who shared their memories and personal experiences with us in the course of this important project. They have added breath, blood and flesh to our words, helping to bring this book to life.

Introduction

The Project

This book is the latest product of a project that started in August 2009 under the ambitious heading: “Speaking to One Another: Adult Education and Oral History Contributing to Armenian-Turkish Reconciliation.” The project was a joint initiative of *dvv international* (the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association) and its partners “Hazarashen” Armenian Centre for Ethnological Studies (Armenia), Armenian Actors Union (Armenia) and Anadolu Kultur (Turkey). The project was funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and aimed at building bridges between the people of Armenia and Turkey through adult education, intercultural exchange and oral history research.

Overall, the project had three phases (2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2013) which built upon the achievements of each previous phase. In this time, the project organized several youth camps for students enabling them to conduct oral history interviews, design and implement small scale projects, and express themselves through writing, photography and performance. The project has already resulted in the book “Speaking to one Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey,” by Leyla Neyzi (Turkey) and Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan (Armenia), based on the oral history interviews conducted in both countries with participation of students trained under the project. The oral history research has also resulted in a traveling exhibition that has already visited several cities in Armenia and Turkey.

The third and final phase of the project had two distinct components: a Local History Workshop for students; and a Traveling Exhibition to Tbilisi, Batumi, Nicosia, Berlin and Paris. This book is the outcome of the Local History Workshop component of the project.

Local History

Local history is the study of history in a particular geographic context. Local history workshops were community-based volunteer organizations established in post-World War II Germany. These organizations, which still exist today, aimed to create an alternative history of a place through oral history interviews, local narratives linked to a specific person, event, place or building, supplemented by archival research. We have taken this German approach to the complicated Armenian-Turkish context in which there is almost no joint historical research either by professionals or the public. However, since the context of the Armenian-Turkish past is connected by a subject that is now over one century old, we were able to use these local history tools and methods (such as oral history interviews, family archives and photography) to deconstruct and reconstruct the past and address how it had been constructed differently.

For that purpose the project team chose a specific area in Turkey which was a part of the Armenians’ homeland where they lived for centuries until their official deportation in 1915 ending in their mass killing. This was the city of Moush with its surrounding villages located in South-East of modern Turkey. We organized our first student camp in Moush. The purpose of the camp was to train 20 selected students from both countries in three different workshops - oral history/local history, photography, and performance. After the training the students would go out into the city and villages and interview people, take photos and find out interesting stories for the performance. They would hence create an alternative history of the place through people’s personal narratives and photos. The next stop of the project was in Armenia, where the students did similar work in the villages populated by people originally from Moush whose ancestors have somehow managed to survive the atrocities in the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, the local history of Moush would be reconstructed through personal narratives from both sides of the border.

The Camps

In the summer of 2011, ten university students were selected in Armenia and ten in Turkey to participate in two Local History Workshops. The students were then sorted into three different groups: Oral History, Photography and Performance. Each group had an equal number of participants from Turkey and Armenia and was led by an Armenian-Turkish pair of tutors, whose role was to guide the students throughout the process and to coordinate the fieldwork, the processing of material and the development of the final products. Prior to the workshops, tutors participated in a study trip to Berlin to train in mediation and acquaint themselves with German experience in local history. While the project was structured so that the main workload was on tutors, each group of the workshop had its respective expert. The role of experts was to train the students in their respective areas (oral history/local history, photography and performance) and as necessary to provide expert guidance during the workshop, during the processing of material and the development of the book.

The first student workshop took place in October 2011, in Moush. It lasted two weeks. For a city as small as Moush, our group was quite large and visible. We were around forty people, including students, tutors, experts and organizers from Armenia, Turkey, and Germany. We also had a documentary crew following us everywhere, since a documentary about the camps was yet another project within the project.¹ The camp was designed so that a student from Turkey would share a room with a student from Armenia. This would allow further communication and encourage them to get to know each other better. After initial introductions each group had a theoretical training by experts on the work it was supposed to do in the field. Oral History students were trained in oral history methods and local history of Moush, Photography students had photography training, while the students in Performance had an introduction into performance as it was used in the

¹ A documentary "Beginnings" has been produced about the project and has been already screened in several festivals (director: Somnur Vardar, producer: Zeynep Guzel, director of photography: Gor Baghdasaryan).

project. The fieldwork started right after the training. Led by their tutors, the Oral History students visited people in Moush City and the surrounding villages to interview them and record their family narratives. Photography students documented Moush with their cameras, while the performers tried to collect interesting local histories for their final performance (there was a performance planned at the end of each camp). There were long reflection sessions at the end of each field day where students discussed their encounters and feelings.

Those who deal with history know that it is not only what happened in the past. History is also what we live and what we believe the past was. In Moush our group became an involved observer of its local history. There were clashes between the PKK and Regular Army in the region. At the end of the first week of our stay in Moush, on October 23, 2011 a devastating earthquake with a magnitude of 7.1 struck eastern Turkey with the epicenter near Van. Our group felt both the earthquake and its aftershocks while Moush Airport immediately became a central hub for bringing aid. At times, it was hard for the students to concentrate on something that had happened a century ago, while history was happening right next to us. Interestingly, even for some participants from Turkey the region was like a foreign country. For most of us both from Turkey and Armenia this was the first visit. Fed by the media, our history books and government narratives, as well as family stories and literature (especially true for Armenians), we had our perceptions of the place and expectations from it that did not necessarily match either reality or our own experience. For Armenians, Moush was that dreamland, that heaven on earth, the land of their most important heroes and artists. The picture of the place they had in their minds was stuck somewhere at the beginning of the 20th century. It included old and most famous churches and monasteries, beautiful landscapes so similar to the ones in the Republic of Armenia, maybe the river but no people on it. In a way it was a still life or a beautiful landscape drawing. For some participants from Turkey, mostly from Istanbul,

this was the region where the trouble was, a region where clashes happened. So, the escalated external and internal environment, the actual encounter with the reality and history, made some participants drop out of the project. As a result, by the end of first week, three Turkish students left the camp.

With history happening as the project evolved, the remaining students had to go out in the field, having all these pictures in their mind, with a little theoretical and no practical training, almost no prior fieldwork experience and with a very little knowledge of the context. They were entering yet another history, the past as imagined by Moush's current residents. In this version, the history started where it ended for Armenians; somewhere in the beginning of the 20th century. There was a huge memory gap about the place and the historical significance for its Armenian population. Well, there were some stories about "happy old times" when Armenians, Kurds and Turks lived together, but those stories were usually too general somehow mythical and there wasn't a widespread popular knowledge about local monuments and remnants of the Armenian culture. There was yet another issue related to the interviewing itself. The respondents mostly spoke Turkish, and some only Kurdish. The students were paired so that a Turkish participant would lead the interview and translate. So it was really hard to follow. Sometimes the process got even more complicated – an Armenian would ask a question in English, a Turkish student would translate the question into Turkish, a local partner would then translate it into Kurdish and then the same in reverse for the answer. The conversation would not always flow smoothly as in an oral history interview. As a result, it was hard to find interesting narratives or story lines in our Moush interviews and as you will see in the book some stories are repeated in different essays. However, despite all these difficulties, the first camp was an emotionally and intellectually challenging and rewarding experience for the participants and we have succeeded in producing texts, performance pieces, good photos and more importantly our own shared history out of it.

The second camp took place in April 2012 in Armenia. All participants from Moush and some new replacements were stationed in Gyumri, Armenia, while actual fieldwork happened in three different provinces (Aragatsotn, Armavir and Shirak), since the villages where the rare survivors from Moush found refuge in the beginning of the 20th century were scattered throughout the country.

At the beginning of the camp we had another training session for all the groups. The fieldwork followed, with daily trips to the selected villages in Armenia. While there were some common fieldwork issues both in Moush and Armenia, such as for example translation during the interviews, there were also significant differences. In Moush we actually lived in the field, while in Armenia we lived somewhere else. This referred not only to our physical location, i.e. living in Gyumri and having your field in different villages and living in Moush and having your field in Moush, but also to the very content of that field. In Moush our field was not so much the people as the place, its geography, nature and monuments. In Armenia our field was the people and their stories. In Moush most people either did not know or avoided talking about the atrocities that happened there, while in Armenia, everyone was ready to tell his family story. While the culmination of internal boiling in Moush camp was the earthquake in Van, in Armenia it was the Genocide Memorial visit on Genocide Commemoration day on April 24. The workshop in Armenia closed with a final performance and photo exhibition in Oshakan village near Yerevan. This was a symbolically chosen location, since the founder of the Armenian Alphabet Mesrop Mashtots, who was born in Moush Plain, was buried in Oshakan. The final performance included the stories from both Turkey and Armenia, as did the photos included in the exhibition. Thus, past and the present, people and their stories from both sides of the border met in Oshakan to tell their un-bordered history.

Book Concept, Processing and Writing

The concept for this book was developed by the following people (Book Team) in September 2011 in Berlin:

Lusine Kharatyan (Book Coordinator and Editor)

Avetis Keshishyan (Oral History Tutor, Armenia)

Ismail Keskin (Oral History Tutor, Turkey)

Nane Khachatryan (Photography Tutor, Armenia)

S. Aykut Ozturk (Photography Tutor, Turkey)

Nihal Albayrak (Performance Tutor, Turkey)

Karen Hakobyan (Performance Tutor, Armenia)

The concept was shared with the experts, organizers and students to include these groups at an early stage. The same team has also developed the processing, writing and reviewing rules and procedures described below, and worked closely with the students guiding them throughout the fieldwork and drafting, conceptualization and the creation of the map and the book. Almost all photos, drawings and texts in this book are authored by the students and the Book Team.

After each camp the students transcribed the interviews and processed the photos. Then, the interviews were translated into English from their native languages. The audio recordings, original transcripts, translations, photos and all the other products were stored in an electronic filing system accessible to all project participants.

In Gyumri camp the Oral History and Photography students were divided into pairs of two, so a pair of an Armenian and a Turkish student could work on a topic of their choice. This was designed so the students could get some ground agreements on sensitive terms and topics among themselves from the very beginning. First, a student pair or in some cases an individual student would come up with an idea for an essay. After discussing the idea and making an outline with the help of their tutors, the students would write a first draft. As to the performance, there was no pairing, since the material for the performance part comes from individual student diaries and two performance scripts developed jointly by the entire groups both in Moush and in Armenia.

There were several review rounds of the content developed by students. When a given draft was ready, respective tutors and the book editor would review and comment on that piece. Sometimes there would be several revision rounds. The next stage was the broader review of the drafts that involved not only tutors and the editor, but also the experts and organizers. After that round the pieces were finalized and sent to a native English language editor. Only after editing in English were the texts translated into Armenian and Turkish by the tutors.

Moush as a Discourse

Even though we have included a brief factsheet on the history of Moush focusing on the area's cultural significance for Armenians and some statistics from the beginning of the 20th century, we do not intent to present the local history of Moush as a set of facts, a definite truth about the place or events that happened in that place. In a sense Moush is a discourse in this book. We are not simply presenting its history. We are presenting the place as it is remembered, imagined and narrated in Turkey and in Armenia. We do not want to define, describe or locate Moush politically, administratively or historically. We do map Moush, but not as politicians or official historiographers do. We map it through people's narratives and our group experience. While current political maps with their defined borders interfere with this discourse, we believe that they do not dominate mental maps of people.

The Texts and the Language

During the preparation of this book, one of the major difficulties was to establish a common terminology for a book that was to be printed in three different languages. It was not because we, the presenters and editors of this book, did not understand and recognize each other's intellectual desires, but rather a trilingual book simply meant addressing to at least three different nation-state settings and presumably three different audiences. Similar multilingual publications in the past seemed to solve this problem by using different

terminologies for different audiences. However, this option did not appeal to us, as we believed that using different terminologies for different audiences would necessarily bring different approaches to the same issue. In other words there was the risk of coming up with three different editions of the same book. For this reason, from the first moment we started working on this project, we were determined to use the same terminology in the English, Turkish and Armenian versions of the book. This is why, in this book you are holding right now, there are no concepts that only appear in one language but not in the other.

However, we were not sure whether it was possible to make everybody happy at the same time. How far could we proceed without actually using some of the words and replacing them with others in different sections of the book? While some of us favored using the term genocide, others were not content with using that word arguing that it was produced within a particular legal framework in the aftermath of WWII. From that perspective, it was a selective word and did not fully correspond with what happened in 1915, as the word has been used to silence some particular histories. Similarly, others were critical of using the word genocide as it has been used as a political and hegemonic tool in international relations. The intellectual concern behind such criticism is that history should not be used as a social technology for power (even domination and discipline), as again the term is not granted very easily to many other contexts except when particular political interests of various actors intersect. At the same time, some of us were not satisfied with using the word massacre, as it shadowed the extent of what happened in 1915. Some of us proposed more powerful words such as extermination, and some others proposed less over-interpreted words such as catastrophe. It was interesting to observe that although most of us recognized 1915 as the climax of gradual extermination of Armenian existence in Anatolia, there was still no consensus on how to name it. This is why it was obvious that even for the editors of this book,

the terminology was so diverse. As this book emerged as a patchwork of oral history interviews, photographs and our own daily experiences in Moush and Armenia, we decided to use the terminology and the approach of the locals we encountered. For this reason, the terminology used in this book does not necessarily reflect the views of the authors and editors of the book. The book is intended to demonstrate how people in Moush and Armenia think of their local histories. As a result the terms present in the book reflect the perceptions and views of the local people in Moush and Armenia

Book Structure

The processes, approaches, concepts and discourses presented above and behind the scenes ended in the book that you are now holding. In addition to this introduction and one-page “conventional” information on Moush, the book has three chapters and a glossary. Thus, each of the workshops we had (Oral History, Photography and Performance) have a space of their own where they tell about Moush as they see it. In addition, there is a pocket at the end of the book that includes a map. The Map is our alternative map of Moush, which we believe is the heart of the book. Each story in the book has a dot on that map. The map is the Moush as we see it.

Moush: Basic Information

Moush is a city located in South-East of Modern Turkey. While the city is currently in Turkey, it has enormous historical and cultural significance for Armenians. It was a major part of Historical Armenia, which has been consequently ruled by different empires since 5th century with a short period of Armenian rule of Bagratids in 9th - 11th centuries AD. The city of Moush and the surrounding region is known as the Moush Plain. It is also sometimes referred to as Taron in Armenian literature. The Plain and its population have played an important role throughout the history of Armenia, and the Armenian people. Not only did several important battles take place on this land, but for centuries it was a cradle of Armenian religion and culture. The main center of pagan Armenians, Ashtishat, and the residence of the Religious Leader of Pagan Armenians, was located on the banks of the Eastern Euphrates (Aratsani in Armenian) in Moush Plain. Here in Taron the Armenian king Tiridates II and his wife, family, the army and ordinary people were baptized after accepting Christianity as official religion in 301 AD. On this same land in Moush-Taron all pagan sanctuaries were destroyed after the acceptance of Christianity and the first Christian churches were built. Thousands of manuscripts and miniatures have been created here. Leading figures of Armenian historiography, culture, linguistics, philosophy and politics were born here. Their work had a tremendous impact on the formation of the Armenian identity. The most famous are the founder of the Armenian Alphabet Mesrop Mashtots (fourth to fifth century AD), the “father” of Armenian historiography Movses Khorenatsy (fifth century AD), the most renowned medieval Armenian philosopher David Anhaght (fifth to sixth centuries AD), and the Mamikonyan noble family who traditionally headed the Armenian Army. Interestingly, the Armenian epic tale David of Sassoun has its origin in the same area.

At the beginning of the 20th century the region was part

of the Ottoman Empire and was administratively in Bitlis Vilayet (Province). According to 1914 Ottoman census there were 309,999 Muslims and 117,497 Armenians living in Bitlis Vilayet¹ while the Armenian patriarchate gives the number for Armenians living in the province as 218,404.² Moush was one of the most Armenian-populated regions of Bitlis Vilayet where 60-65% of population was Armenian. Different sources indicate that back then around 86-100,000 Armenians lived in Moush of which 12,450 in Moush City.³ The city was divided into two parts, Armenian and Muslim. It had 12 districts, a city bath made of stone and two hotels. The center of the city was the marketplace with around 800 shops and workshops of various sizes. Five hundred of those belonged to Armenians. There were also two mosques and seven churches. There were seven Armenian schools and two Armenian orphanages in the city. In addition to these schools, there were also Armenian schools in the Saint Karapet, Saint Arakelots and Saint Aghberik Monasteries of Moush Plain.

Currently, there is no Armenian settlement on the Plain and no Armenians in the region. From 109 villages of Moush only 1,500 Armenians have survived the massacres and found refuge in Eastern Armenia (then Russian Empire, currently Republic of Armenia) after 1915.⁴ There are only a few individuals and families in Moush, descendants of people, who survived converting to Islam. The churches and secular buildings lay in ruins at the time of our visit.

1 Shaw, Stanford J. and Shaw E. K., History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume II, Cambridge University Press 1977.

2 Raymond H. Kévorkian - Paul B. Paboudjian, Ermeniler 1915 Öncesinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda, İstanbul, Aras 2012.

3 Encyclopedia “The Armenian Issue,” Yerevan 1991 (in Russian).

4 Ibid

A close-up photograph of a weathered, reddish-brown metal door. On the left side, a greenish-grey padlock is attached to a brass-colored metal ring. The door surface is heavily textured with rust and numerous small holes. To the right of the padlock, there is a large, circular, scalloped-edged metal ring. The text "ORAL HISTORY" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image, partially overlapping the scalloped ring.

ORAL HISTORY

Introduction

Photographers run after colors, performers run after action... Our part in this journey was running after stories. A reconciliation project through the bitter, sweet or bittersweet memories regarding a place was a good yet challenging idea. Because stories – not unlike friendships – blossom over a strange alchemy. A strange combination of pain and joy, intermingled within yesterday and today, past and present. Tasked with collecting narratives about the local history of Moush both in Turkey and Armenia, our crew made a tremendously challenging, yet very interesting and highly informative journey through the high seas of Turkey and Armenia. The five essays presented in this section are based on interviews and observations made by our Oral History group during the 14-day study camps in Moush (October 2011) and Gyumri (April 2012).

Coming from different academic backgrounds and having modest experience in oral history, participants were offered three days of training in interview techniques and peculiarities of the field, as well as a short introduction to the history of the region. It was imperative that the group was provided as much practical information and guidance as possible, since our skills and ability to better orient ourselves in the field would subsequently affect the quality of this publication.

Another major determining factor for the success of our project was the organization and preparation of the fieldwork. Two fact-finding missions were formed before each camp, which, among other organizational matters, attempted to scout the area for potential informants and contacts who could help us arrange meetings with locals. These processes, as well as our actual fieldwork, ran quite differently in Armenia and Turkey. Compared to Armenia, Turkey is a much bigger country and it was more complicated to organize a camp thousands of kilometers away from Istanbul (where the organizers are based) even with a preliminary visit and having partners based in Moush. Also, since the issues we

are dealing with have not been publicly discussed in these areas and have been largely silenced, it was harder to find respondents willing to share their stories. In Armenia it was just the opposite. The organization and fieldwork was easier, since all the places we visited were a maximum of two-hours driving distance from Yerevan, where the organizers were based, the partner organization was specialized in field research and most people wanted their stories to be voiced as loudly as possible. If in Turkey silence was the main issue, in Armenia the issue was the outspoken and sometimes very opinionated judgment.

During the five days of fieldwork in Moush we managed to conduct 21 interviews, most of which are used in the essays. Some of the meetings were arranged through our contacts and friends in Moush but most happened spontaneously by asking random people in town streets or villages to talk to us about the history of the place. The experience proved it was pretty difficult, and in certain instances even impossible, to gain the trust of people and engage them in an open conversation, if the interview was not prearranged through a trusted intermediary.

An excellent description and conclusion for most of the stories we heard in Moush would be the answer of one of our respondents to a friend's direct question about his ethnic origin. The man stayed silent for a while, then replied "I don't know... I don't know... but I suffer." Elements of secrecy, silence, and human tragedies, were there for each person we talked to, and although we learned and experienced a lot, we actually left Moush just as people were getting used to us.

During the six months between the camps we planned to have the interviews from Moush transcribed and translated into English. The idea was to write short stories or blog posts based on Moush material, which would make a good platform for discussion and might subsequently become a basis for our essays. We consider it a major shortcoming that those stories were not written and although the bulk of Moush interviews were ready shortly before the second camp, we

came to discuss and analyze them only in Gyumri. The long period of silence certainly did not play into our hands but, throughout the whole project, starting a discussion on these painful topics felt like opening Pandora's Box. We did slightly uncover the top layer, but did not dare to venture any further, feeling overwhelmed by the emotional field of the ongoing interviews, our own backgrounds and all the diverse narratives that were coming out.

The second camp, overall, turned out to be at least as heavy as the first one. Descendants of survivors from Moush (and Sasoun) had predominantly settled in the Talin region of Armenia on the north-west border with Turkey and it took us at least 40 minutes to get there from Gyumri. Unlike in Moush, the villages were informed about the arrival of an Armenian-Turkish group and consented to admit us in advance. It may sound a bit dramatic but the truth is the Turkish people in our group were to be the first representatives of their country to ever enter those villages, let alone interview the villagers about their history. While people were eager to talk to us and we didn't have to worry about finding respondents, they had also many questions of their own. Meeting a person from Turkey the first question they would usually pose or the one that would somehow come up in all our interviews was as simple and yet complicated as "do they accept the Genocide?" They have been waiting for generations to finally voice their stories to the "other." Since the interviews were conducted in Armenian, our respondents checked and rechecked whether the Armenian participants were translating what had been said. They would sometimes ask whether we were recording the interview and request to record everything in detail.

The number of potential respondents was so big that some of us had to carry out up to three interviews per day. Thus, during the four days of fieldwork in Armenia our group made 35 interviews in seven villages. Compared to our findings from Moush, narratives from Armenia were much more coherent and covered the lifespan of at least four to five generations. Maybe this was also due to the fact that in

Moush we focused more on asking people what they and their grandparents knew about Armenians, while in Armenia our interviews were more focused on people's family narratives.

In both cases we came to realize that those stories were intensely populated with "if" clauses. That is to say, a small window of thought about "how I, how this place, how my life would be if we were living together." Undoubtedly, all the field work and interviews we carried out was a big challenge. Not only because of the historical context, political ambiguity or organizational hardships but also the indispensability of building teamwork and friendships under such a heavy context. A context which challenges mutual trust towards other with every step. Yet as we have mentioned at the beginning, friendships blossom over a strange alchemy and we managed to overcome those challenges at the end through the energy of newly established friendships within our team. The essays and stories in the following pages are the outcome of such friendships established despite the difficulties facing us as a team. In fact, no one asserted one view over the other and no censorship was at any point applied. Given this, we are happy to introduce this work as honest and hard step towards mutual understanding, a microcosm of the odyssey for a past and future.

Imagining, Remembering: Moush and the Armenians

**By Hilal Unal (Turkey) and Shahane
Halajyan (Armenia)**

Landlocked between mountains, Moush is a small city in appearance, no different from many others in Anatolia. Until now largely left on its own, existing traces of its past are being slowly erased by development. In the old part of the city, we talked to a woman who was happy that TOKI, the Mass Housing Administration, was planning to build apartments in place of their houses. While the residents had the right to seek to improve their living standards, and move on, we felt that this level of change in the city would speed up the erasure of the signs and memory of what remained.

What existed of Moush's past was already only visible if one looked close enough, and asked the right questions. In villages where things have changed less, time also passes more slowly and memory is more easily preserved. We visited people both in the center of Moush and its outlying villages, trying to listen to older generations through their grandchildren. We paid attention to the signs these past generations had left in the houses, on the landscape and in the perceptions of contemporary inhabitants.

One of our visits in Moush was to a vineyard. Although it was not situated far from the city center, it took us traveling up a long winding drive from the dusty plains to the green expanse of the hills surrounding the city. We were met in the vineyard by its owner, an elderly man named Tevfik Renschber. We introduced ourselves, but Tevfik surprised us by asking the first question: "You want to know who these





lands belong to?" Despite our reply that we were not there for this question, he insisted that we were and went on to tell us the story of how the war [First World War] started. In his narrative, he acknowledged that widespread massacres took place but blamed the Germans, who "started the war," and the Kurds, who "killed more than the Turks" and the Armenians, who "had joined the Russian side." He ended his story by saying, "I never knew an Armenian, but I heard from my father." He then pointed to what was left of the walls of the vineyards around us and listed all the names of the previous Armenian owners to us: "This is Sepan's vineyard. This is Sirko's. This one below is Baricci's. I know all of them; my father told me." He conveyed the stories he had heard from his father, memories filled with idealization and nostalgia for a people he had never met. He then set these people of the past in contrast to those of today.

"It didn't matter for them whether their neighbors were Muslim, poor or miserable. They would invite them at night. Look, not in the morning. They wouldn't give them the money in the morning. They would invite their neighbors at night to give them whatever God has given them so that no one knew about it. They were such neighbors. Understand? We lived together. They were very nice people, very nice. If they ate the bread of someone, they would never hurt them. They would say: "I've eaten his bread."

Tevfik's speech initially started as a more moderate version of the official Turkish narrative, which emphasized war and collective blaming, with a nostalgic representation of the Armenians as the original owners of this land, good neighbors and hardworking people who could not be matched by the population of Moush today. This storyline was common among other people we spoke with in Moush. As they tried to make sense of the contradictions between official narratives (which are so often heard that their truth is taken for granted), and what they had heard from their own parents

and grandparents (which obviously must also be true), people came up with their own versions of the past.

At times in his conversation with us, Tevfik expressed an almost exaggerated wish for a co-existence with the Armenians of the past. For instance his telling us about how he had “no friends today in Moush, except the Armenians” was an example of how social or collective memories, in this case those of his father, can merge into and become the framework of individual memories. He had not met the previous owners of his vineyard, but his father’s opinion of them had become the image of an Armenian for him. On the other hand, these were also connected to the problems he had today. His complaints about the people around him, including his own people as being unreliable, close-minded and untrustworthy seemed to be connected to his aspirations to make wine from the grapes as the Armenians did, but which he said was hindered by the people around him. The former state of the city which was gradually disappearing had been more suitable for his aspirations and new dynamics such as migration and economic changes were changing the sort of life and relations he saw as ideal.

Ironically though, if the Armenians of the past were alive today in Moush, the gardens he so wanted to turn into vineyards probably would not belong to him.

In Moush, the memory of Armenians is often associated with wine-making, and expressed with an awe of the sophistication that was used to produce wine from this rugged but fertile (when worked upon) landscape. In Arinj village we met Mumtaz; (who emphasized his Arab roots, although he mentioned that his grandmother was Armenian) and his Chechen friend Israfil. Somewhere in the conversation about the past of the region, the topic naturally turned into wine-making and Israfil told us about a wine exhibition that he had been too:

“There I saw a wine known as the Moush wine. This wine dates to before the 1820’s. It was produced from the grapes

of Moush here in these mountains. Armenians would transport the wine to the city through clay pipes. There they would store and then market it. They would milk the cows there, ten kilometers from here, then drain ten liters of milk from the mountains. Kurds worked for the Armenians, so the Armenians were the lords of this place. Now, this is also an Armenian house. There! Another Armenian has arrived...”

Here their friend Hikmet who was an Armenian on both his maternal and paternal sides joined us. The details of what this conversation entailed would make an article of its own, however the friendship between these three men who openly shared their varying opinions on the past and on what should be done in the present, seemed to reflect the trust we were so often told existed between Christians and Muslims during the time they had co-existed.

In the old district of the city we visited Salim and his family. Salim told us he was born in a house inherited from an Armenian called Petros Efendi. While showing us a mirror that he carefully kept and which had been left behind by Petros Efendi, he told us about this co-existence.

“Armenian and Muslim shops were next to one another at the market place. For example the call to prayer would be recited and the Muslim would go to mosque. He would take out his key and give it to an Armenian. He would give it to him because he was afraid someone else would come and steal his stuff. This shows how much they trusted one another.”

Why then, had these people so commonly praised for their loyalty and hard work suddenly disappeared? Our hinting at this question was met with answers which contrasted with this positive image of Armenians. Some said they left because they had been “insulted” as a people; others answered in a way that implied non-responsibility, suggesting that they had “left before we came here,” while a few others openly but without going into any further detail, used the word “massacre.” The



way people talked showed how they themselves were curious despite their seemingly firm answers that everything on “this side” was innocent. Like how Mehmet Koch from Goms, who had been the village head for 20 years, answered this question in a rhetorical fashion:

“From here to Gyolbashi, the plain was all Armenian. There were some Muslims living in the mountains but the city was completely theirs [Armenian]. My father had a house in the city too. There were ten households or so and it was one of them. They all belonged to Armenians. Then what happened? How did it happen? Was there a massacre or something? They all went away. Some of them went away, some of them stayed.”

Vineyards, cross-stones in the walls of the houses, the old Armenian names of the villages which people still used, all formed a constant reminder of the past. The inhabitants of Moush could not break from the past because they were still haunted by its existence which continued to resurface mostly through the physical surroundings, such as the ruins of old churches and monasteries; or by the day-to-day reality of people living, eating and sleeping in houses built a few generations ago by Armenians; or by visiting groups of foreigners with candles, who they could not communicate with but who constantly reminded them with their very presence. Meanwhile, the people on the other side of the river and the mountain, longed to re-live the past but were prevented by boundaries, by time, and by other practical constraints.

In Armenia, in the village of Voskehask we met Rafik, a quiet 77 year-old man. Rafik took us to his house to talk, and as we entered, our eyes caught a large map of Western Armenia hanging on the wall. A few days spent in the Mshetsi (villages of Moush ancestry) villages of Armenia had made us understand that the existence of maps in living rooms was common and carried significance for the inhabitants. Seeing these maps was part of our changed perception of a village, which in our imagination was not a space where one would

come across statues yet here there was at least one in every village; like the one of Andranik that Rafik introduced us to, or our conception of a villager, faced with the fact that almost every person we visited had either made some attempts at writing or showed us manuscripts of a close relative of the family who had written the village histories and about the memories of the Genocide.

Rafik had written too, on the history of his village and its inhabitants. When asked from whom he had inherited these stories, Rafik told us that people who had survived the Genocide used to gather and recollect their stories, in order to preserve their memories and perhaps to share this heavy burden of remembering. These rituals were carried out secretly, as it was forbidden to talk openly about the Genocide in the beginning of the Soviet period. He told us how he would secretly listen into these meetings at the age of ten and write them down. We wondered what had been passing through his mind as he secretly recorded memories of this magnitude at such a young age. While he was narrating this to Shahane, his wife took the rest of us to her bedroom where we were surprised to see a room with the walls filled with paintings, Rafik's colorful oil paintings of scenery and a few amateurish portraits of Andranik and of his father.

Rafik knew the villages of Moush on the map by heart. Just as the original names of villages in Moush were unchanged, villages here had been given the same names that they had in the past, just like the way people were given the names of their relatives who had not survived, and narrated these relatives' stories as their own. They tried to get soil from the homeland to put on their graves in Soviet Armenia and called themselves Mshetsi meaning "from Moush" in Armenian. The way they spoke about it revealed to us how they imagined Moush, a place which they had never been and to where most of them would never probably go to.

"To me, Moush is a sacred place. It is the place where my parents had lived, it was the land of their dreams; it is my homeland. My parents often said, Gevorg, lad, you will go and see it one day."



In Armenia, the village administrations (or town halls) were our first stop when we reached a village. We would introduce ourselves before heading out to houses like that of Rafik. We would give them a photo album we had taken of Moush as a gift and people would silently and eagerly crowd around the album to look at. Once in the houses, we would start the conversation by asking how many generations back they could go in their family. The initial replies to this would generally be emotional, their eyes filling with tears even as they started to talk about their ancestors, telling us of how only certain family members –their father, mother or grandparent – had escaped the massacres. They told us where it happened, and how they managed to escape and how their parents lived with constant expression of pain and longing for their homeland. Their narrations conveyed how the pain that had been witnessed by their elders, and which they had grown up with, had come to be inherited by them.

Pilos Hakhoyan, for example, whose parents were from Bingyol, told us the tragic series of events that befell his family during the massacres; about how his mother's first husband had died before the massacres; how their child and his aunt were abducted by the Turks; and how after this his aunt tragically threw herself from a roof never knowing that her two sons had actually been brought to safety across the border. He told us how his parents met and married during the escape to the village we were all in, Katnaghbyur. Pilos told us the stories of anguish he had heard and about the book of poems he had written about those experiences.

My parents' pain passed on to me through genes
The desert of Deir Zor is calling me
The roads are closed, I cannot go to tend... their graves.

These lines he wrote regarding his uncle, who was from Moush, and who had been one of those driven to the desert of Deir Zor, were a touching expression of what Moush meant to him, and also exemplified what opening a border would

mean. People's desire to see today's Moush was connected to the tragic events of the past that had happened there to their families and which they had heard and absorbed in detail. Talking to them about this connection gave us a sense of the present being so full of the past.

Mrs. Matevosyan, an elderly woman from Suser told us about the fate of her husband's family. The emotions that she conveyed while telling her story felt like more than simple empathy, she felt the pain of her family deeply.

“Mother passed through a lot of hardship... As soon as she remembered, she would cry. She wouldn't be able to talk. She sat on a horse with bare feet. Then she escaped and met a Kurdish man. He promised to help her cross the Araks River. They agreed to cross together. Somebody gave her charokhs [leather shoes] but when she fell asleep, the Kurdish man stole her shoes and disappeared. His eyes were on those shoes. Meanwhile, she stayed barefoot. Imagine how long she was wandering like that barefoot...She couldn't tell long, she was crying, getting emotional [starts crying too].”

Growing up and listening to these stories, it is not surprising that people came to associate Moush with pain. However, they had also been told stories of a different life when the land was fertile, the houses big and the families happy. This prosperity and the good quality of life before the massacres is also what largely seemed to shape the imaginative geography of Moush for those in Armenia. Pilos, whose parents were from the Sassoun and Moush regions, pointed this out by saying:

“They must have had a good life. One who has had a hard life doesn't regret the past. I don't mean that their life had been sophisticated, no. It had been the simple life of a country-dweller. But they had been content.”

In the narratives Moush was often associated with heaven.



In the Babylonian version of the epic tale of Gilgamesh, he searches for the Garden of Eden to find the water of life. His destination was the Kingdom of Ararat where the headwaters of four Mesopotamian rivers are located. This epic tale feeds into certain parts of Bible. Vardges, a 71 year-old man from Katnaghbyur connected this myth to *ergir*.

“It is not for me to praise the beauties of the homeland. The Bible is the book above all books and it says that God created Man and put him in the Garden of Eden. The source of four rivers was in Eden: Tigris, Euphrat, Tison (Araks), and Kur. That was our homeland – the Garden of Eden. What more can I say? Heaven on Earth was in Western Armenia.”

Hakobyan and Matevosyan were an elderly couple from the village of Suser whose ancestors were originally from the village of Tsrnk in the Moush region and Kars. They knew

about all the traditions in Moush – from pagan to Christian, from fertility rituals to marriage in the mountains. Mrs. Matevosyan also told us about a plant referred to as gaspe which was also described as manana and which we were to hear about many times in the villages of *Mshetsi* Armenians. Our respondent told us about it in a very descriptive way, later even singing a song about it:

“Do you have any idea how rich was Moush valley in herbs... khavrtsil. They used to say that when they had some complaints, they would go to the valley, bring a branch of khavrtsil and eat it. It did cure them. Gaspe was the herb that the morning dew made sweet. People would gather and boil it. They said that even the honey we produced here didn't match the taste of gaspe, manna. They called it manna as well, which means a gift sent from heavens.”

These associations of Moush as a heaven were closely related to people's connection to the land, both in the past and today, and the significance of fertile land for a rural person. It is hard to tell how much of these stories of a land of longing and abundance, narrated by people who tell their grandparents stories as if they are their own, are exaggerated. Was it all they could bring from the homeland or was Moush actually as abundant as described? Reality, which is always already something subjective, becomes increasingly more so over generations. Nevertheless, almost all the people we met referred to Moush with longing and a desire to return. The notion that someone could miss a land he or she hadn't walked on seemed strange to us but also somehow understandable, considering how these people spent all their lives with parents and grandparents who expressed a constant longing for this same land. The connection that people had to this land which they had never seen themselves was symbolized in the practice of getting a handful of soil from Moush to put on their graves. Missing and imagining were combined in this process, for these people, who in a sense had a double citizenship: physically they were from the Republic of Armenia and mentally they belonged to *ergir*.

Kyaram, a Yezidi with Western Armenian roots, whose grandfather was one of the founders of the village of Zartonk in Armenia expressed the duality as thus:

"I fulfill my yearning with photos... My father didn't see them, but then I realize that a third person would think of me as an abnormal person..."

His friend Paruyr, whose grandfather first moved to Dashtadem village of Talin region of Armenia and then to Zartonk, continued:

"Just like how we say we are from Talin. We weren't born there; we didn't grow up in there, but we say we are from Talin."

Ashot, another friend adds:

"But as soon as they get a little drunk, they say they are from *ergir*!"

In Moush life goes on as usual; people go to work, they till their fields and face the daily issues of life in eastern Turkey. They have other things to consider than contemplating the past. Thus the knowledge that these ruins are those of the Saint Marine church and that house belonged to Petros Efendi does not make much significance to them. In fact, it seems like few people are eager to remember until they are faced with tourists or inquisitive students like us who ask them to look back at what they know of the past for us, for a change. When they do, they tell us of their neighbors who they remember as honest and hardworking; yet who were traitors and somehow left. Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, the children and grandchildren of these people who "left," are constantly looking at the past. They have maps of the past in their living rooms, they carry the names of the past, and they feel the pain of the past. What they say suggests that the pain they have inherited would ease if the doors of communication were opened, and if people would accept and acknowledge their narratives. People need to come together and listen to each other, and perhaps start by merely believing in each other's humanity. Here, the way Tevfik, the vineyard owner from Moush, conveyed his observation of Armenian visitors to the old city, offers hope of acknowledgement of the pain that was felt and of an awakening of the possibilities for resolving this pain which has laid dormant until now. His words offer hope for reconciliation of past and present.

"There is a fountain here. One of them came... she hugged the stones and kissed them repeatedly. Her father's vineyard was behind this house too. The woman was old. It was 25 years before this. Now those who escaped to Yerevan, they are dead too of course. They are no longer there but they have grandchildren. They wrote and left it to them. They die for these places. They die for this soil, this land of Moush."

He hands us grapes from the vineyard, saying to the Armenian members of the group: "Eat, these are your grandfathers'."

Those who “left” and those who “stayed”

By Ani Poghosyan (Armenia) and Sercan Cinar (Turkey)

The Journey

The saying goes, you truly get to know somebody only when you travel with that person. Our journey started in October 2011 with the camp in Moush and since then we haven't stopped travelling. Our experience hasn't been a mere physical transportation from one point to another. It is

another kind of journey from one reality into another, from past into present, from myth into reality, and finally, from us to them and back to our altered selves. We have been travelling through the souls and memories of people in Armenia and Turkey, trying to abstract from our own backgrounds and see the world as they do, understand it and take this knowledge to a wider audience.

For the two of us, digesting this material and producing this work turned out to be much longer than we expected and yielded writings other than we thought we'd have. Although we are not anthropologists or oral historians and our skills in these fields are quite amateurish, our team managed to collect really fascinating stories, which could fill volumes. But



the project's time and page limit forced us to choose between many topics, which proved difficult given the vast range of material and our own interests.

The initial idea of our pair was to write about the life of Armenians and Kurds before the Genocide, and then talk about the Kurdish issue in its current context. However, our efforts proved that the material at hand was not sufficient to accomplish what we planned: we would have to do a lot of external reading and research to support our points, which was impossible, given the time constraints. Thus, we decided to change our approach and concentrated on stories and memories about the Aratsani/Murad River, which has always been an important part of rural Moush life and landscape. But the bulk of the material came from the Armenian side and the findings from our fieldwork in Moush did not balance it.

Having drafted and left aside two essays, we ventured into our third series. This time, the agreement was to go for a conceptual change – not to do a thematic division but select two interviews that we liked and try to narrate the lives of those respondents. Since the rest of our partners were working on specific topics using quotes and excerpts from the interviews, we decided to illustrate the lives of two of our interviewees. We chose to focus on the lives of Taron Muradyan from Irind, a village in Armenia and Suslu Hanim of Moush, Turkey. Their and their ancestors' lives have been largely predetermined and deeply affected by the Genocide. Both of their grandfathers, Armenians by origin, were left orphan after the massacres and found refuge with Kurds. It was a mere chance, perhaps one among thousands, that Taron Muradyan's ancestor met one of his relatives and escaped east to modern day Armenia. We were struck by the realization that the story of Suslu Hanim's grandfather could easily have been the story of Taron's grandfather had he stayed behind. Taron's grandfather's life in Armenia is typical of those who managed to reach that side of the border.

As it is, both lives are filled with pain and fear and have been reduced to those of solitude and silence. Taron and

Suslu make important points about the silencing policies both in Turkey and USSR and how in spite of these policies people found ways of coming together and talking. In many direct and indirect ways they speak about the burden of the traumas they have inherited from the elders and most importantly speak about their own fears, which, again, seem so similar: Suslu Hanim is hesitant to approach Armenian tourists she met in the Moush marketplace and ask about her grandfather, while Taron Muradyan wavers over going to *ergir* and seeing his grandfather's homeland in real. It is clear that these people still suffer from a "floating" identity; a trauma inherited from their ancestors: for the heirs of Western Armenians outside Turkey it is the enduring pain and strong mental bonds with the lost motherland that creates a dual sense of belonging. For those who stayed behind and mingled with Turks or Kurds it is again the painful memory of the Genocide, aggravated by everlasting fear of voicing it and regaining their place in the society.

“This is genetic.

You know something draws you...”

By Ani Poghosyan

Hayrettin Bey, or Serob by his Armenian name, is a middle-aged man with sunburnt skin and big, green eyes. The son of an Armenian father and a Kurdish mother, Serob is one of only a few people in Moush who speak openly about their Armenian roots. Serob's family was based in Sassoun during the Genocide years and his father, uncle and aunt survived with the help of Kurds of Sheko Ashiret.¹ As he grew up, Hayrettin's father married a girl from Sheko Ashiret and according to him, so did many other people of Armenian descent.

¹ Ashiret means house or clan. Most of our respondents in Armenia mentioned the “Ashiret sheko” or “shigo,” while talking about help they have received from Kurds.

We met Serob on our very first day in Moush and during the subsequent two weeks he would always come to our hotel after the working day (he was employed in the local sugar factory), eager to chat and spend time with us. He was also helpful in finding respondents, since he was a part of the “underground” network of people who had Armenian roots. As he used to say, he tried to be easy going and kind to everyone, so people in Moush trusted him. Recently, Serob has been seeking out other people of Armenian descent and he plans to establish an organization of Moush Armenians. It was Serob who led our group to the previously Armenian vineyards on the plateaus above Moush and then to meet his “sister,” as he called Suslu Hanim, a woman that left the brightest imprint on our hearts.

Suslu’s family was living in the town of Moush, in a newly built district that was about 10-15 minutes’ drive away from Ataturk Boulevard, the central street of the town. The modern, private houses of red stone with small backyards and cute brown roofs stood out from the general picture of provincial and rather poor Moush. Although we were used to seeing the economic contradictions of the town (brand new cars vs. poor marketplace, urbanized busy downtown vs. the old district of old ways), the change of the urban landscape was so visible that for a moment I doubted whether we still were in Moush. It was amazing how many faces and layers that place had, how many stories lay around us, untold and undiscovered. I realized immediately we would not have adequate time to explore all the stories of these people. Absorbed in these questions of the new and old Moush – or, the known and unknown Moush – I didn’t notice myself getting off the bus and walking towards the house. I awoke only to Serob’s voice as he exchanged greetings with our hosts.

A mother of two children, a son and a daughter, Suslu Hanim was probably in her 40s, a woman of average height with a covered head and expressive, steady voice. Her sincere greetings, kind smile and excited eyes, her hospitality and mother-like kisses immediately made us feel at home. Leading us to the living room and making sure we are



comfortably seated, she and her daughter went to the kitchen to serve us some tea and I followed to help them. We didn't know each other's language, we couldn't understand each other, but she was so excited she hugged me and gave warm kisses. We could sense that we were about to hear a story of a person who stayed through the Genocide to see his world crumble and to see "Armenianness" fade away.

In the next room a group of around 16 people including her son and husband, and the entire oral history and documentary crew waited for Suslu Hanim to speak.

"My grandfather was seven years old," she began. "His name was Hussein. I don't know his previous [Armenian] name. He never said it. His father's name was Hazar and his paternal uncle was Musho. They are Mano's sons: two brothers. What we know is what my grandfather told us, that my grandfather's children were my mother and my uncle. My uncle has five daughters and three sons. And my mother has four sons and four daughters. So, eight children each. Now I am looking for my grandfather's brother and we heard that he is in Armenia. He is my grandfather's elder brother; he was seventeen or eighteen at the time... At that time he had gone away to study and he's been missing ever since. Wherever he is, if we could just see him... We want to see his children and grandchildren."

Suslu's maternal grandfather (Hazar's son) was born in Guzi, a village in Bingyol Province, Ottoman Empire. Although she was young when her grandfather passed away, too young to ask him about his past, she keeps a tender memory of his image and cherishes the little information she got through her mother. "He was like an angel," she continued. "All white. His height was normal but you could say he was pure light. He could not speak at all. If someone forced him to answer one or two questions, he would say one or two words. He couldn't speak much."

As she spoke, Suslu's husband was silent only occasionally

asking her questions or adding things here and there. It was her husband, for instance, who told us the current name of Hazar's village, and about his occupation. He was probably in his 50s; a tall, black haired man, seated proudly in an armchair across from his wife. "Its current name is Aslankaya Koyu," he said. "It is a village in Bingyol. But she forgot to mention one thing. That village of Guzi was a municipality in the 1900's, then it became a town. Her grandfather was the pastor of that district."

Suslu Hanim: "My great grandfather was the pastor of that place. He was the mayor and a very influential man."

Suslu Hanim's husband explained, "Half of the village belonged to him. They call it the village of Hazar."

Suslu Hanim: "Because he was both the hodja (the pastor) and the mayor of the village. And because he was a great man, his name was everywhere. Everyone speaks of him now; they say 'You are Hazar's granddaughter, he was such a great man.'"

I felt that the picture of Hazar presented by Suslu and her husband seemed somewhat exaggerated because a clergyman would not also serve as a village mayor, a secular position. I think families sometimes add color to the memories of their ancestors which, added to the common stereotype of Armenians as wealthy and strong could explain the confusion in their speech.

Within the family, Suslu's mother Rinda had tried to inquire about his past. Rinda also kept touch with other Armenians. Suslu explained:

"The ones who stayed used to meet with my mother. We knew them. Fatma Sefo's daughter was one of them. Also the family of the mother of my stepmother, Fatma Seko. They too had Armenian blood in their family, but she died young and since she died young we could not see her. Also my sister's mother-in-law. Her old name is Zarun, then they changed it into Asya. Later on, they would inquire about one another; they would pay regular visits. We were really young children. When there was no one, my mother would ask: "How many

brothers did you have? What happened?" My grandfather was seven years old. He wanted to run away but couldn't. He used to say: "I ran away but I do not know what happened to others." My grandfather's mother had already passed away at the time of those events. And my grandfather's elder sister had gone to Armenia with her husband. She was the elder sister. They were four or five siblings in the family; I don't know about the other ones. I mean he wouldn't say. He said: "I had an elder brother, and he went to Istanbul to study."

Even today most people of Armenian descent in Turkey's provinces are afraid to openly speak of their ethnic background and choose to keep it a secret. In small communities, such as Moush or the surrounding villages, where everybody knows each other, it is extremely difficult to conceal your ancestry and people are still faced with hate speech and discrimination. It so happened to us, that in random shops we were asked where we came from and learning we are Armenians, the shopkeeper closed the door and said he is Armenian too, but refused to be interviewed. Another man who promised to talk to us, met us in our hotel but then gave an excuse for having to leave, un-interviewed. Having undergone the terror of Genocide and further discriminations, fear became a determining factor throughout the lives of survivors and their families. Their stories, if ever disclosed, remained in the narrow family circles. The story of Suslu's grandfather is no different.

"After my grandfather ran away from that place, Guzi, he comes to Oruk. From Oruk, he goes to Koshk. From Koshk he passes to Dersim. Dersim is a village of Moush. Not the one in Tunjeli. This one is near Koshk. The third village this side. Their names are Yukari (Upper) Kalebek and Ashaghi (Lower) Kalebek today. It is a small village there. There he lives with a tribe. They brought him up. They come here to the plateaus; they took him to another village. Now they remained in their village. They are Zaza. They said: "If you give Hazar's son to us, we will give you whatever you want:

a house or some land if you like." But they didn't give him. They said: "We can sacrifice our lives, but we are not giving this boy to you." They took care of him. Many thanks to them. He was very reserved. He would sit and count his beads. My mother would ask: "How many siblings did you have? How was your father? Was he good to you? Did he love you?"

"He wouldn't speak. The hodja told him that he would become a sinner. So he couldn't say anything. They told him never to tell anyone that his parents were Armenian. I am so sorry for them. I cry, I ache. They said never, no! They told him he would go to hell and become a big sinner. Back then my grandfather was very young and the hodja told him "You became a Muslim so, never!" This is why he wouldn't speak about it. May God do whatever he wants to those hodjas! Hodjas did so in order to control them. They got them under their thumbs."

Suslu's husband, in turn, makes an interesting point as his wife finishes.

"This is not the religion. I always say, don't deny yourselves. Now because of this, we should leave the past aside and speak of new things in this globalizing world. We should live in an environment of peace and harmony, share some things like our culture and traditions. That is why Hayrettin said so. Even if most of the people say this, and they would, they would also say "Do not get me involved in this! You can take him, it's not a problem." My wife is very religious indeed. She reads the Quran from memory. See I don't but she does. She prays five times a day and I don't. But when it comes to the issue of Armenians, she cried for the murder of Hrant Dink for a week. So this is genetic. You know something draws you. That means those who have feelings are influenced by some things. This shows that such a Muslim woman can turn into this. I hope good things happen if God permits. I mean with regard to the

erasure of past mistakes and the pressure and hatred present in the society. The elimination of such activities would be very beneficial for the local people. I mean we have to get over these things. We have to remove these feudal and ignorant thoughts. Well as I said, how can we live together? How can we love each other? We have to find the answer to this. I mean here I am an active member of the Republican People's Party. Someone else would not be that courageous, but I do because I have a problem with this state and with the Armenians. The events that took place 150 years ago... today I do not feel hatred or rage for anyone. I love everyone. I love both the Armenian and the Kurd and the Turk. And because I love them I am always available for a common life. Because I've overcome some things."

"She prays five times a day and I don't. But when it comes to the issue of Armenians, she cried for the murder of Hrant Dink for a week. So this is genetic. You know something draws you... This shows that such a Muslim woman can turn into this." These words have been spinning over in my head since I first heard them. Having the obvious strong emotional bond with her granddad and having the clear realization of being a heir of an Armenian, Suslu Hanim must have thought a lot about what it means to her. As short as our talk was, and as little as we managed to learn about that part of her identity, we could feel its immense grip on that woman. Her husband's words, important and interesting from different perspectives (according to Suslu, the husband's mother was an Armenian too) are yet another proof of it.

Throughout the interview she kept on repeating she longs to see the children and grandchildren of her granddad's brother of whom they had no news since 1915. Of course her seeking the lost relatives speaks of highest human qualities of that person but I also wonder to what extent should we attribute this wish to the actually suppressed part of her identity. The thing is many people who openly spoke about

their Armenian ancestry had been in Armenia on a similar quest. Hayrettin, for instance, has been to Armenia several times and knows many people with roots in Moush. Having been to Talin region of Armenia he had told Suslu's family that Armenians from Moush have settled there and Suslu hoped she could find her relatives among them and maybe through them, smooth the heartache that passed to her from her elders.

To our question how she imagines the meeting with the other part of the family, Suslu Hanim says:

"I really do want it. If only we could see them, see where and how they are. Just like my maternal uncle, this man is my mother's paternal uncle. He is not different from your father. What is the difference between a mother and an uncle? But there is a lot of difference between the families of your mother and father. Milk and blood draw you to the maternal side. One is more devoted to them, suffers more for them. Of course you hurt and suffer for your father's side too, but this is more from the heart.

Three years ago I went to the market. They [Armenians] had come again. They arrived, I just stared at them. They are older, about forty five years old. I thought: Shall I ask them or not? Then I went up to them, but I couldn't ask. Later on this became a worry to me. I thought to myself: If I ever see them again, I will ask. Who are they? Would they know? Because for example, even if it's a neighbor they will know. Won't they? Just like I am in Moush, and I know people. I know the people who live here; I know the villages. I think everyone is like this."

What was it that stopped her, was it mere shyness? Hardly so... Language wouldn't have been a serious barrier as well. What was it then that she had to overcome to approach those people? We never learnt the answer. Neither do we know how she expressed her Armenianness in public or in the family. We did not learn what it meant for her children to host

a group of students from Armenian and Turkey and see their mother talk to them about her granddad. Was it one more chance to hear the family story, or may be a unique case for them? I guess we should have visited her a second or third time for such deep and intimate conversation but we didn't manage to and God knows whether we shall ever see each other again. But one thing we can still do for Suslu Hanim is to keep our promise and continue asking people about the family of Hazar, son of Mano, from the Guzi village in Bingyol.

“Maybe my grandfather’s stories were more beautiful than what I’ll find there...”

By Sercan Cinar

Taron Muradyan was born in the village of Irind in the Talin region of Armenia in 1950. He lives in the village where he was born but he is working in Dashtadem village, which is also where our interview with him was conducted. He told us that his paternal ancestors were from the village Aran in Moush Plain and his mother's side of the family was from the village of Hovarak also in the Moush. Taron's grandfather, Serob Muradyan, studied at Arakelots Monastery in Moush. Serob was 14 years old when he witnessed genocidaires kill his brothers, sisters and parents. Taron told us the story of his grandfather's survival during massacre in their village. He said:

“Old people, women, children were driven into the church. The Turks and Kurds closed the door and set the building on fire. My grandfather Serob, son of Vardan, was a short boy and stood at the church door. In the confusion, as people were screaming and falling over each other, he fell under the corpses. That is how he didn't get burned. He only fainted. In the morning when fresh air came through the crack of the door, he came to his senses, crawled out and ran away.”

Serob was the only person in the village to survive the massacre. Afterwards, he went to a close Kurdish friend, his family's qirva in a neighboring village. The qirva found a way to hide Serob's identity by keeping him from speaking in Armenian.

“He told my grandfather that, from that point on, he would be called not Serob, but Hassan, and that he had to pretend to be deaf and dumb and never answer any questions. He was to take the Kurd's sheep to pasture and never utter a word for if others knew he was Armenian, he could be killed.”

According to Taron, Serob stayed in the qirva's village for one or two months even though his identity had been figured out by some villagers. One day he saw a group of Armenian survivors in the village, mostly women and children. He walked among them and suddenly encountered his aunt's daughter whom he called aunt, Elik, whose husband was killed. His aunt realized and asked him if he was Vardan's son, but Serob got afraid and ran away. The next day, he came back again and his aunt told him not to be afraid and that they would be leaving in the afternoon. Taron said that his grandfather couldn't decide whether stay or join the group. Taron explained,

“He hesitated. Should he join them or stay. He felt responsible for the Kurd's sheep but was also afraid to stay. As he saw the survivors disappear over the horizon, he found a decision within him. He ran to them and explained he was Vardan's son and he wanted to leave with them.”

Taron explained that the journey his relatives made to reach Talin was incredibly painful. They reached the place only in 1920.

This is the story which Taron Muradyan told us about how

his ancestors survived the genocide. With this background in mind, I now want to focus on other parts of our interview with Taron, which contain many important points for understanding the transfer of narratives between generations and the image of Turks constructed in these narratives. There are also some stories about the Soviet Union which discuss the role of state policies and state discourse in the transfer of narratives and the construction of the image of “the Turk.”

Respondents in this project were mainly of third generation after the genocide. The distance of the event in terms of years may impact on how much of a story is remembered and transferred. The fact that a long time has passed since the genocide is an important point, and bears on the formation of narratives between generations. However, we must also be aware of different structures and layers such as personal and family experiences, public discourse and state policies, for example.

It is possible that in the process of the transferring

narratives over generations, a certain level of generalization occurs. Some details may seem more relevant in the narratives of witnesses or subjects of the narrative, for example. Over time, a narrative may become more simplified in order to be more transferable. In my interviews, I felt this process may have included both carrying over less detail between retellings, and highlighting particular aspects of the story to make it more memorable. Consequently, narrating is usually characterized by generalization in order to create a harmonious story but in some cases detailing is an important tool for story-telling.

Language and terminology is another important element to retelling. Stories emerging from the 1915 period use language of that time, which included many words from Turkish that are no longer found in the modern Turkish lexicon. I think this is important to remember because there are associations attached by different generations to certain terms and the same phrase may have a different meaning



when spoken by a witness as when spoken in modern times.

There are many examples of a unified image of Turkish identity. In the stories we listened about the Moush region during the genocide, we came across images of murderers or genocidaires, which are defined by storytellers as Turks. But, the demographic structure of the Moush region shows that Kurds constituted the majority of the non-Christian population both during and after the genocide. One such example is Taron Muradyan's grandfather's story, in which he says that "My grandfather was born in the village Aran, studied at Arakelots Monastery of Moush. In 1915, when the massacre began, he was 14 years old. He came to the village, a short boy of 14. All his brothers, sisters as well as his parents were killed in front of his eyes. Old people, women, children were driven into the church. Turks and Kurds closed the door and set fire to the building." In addition to this, Taron also tells us that "...there was a kind of fish in the Murat River which had a cross shaped bone in the head." He explains that Turks didn't eat this fish because they considered it to be a Christian fish. He thinks that by now either the fish must be more in number because Turks haven't eaten them, or they have been exterminated. In this story, the image of the Turk is something unified with Muslim identity. Besides that, there is a point relating to the Kurds living in Moush region. Some of the Kurds mentioned in his story are seen as different from the mainstream and are recognized for helping the Armenians. Taron says, "... he escaped, ran away and went to the mountains. He knew that there was a close Kurdish friend (qirva) of theirs in a neighboring village. He went to him, said that he was Vardan's son Serob. The Kurd accepted and recognized him. He told my grandfather that since then he would be called not Serop but Hassan and that he had to pretend to be deaf and dumb and never answer any questions. He was to pasture the Kurd's sheep and never utter a word for if they [Kurds] knew he was Armenian, they [Kurds] would kill him." I feel these sentences contain a sub-text indicating this situation was an exception. As the following sentence points out, a mainstream

attitude of Kurds was against Armenian people: "Kurdish boys figured out that he was Armenian. They threw stones at him and called him fele," meaning the son of an Armenian. At the same time, Taron's grandfather's fear of disclosing his identity even as he faced an Armenian group and his relatives, points out an interesting situation. He was conflicted about whether he should stay and protect the property of Kurdish qirva or go with the group. His sense of duty towards Kurdish qirva is evident. It can be understood from Taron's own words that his grandfather hesitated a lot to make this decision. Although living at a time of massacres, his decision was affected by his desire to protect a Kurd's property.

Taron's perception of Turks can be seen in his narrative about the April 24 commemoration as well. He tells us about the commemoration in the village with these words:

"We commemorated that day in the village. The same tradition exists now. There is a hill in our village. You may have seen it. At night, fires are taken to the top of the hill and burnt for Turks to see that we are alive, that we remember and that we exist."

This is happening on the Armenian border with Turkey. He clearly perceives the other side of the border as a population fully consisting of Turks and puts his existence against their own.

Another point that can be reflected in a narrative's structure is the political context of given period. For example, we can see this when Taron talks about Karabakh, which is a current issue in Armenian politics. Speaking about the Karabakh Movement, he says, "Karabakh is ours, it was patriotism but I am against destroying and shift of power." He seems to combine his political attitude with history when he adds, "If we don't struggle or if we lose our memories, we can't achieve anything. We must plant everything in our children as our grandfathers have done." In the course of this project I felt a common theme which was that people's politics were shaped by their memory or past experiences. Shaping the political attitudes of children and trying to construct politics on the



basis of history is a common theme of nationalism and it is the same story in Turkey. I am worried that if history plays a very large role in determining and shaping in daily life and politics, it doesn't leave any possibility of reaching reconciliation because history becomes static and no movement forward is made. In this context, it is impossible to find an intermediate point or a starting point. Norms and identities continue to be constructed by historical facts and cannot take account of what is happening in the present. Generalized attitudes towards different identities and the sense of belonging to a nation can only be challenged by taking a critical perspective to historical events. Otherwise, history becomes a weight on

our shoulders and I believe reconciliation will not be possible. These sentences should not be understood as a part of denialist approaches to the genocide. There should be an intermediate way between forgetting and carrying history as a weight on our shoulders. I am trying to refer to the idea of being independent from the official discourse of both sides. This is what I think is necessary for reconciliation.

Taron Muradyan equates his children's knowledge about his grandfather's story with being patriotic. He answered our question about whether your children know your grandfather's story as, "Certainly they know. I have my son read everything, he is very patriotic." According to him, knowing the history is a

component and measure of patriotism. In addition, resistance to the Soviet Union was also shaped by remembering the genocide. For example, the strict policies of the Soviet Union against genocide commemoration up until 1965 generated protest and resistance by Armenians. Taron told us about his grandfather's attempts to locate banned literature about Western Armenia. He said, "Serob found the history of Sassoun and used to read those papers by lamp light in the evenings. He was a reliable man that is why they trusted him. I was a child, they took me to him and he read to me."

This resistance was directed at state-level decisions banning certain information about one's culture and history. Resistance should not only be understood as an actual confrontation with state forces. Reading these stories was a form of protest as well. While Taron was telling us about the monument he and other villagers designed for commemoration of the Genocide as well as for their fellow villagers who fought and died in World War II, he noted that, "Instead of the inscription we wrote 'A whole nation was slaughtered.' There should have been a portrait of Soghomon Tehlerian [known for his assassination of Talaat Pasha in Berlin in 1921] but it was forbidden." This point shows resistance against Soviet policy by actively remembering the history and combining two things into one: a single monument built with the money collected from the residents of the village commemorates two types of victims, the heroes of World War II from their village, and the victims of the genocide. The villagers planned to have Tehlerian's portrait at the center of the monument. In creating this memorial, it seems they were trying to say, that they had fought both for Soviets and against their murderers. But preferences of people, designing the monument with Tehlerian's portrait, are shaped by the notion of revenge and this situation produces and re produces a permanent conflict between the two sides of Ararat.

Finally, while he was talking about the start of construction of buildings in Igdir by Kurds (actually such a construction was encouraged by Turkish state and he also mentioned

the state) after 1945, he points out the role of Soviet Union. He told us that after Kosygin (Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR) went to Turkey and said they had no claims, construction began in Igdir. Then he adds:

"As Turkey, the ally of Germany, kept its troops on the border, there were Soviet troops in Armenia up to 1945 lest Turks attacked. Stalin wanted to bring back these velayats of Western Armenia and join to Eastern Armenia. He had already appointed Secretaries of Executive Committee for Western Armenia there but H. Truman, President of the United States didn't allow this to be fulfilled by conducting two atomic bombings on Japan... Armenians were unlucky again."

The last two sentences are very interesting because conduction of two atomic bombs on Japan is perceived by him as an unluckiness of Armenians because of not bringing provinces of Western Armenia. The case of atomic bombs and nuclear warfare has also a nation-based meaning in his mind.

To sum up, it may be significant to return to the title. He used these sentences when we asked him about a plant described by his grandfather while he had been talking about Moush. The plant's name is gaspe and he said that "He always told and it is in our blood. You see, I want to go but at the same time there is something that holds me back. Maybe my grandfather's stories were more beautiful than what I'll find there and I'll be disappointed to see only ruins or don't find my ancestors' house or graves." Sometimes, keeping the past in stories may be more sensible than facing with the actual one because people want to construct in a beautiful way.

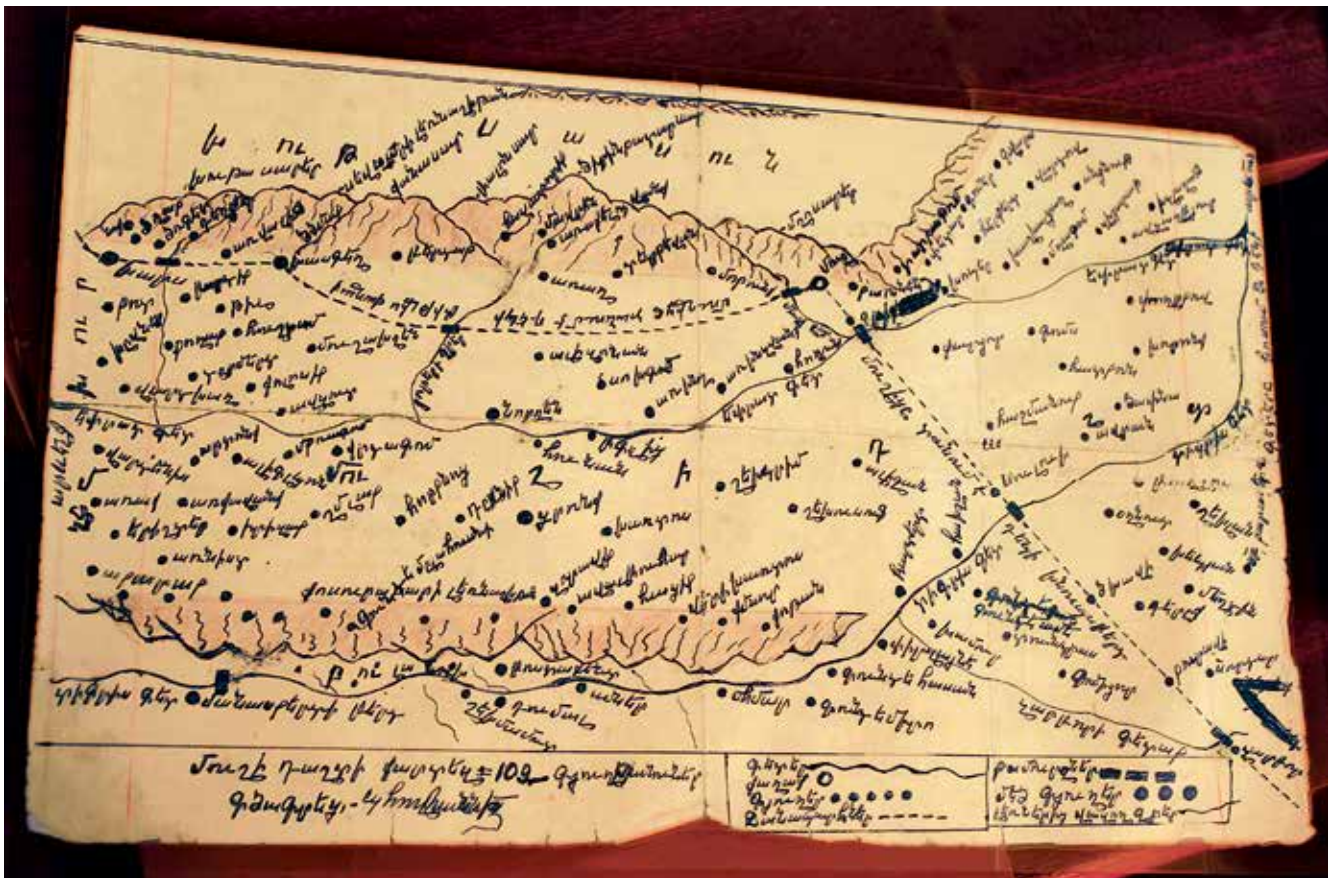
Treasure Hunt

By Eylem Nazli Tasdemir (Turkey)
and Rinet Isajyan (Armenia)

Treasure Hunters in Moush

The number of Armenians visiting Moush City and the surrounding area is growing year by year. Groups of tourists looking for their ancestral houses using either hand-drawn or printed Armenian maps are now becoming part of the local landscape during the high season. Yet, larger, mixed Turkish-Armenian groups staying for longer periods are relatively

rare. Therefore, at the end of October 2011 our group became an “event” for the city and the region. It seemed that Moush had not experienced anything like that before: not only we were young students from Armenia and Turkey in one group, but we were together making an inquiry into the history of the place and thus attracting the locals’ attention. The news of “Armenian and Turkish students in the city” quickly spread. Then, when we started visiting villages and talking to people in search for the Armenian presence somewhere on the mental maps of current residents of the place, we came across the treasure discourse. Many people asked us directly whether we too were looking for treasure and if we



had the treasure maps of our forefathers. Their perception of Armenian inhabitants in the past evolved through the myth of their exaggerated wealth and physical qualities. In addition, the Armenian letters on the maps and the remnants of Armenian culture also fitted into the mystic and imaginary part of the history.

Once, while we were looking for people to talk in the old city of Moush, a tall middle-aged man reacted positively and after learning about the project and about the Armenian students in our group, he kindly invited us to his family home. Our conversation was mostly about Armenians and the names of the places where they used to live. We were very touched by his hospitality and willingness to help with the history of the villages and monuments. We have learned that there are still places named in the same Armenian way they were before. During the conversation, our host kept asking about our own maps. This was surprising, because for us they were ordinary maps that one could find everywhere. It was during our second visit to his house that our host looked at the map and said:

“Of course, Armenians left; they went away. At the time there was a map like this. They left then, when the map was like this [...] You know the map left from that period. [...] Particularly the names are all the same in those regions. Nothing has changed. Tell them that nothing different has happened.”

It was interesting to hear that people use old names, because in the official maps toponyms are changed or their spelling is used in a Turkified way. Later, we learned that this was not the only case - many people in Moush know the previous Armenian names of the villages. While he was talking about the map and the toponyms, his wife added:

“Inshallah, next time we'll travel more, up to the mountains. [...]. One finds a lot of gold. I mean they dig up; clear water

comes out. Clear water comes from the creeks; there is also gold. Everyone knows this. Works of art... They hid gold. [...] They dug up and left signs. There are signs where they dug up. They left signs on top. They leave writings in Armenian on top. - It's like they dig up a lot. Armenia [Armenians] come here. Armenia comes here with Turks; they come here and travel around. Then they extract things. They take a lot of things. These Turks get rich on account of Armenia. They come from Armenia, bring their maps. They bring the names of their grandfathers and villages and signs. They dig up and extract. People now say that their [Armenians'] grandfathers would know... Maybe they could tell them the places and the signs. Together we could go and find it.”

This is how we came to understand that current residents of Moush have been seeing people from Armenia traveling around Moush City and plain. These people have their own maps with strange marks, which are actually simply place names written with the Armenian alphabet. After talking to more people both in downtown Moush and in the villages, we found out that not only have residents of those places seen people “looking for gold,” but some have witnessed real cases when people actually found “gold.” For example, while talking about Armenians in Moush, a person of Circassian origin residing in one of the previously Armenian villages recalled a story:

“We dig here and find Armenian coins and bullets. Right behind our house, my sister had planted beans. While she was watering the plant, she left the water there. Then she was digging the ground to change the direction of the water flow towards the plant, and she found this huge piece of gold. Two bracelets and also a man's corpse and the buttons of his clothes. The buttons had stuck to the bones. I guess the man was escaping, and somehow he died with those two bracelets in his pocket.”



So, the narratives were not merely based on people's imagination. Maps and treasure hunt stories helped us to understand that this myth was not just a myth. These stories can tell us more about how people remember the past and each other in the past. Through these narratives we felt that there was a general perception of Armenians being rich, and some people linked the Armenian treasures to their hard working nature. The wife of our first host in Moush told us, "Armenians were strong unlike the Turks. This is why they had so much gold. They worked so hard unlike us." There were also some people trying to explain why Armenians had to leave their gold, like this man in one of the Moush villages:

"Here treasure hunting is popular; they search for Armenian gold. I ask them: "Do you ever think why they

left that gold there?" Why? They could wear their jewelry and take them away. Why did they leave those behind? Because the state passed a deportation law..."

As we can see from these narratives, myths create a social memory and imagination for the past. Interestingly, in the popular imagination treasures were located around the ruins of abandoned Armenian churches and monasteries. This belief may have had some basis in fact, since wealthier people were traditionally buried around these places. Current residents of Chengilli village, which is located on the grounds of the famous Armenian St. Karapet Monastery, tried to sell us some "treasure" objects and told us about these strange Armenians coming to their village in search for gold. There were other instances, when we were told that the treasures

were hidden in the churches. Here is an excerpt from a group interview with young boys in one of the villages that illustrates this notion of linking churches and monasteries to treasures:

Q: There are no Armenians living here today, but there used to be. Are there Armenians coming here for a visit, like us? We came from Istanbul.

- Yes.
- They used to come in the old times as well.
- They had come here one or two years ago.

Q: What do they do when they come here?

- They take photos.
- They take photos of the church.
- When they came, there was no hay in there [church]. They went inside and took photos of the signs.

Q: Got it. Do you know specifically what lies beneath the hay? Have you ever seen its interior?

- No we haven't, but some people say there's gold in there.
- They say so.

Q: Under the church?

- Yes, they say that there's a treasure, that there's gold.
- It's told that there's a door underneath.

Q: Is this gold still there?

- We don't know.
- Yes.
- Christians hid them.

From Moush to Armenia

We thought that these treasure stories were told only by the current population of Moush. However, we were surprised to discover that people in Armenia had also heard these stories from their families. We met Daniel Danielyan, a 72 year old man in Voskehask village of Armenia. He told us

about his grandfather with a kind of longing in his voice. While talking about the life there, in the Bulanikh region of Moush, he recalled his parents' tales of fertile fields, vineyards and bee hives. At one point he turned to us and said, "I want to tell you an interesting story." He continued:

"Our grandfather on his death-bed stroked his knees with his hands and said: "Khchka Ago, Khchka Ago." We learned that Khchka Ago was a location where he had hidden his gold. He was afraid that in spring, when the snow melted, people would find the pit and steal his gold. My father said if he went, he would find the place. Our grandfather even measured the site (seven belts) so that it was far from the tilled field. Children said, "Kyake Bro, instead of telling about the grape orchards, springs, things like these, you repeat the name 'Khchka Ago.' He answered, "It is because I've hidden gold there."

It was interesting to discover that people in Armenia were talking about the family wealth left behind and passing this information from generation to generation in some kind of hope that one day someone from the family might go back and find the gold. Some people have heard stories about family members who have actually tried to go back and bring the family wealth. Gevorg Margaryan from Suser said:

"They had had property, gold that they had buried and left behind. They had had special pits to store grains in. They had dropped their valuables into those pits and fled. But my father and a friend of his, Bareh by name, they had returned one day after the war – they had crossed the border by night and had gone back... They had walked all the way to get the gold... Bareh had got his valuables from under dung where he had hidden them."

A woman from Katnaghbyur village tried to explain why her ancestors had hidden their wealth:

“She said that they had pits and had filled them with wheat, barley, gold. They had hidden all their wealth as they thought they would go back to their homeland, to their land and water; that’s why she kept asking, “You say we will go back, we will go back but we never go”.”

Similarly, Sos from Tsamakasar village justified his ancestors’ choice to settle near the Turkish-Armenian border with not only the hope to go back but also to claim their property, including the hidden gold:

“See, those massacres, that exile, people lost their children, siblings... they set out with only daily food supply, all the belongings, all the fortune was left behind. Some even had money, gold, they buried in their gardens, under the walls of the houses, aiming to return and claim their property.”

So just like the people in Moush were trying to rationalize and explain why Armenians had to leave their belongings, because the deportation law was passed and people could not take much, those in Armenia were also looking for explanations in family narratives. In their version, however, the wealth was hidden not because they were deported, but because people still hoped to go back to their homes.

At the same time there were cases when the gold was not hidden but had been used in other ways, like in the story of Pilos Hakhoyan, an 81-year-old man residing in Katnaghbyur village in Armenia:

“My father had had gold, much gold. He said he had wanted to buy sheep with it. The gold was not buried. Other property was buried. The gold coins, they had wrapped them round the wife’s and the daughter’s waist as pay-off money in exchange for freedom. They had fled and hoped that the wife and children would be set free in exchange for gold. They had had other property, wheat, other property.”

As well as stories about treasures left behind in Moush or brought to Armenia, there were also stories about gold left behind by the Kurdish or Turkish families who used to live in Armenia. For example, when asked about family gold, Rafik Avagyan from Voskehask, instead of talking about the hidden treasures of his ancestors in Moush, told us:

“What could poor working people leave there to tell? They scarcely could afford their and their children’s daily bread. But they are said to have found gold in rich Kurds’ houses after the latter have left [Voskehask], hidden in walls, under floors. This I know but not more.”

Interestingly, in the perception of some Armenian villagers, the previous residents of their village would come back and go to mountain springs to look for their gold, just as the Armenians would do in the stories of current Moush residents. Aramais Israelyan from Katnaghbyur said:

“No they have left. Turks have left, but there was one that lived in my grandfather’s paternal uncle’s place. That woman always came, every year and went up there to a spring. She looked at water there. People used to say other things, they said, “She probably hides treasure there”.”

Arshak Torosyan, also from Katnaghbyur told us the story about a villager, who had actually witnessed the previous owner of his home taking something (assumed to be treasure) from the house after spending a night there as a guest:

“They [Turks and Armenians] have lived together for some time. Then they [Armenians] realized it was not working and told Turks to take their belongings and leave. There was a case, Miro’s house. There was a man named Miro, Armenian. He unsettled the Turk and stayed. The Turk had gold hidden in his house. It was hidden in the cattle



house, as they tell it, I haven't seen it myself. So the Turk hid gold in a cattle house and went to Masis. Back then people used to bring nuts and grapes loaded on donkeys and camels. There was nothing in the village back then, no trees, nothing. They brought here nuts and grapes to sell. Those Kurds, Turks from Masis that left this place. The Turk that was kicked off by Miro he came to Miro's place for trade riding a camel. He stayed overnight after he had finished his trade. He woke up at night, entered the house, took his gold and disappeared. In the morning Miro woke up and saw a ground flag-stone removed."

Treasures we found

While we have heard many stories of family wealth being hidden or found, we have also heard stories both in Armenia and Moush about other types of treasure. Many Armenian

families would take other sorts of family treasures such as old Bibles, prayer books and other items of worship. Seda Pargevyan from the village of Voskehask in Armenia told us:

"They didn't bring their gold with them. My grandmother brought some pieces of jewelry. She tied them up with the saint. We left the gold behind, she used to say. The jewelry she sold back then and the Saint is now kept in my brother's home in Yerevan."

There are so-called home-saints brought from Ergir in almost every village in Armenia that we have visited. They are widely perceived not just as protectors of their owners but also as relics and treasures that have traveled with their owners all the way from Moush to Armenia, which where most villagers go in search of support and protection.



The most interesting thing we noticed was that some people in Armenia would use the word treasure not necessarily with respect to the family gold or wealth, but while talking about nature - fields, rivers, mountains, lakes, monuments, and the history left behind. Those were and still are very important parts of physical, mental, and chronological maps of their lost homeland. Moreover, even though family gold appeared in the Armenian narratives, it was not mentioned as the main reason to visit Moush. It was kind of absent from the mental map and travel routes of people when talking about past or future visits to their lost motherland and when discussing the things they want to see in Moush or bring back with them.

Most often people want to visit historically and culturally significant places that are still alive in their map of Moush, such as the ruined monasteries of Saint Karapet and Saint Arakelots and the village of Hatsekats/Hatsik – the birthplace of Mesrop Mashtots, inventor of the Armenian alphabet. They want to see the Moush Valley and the Murad River and bring back a handful of soil or a piece of stone. People also talk about seeing their villages, houses, cemeteries, fields, springs and gardens. Aramais Israelyan recalled:

“My grandfather was going to return to their house, to their garden and spring water, to everything. He wanted this, but it never happened. I don’t know if it will be possible in the future. When talking about Moush Valley my grandfather used to say, “Son, the grass was like a sea, you just plant wheat you will always get bread, we had trees, we had everything...” Others go one by one there to see, and I am jealous of them. Why don’t I manage to go there to see *ergir*, the river where my father swam, houses, everything.”

The desire of many people of Moush origin in Armenia was to visit their ancestral places. However, they have certain hesitations like the one mentioned by Taron Muradyan from Irind village:

“Now I want to go to the village Aran which is on the bank of the river Aratsani. It is a small village, you will not always find it on the map. It is near village Ashtishat, the fortress of Voghakan, the famous Sulukh bridge. I remember him [his grandfather] say that the battle of Gevorg Chavush was near this bridge. It was in 1907, wasn't it? He said that he was six years old then and they heard the sounds of firing. For every person his birthplace is certainly the best in the world but just imagine the plane of Moush, banks of Aratsani, grape and apple orchards, the cattle, their forest, the manna, gaspe... It is in our blood. You see, I want to go but at the same time there is something that holds me back. Maybe my grandfather's stories were more beautiful than what I'll find there and I'll be disappointed to see only ruins or I won't find my ancestors' house or graves.”

Longing of their homelands, people ask those who visit Moush to bring a stone, some soil or water as if they are real treasures. They also asked us why we did not bring any soil or stone from Moush. “If somebody goes to Ergir I'll ask them to go to my ancestors' land and bring a handful of soil from there,” said Rafik Avagyan from Voskehask.

After visiting both Moush and the villages of people of Moush origin in Armenia, we feel the narratives uncover what both sides left behind. It is beyond and more valuable than treasure. Hrant Dink had a powerful response to those in Turkey who loiter in the ruins of Armenian graveyards and churches looking for treasure:

“You are digging and looking for treasure under the ground,” he used to say, “but you fail to realize that the real treasure - walking on the ground in these lands - was annihilated.”



Denying One's Self: Stories of Women By Rinet Isajyan (Armenia)

Upon hearing we are from Armenia, many people in Moush would say their grandmothers were also Armenians. Unfortunately we were not prepared to make deeper inquiries about these women. Such conversations might have yielded interlinked stories or family connections between distant relatives in Moush and Armenia. Making these connections could alleviate the grief and longing of those people. Across the border, in Armenia, people with Moush ancestry were also focused on their mothers and grandmothers. There were two parallel story lines, unaware of each other, divided by a border, yet very similar. There were those who were left behind and those who escaped and passed the border. Both narratives were marked by fear of violence, unknown challenges and the certain difficulties of adapting to new conditions. Our interviews of Armenians in Moush were limited because many still do not speak openly about their Armenian roots. I hesitate to apply the information we got to a broad picture, but have more confidence in comparing these stories back towards the sample of non-Armenian respondents. Here is the story of one of our respondents from Moush who had an Armenian grandmother:

“My father’s side is Armenian and my mother’s side is Yezidi. They come from Kars. My father met my mother there and they got married. We were born and raised in Moush as children. We learned a little bit of Armenian from my grandmother. You may ask me why I learned it. My grandmother wouldn’t speak Armenian at home. The reason why she didn’t speak it was that she had seen all the massacres being committed here (they [Armenians] call it Harpet; now it’s called Elazig) in 1915 when she was nine-ten years old. My grandmother saw and witnessed them all...

She told me all about it. I took them by force. No one at home knows as much as I do. At home I would badger my grandmother and learn things by force. Everyone denies them. Since my grandmother witnessed all those massacres she used to recount them. She told what she knew. She was still afraid and leery of it. Because she witnessed those events, she constantly lived through them. She lived them with every breath she took. And she used to tell us... I would say: “Grandma, why don’t you teach me Armenian? I want to learn what bread is, water is, God is [in Armenian].” She would say: “Allah is Astvats; water is jour.” That’s how I learned things from her. I would learn by force. She used to tell us not to learn, and I would ask why. “You’ll go out and speak among yourselves. Then everyone in the village will understand that we’re totally Armenian; they’ll annihilate us in one night here. Because they destroyed hundreds, thousands of people.” There are some things about my grandmother I cannot tell. There are very painful things. There are very bad things other than hitting, smashing and sleeping in the barn.”

When talking about his grandmother, this seemingly strong man in his forties would become very emotional. He was haunted by his grandmother’s stories his entire life as if these stories were part of his memory.

Having learned about all these Armenian grandmothers, we started searching for traces of the Armenian girls left in Moush in the narratives of our respondents in Armenia. This is how we discovered that there were many stories of girls being kidnapped from their families. In Armenia, however, the story line ended right after the kidnapping, since they usually did not know what happened after. “We had an aunt, a distant aunt who was so beautiful that the Turks took her away. Whether they took her to become a wife or otherwise, who knows? The fact is that they took her away for good. Nazo was her name, dear. I am not sure but I think her name was Nazo,” – recalls Saro Ghukasyan from Zartonk village of Armenia whose father was from Tshhak village of Moush.

Qloyan Mkhitar, whose grandparents came from Aner village, Moush, and who currently resides in Katnaghbyur village of Armenia recounts: “They killed their brother, a man called Khachik, her sister was kidnapped, her name was Khazal. She was very beautiful and she had very long hair, Khazal. Khazal is a name of a bird...”

Since kidnapping was quite common, Armenian families in Moush would try first to hide beautiful women and girls by putting dirt on their face, dressing them as boys or hiding them somewhere in the house. Here is a story of 80-year-old Seda Pargevyan from Voskehask village of Armenia:

“Hatsekats, Hatsik. It was the village of Mesrop Mashtots. My forefathers lived and died there, my son. I will tell you how they died. My grandmother, my paternal grandmother, migrated and settled here back then. Two boys were saved, only my father and his brother were saved. The rest, all of the 10 children died and they kidnapped one girl, they took away one 13-year-old girl. My great grandfather was a priest; his father was a priest as well. Both of them died. The Turks killed both of them, they were cleric servants. My grandfather was Pargev. Pargev’s father was Avag, Avag’s father was Khachatur, Khachatur’s father was Sahak. I shall tell you everything, Shogho and Ropee were still alive then and we took much interest in those stories. We asked them to tell stories and cried together for the murdered, for how cruelly those men were murdered. My paternal aunt, 14-year-old, was very beautiful. Learning that they are coming for them, grandma slurred her face and hid her in tonir. They used to have slabs back then, son, she covered the girl with one. They knew there is a child in the house; they looked for her, pulled off the slug to find her sitting in the tonir. They cursed my grandmother in Turkish “your din” and carried away the child. A living child. She died with the name of that girl on her lips... day and night she remembered her. They killed my grandfather, there wasn’t any man left in



the house. That poor woman was left with her children... out of 12 kids only two passed the border. Twelve uncles and aunts, she had 12 children. My father died in the Second World War. He died in the war and nothing was left for us.”

The fear of possible kidnapping was so strong, that many women or girls would commit suicide. In Katnaghbyur village of Armenia, Hripsime from Derik village recalls the story of her grandmother Shushan and other young girls of Derik:

“...She was a very beautiful woman, my Shushan grandmother; they slurred her face lest they should kidnap her. She said, our girls had put dirt on their faces... and that molla would look closely to figure out whether we were beautiful... and we dropped our heads at once... the order was that only girls, especially women were to deliver the taxes. They didn't want men, they wanted women to pay the tribute and tax. She said many women were kidnapped by Turks, many threw themselves into Murat river, especially on the exile route. They boned their hair together and threw themselves into the river not to get converted.”

The stories of kidnapping of beautiful women are echoed in some narratives of current Moush residents. Thus, one of our respondents in Moush was telling how beautiful women have been selected and put aside during the massacres:

“There was this event in which they took hundreds of women to the banks of Firat [Eastern Euphrates/Aratsani or Murat]. After they took them there, they separated the most beautiful women. Then they [throw] the little children in their laps into Firat. They took the beautiful women for themselves. They shot the ugly ones and threw them into the river. And for months they used these



women as slaves. And when things calmed down a little, they picked them off again at the Harpet Castle in Elazig. Then they brought bullock carts and threw them in again. [Blood] poured out of the bullet holes and turned the river bright red.”

In Moush, there were also stories about conversion and intermarriage: “There’s no intermarriage, but many Armenian girls were left behind after they [Armenians] ran away from Arakonak-Girvas, near Salohan. People married them. Now they have a lot of children, but they’re Muslims,” - tells a respondent in Cengilli village. A woman from Goms village in Moush recounts the following:

“All the Armenians here fled with Isro. Most of them were killed in Andok. A lady was able to run away. She hid herself underneath the dead bodies. She recounted the story to my mother-in-law. We haven’t seen the woman. Her name was Nvard; her Muslim name was Reyhan. She was the bride of this village; she ran away and went to Moush. That bride’s father was a leader, an agha. An Armenian lady, she married with a Muslim man...”

Generally, stories related to Armenian women told in Moush were about the hidden lives of survivors and Islamized girls and women, while the stories in Armenia were mainly about kidnapped Armenian girls and women. However, in Suser village of Armenia we encountered an interesting story unique within the Armenian context, yet, somehow “parallel” to the ones told in Moush. During the massacres of Armenians in Moush a young Kurdish woman called Ifo was kidnapped by an Armenian man and brought over to Eastern Armenian village Suser. Members of our group visited the village cemetery with Ifo’s grandson Igit to see her gravestone that read “Ifo Suleyman Zakharyan” And to hear Igit’s narrative about his grandmother:

“She died when I was 10... She would embrace me, caress me. She was a tall woman, her hair reached the ground... beautiful, very beautiful that’s how our grandma was... longing, sighing to go and see her native land. She had ten brothers over there. She would always sing in Kurdish and cry, sing and cry. My grandfather Igit kidnapped her in 1915, brought her to Etchmiadzin, baptized her and then married... She accepted our surname but kept her father’s name. Her name was registered as Ifo. She would always curse my granddad Igit. I was called after him. She learned to love because of what she had escaped but the separation from her relatives meant she could never find happiness.”

A hostage of Armenian-Turkish relations, Ifo never accepted her Armenian name, Mariam. Her grandson recalled that: “She kept on telling us names, she would tell us all about her brothers in case one day Armenians and Turks unite, we would be able to find our relatives. She used to tell us that when the Armenian- Turkish problems were solved we would need to know where to look for our relatives. But back then who could talk about Turks... Under the Communist party we couldn’t even think of uttering Andranik’s name. We would be exiled... exiled to Siberia or elsewhere. We didn’t have the right to speak, nobody spoke about this war.”To our question how was Ifo’s life among Armenian people who must have known that she is a converted Muslim, Igit tells:

“The set order was that the youngsters would always obey the elderly. They all went to ask advice from the elders. There was love, reverence for her. She wouldn’t sleep until her son came back from work, she would see that he had eaten and would then retire. She was a very kind woman. I do remember her cooking, caring for the poor families. I don’t remember her being discontent... her brother, her parents, they were left on the other side, that’s why she would complain. You see what kind of thing love is... that an Armenian would kidnap a Kurd. Love is above war, borders... there is no way of getting in its way.”

Igit tells that his grandmother died with longing for her motherland and relatives, and how she would always ache and cry for them. She always dreamed of the opening of the border, so that she could visit her brothers, and relatives, but, generations passed and the two sides have lost touch with each other, as was often reported to us.

Violent stories involving women from the family itself are generally accurately avoided in family narratives of survivors. Even in their second or third generations people are still unwilling to talk or “don’t remember” the cases of women from their family being converted and/or raped. When this topic is raised, people get overwhelmed with emotion, becoming awkward, uncomfortable and angry. Arshak Torosyan of Katnaghbyur village recalled that his grandfather had six children- a son and five daughters:

“Five, five of them. My father was the only son. They killed them... They were taken [bit angry]. Maybe they were taken and kept, the beautiful girls were kidnapped. And two of them were killed on the way. They only brought my father, carrying him on their shoulders [lowering his voice]...”

The traumatic memories and the deep-rooted fear must have radically changed the physiology of survived women in certain cases, resulting in denial of their womanhood. Amalia from Voskehask village of Armenia, who roots from the village of Derik in Moush tells that the only female survivor of their family was dressed in male clothing during the escape so as to hide her from possible kidnappers. After the escape and survival, she never became a woman again. She lived her entire life as if she was a man.

“It’s about the son of my uncle. He was a woman... no, no... not a woman... a young girl. He got into male clothes. She was my uncle’s daughter, her name was Hovhannes [Hovhannes is a male name]. Her entire family was slaughtered; she got into male cloths and never took them off... till her very end.

She died in 1970. Everybody thought she’s a man. They would call her Sissy Hovhannes. People thought she’s a man. You know what they called her – Sissy Hovhannes. Who would wear male clothes back then?”

As the men were taken away by the government order, mostly women, elderly people and children were on the roads of migration or on escape routes. Exhausted mothers often had to leave their child or children on the roads or even kill them. Those harshest memories would later devastate the survivors and turn the saved women’s lives into hell. Jivan Yeghiazaryan from Tsamakasar village of Armenia, remembers:

“...The wife of my father’s uncle left one of her children, an infant there. She buried the baby in the soil alive with her own hands so as the cry of the baby wouldn’t bring them, and so as they wouldn’t kill the other thousand people there-so, she had to leave the infant there. She brought the other child with her. Buried the infant in the field... in the field... in the soil... in ‘chuhgil’ – do you know what ‘chuhgil’ is? It’s the heap of stones gathered from the fields.”

The concern that the paternal line could break forced girls and women to seemingly impossible sacrifices. “They always told that during the exodus they... Say they had three children and had to carry all three in their hands... so they preferred to leave the girls and save the boys so as the sons would continue family line,-” tells a relative of Pilos Hakhoian.

Listening to the stories of those ill-fated parents’ sufferings I constantly felt that they are kind of exaggerated, that with time their children spiced them with mythical, imaginary elements drawn of their own heartaches. These accounts were ultimately turning into a fairytale-like fiction for me. But when Paruryr Zakaryan from Zartonk village was telling about his granddad from Tsghak village of Moush, the one who cried

his life out in prayers for his mother who was burnt before his eyes, I clearly realized, not even felt, I realized that these stories are very definite. They are about very definite people whose lives were changed forever by very definite events.

“My grandpa was in the barn. Hundreds of people were stuffed into it. Somebody called “Vardan from Tsghak, Vardan from Tsghak.” Grandpa’s name was Vardan. “There were so many people inside I could hardly get out of there. I got out and as soon as the door was opened I saw my mother standing in front of it. She kissed me then they pushed her and threw into the barn. I didn’t even manage to touch Mom with lips. The Kurd had my mother’s belt in his hand.” He was a Kurd not a Turk. Perhaps she had given the belt to the Kurd so as he’d save Grandpa. So, Grandpa and his mother had changed places. That’s how it was. So, he says, “In five minutes the Kurd took me aside. Then they poured oil or diesel oil over the straws and grass and set the whole barn on fire”. “Hundreds of people” he says, “the smell... the smoke... We were away for kilometers but whichever direction the wind was blowing, it brought this loathsome smell it seemed to have lingered in my nose.”

This story is not more atrocious than other stories we recorded but it is so real. What else could a mother do if her son was going to burn, though he might well be saved if she took his place? It came to me with a strange clearness that was exactly how she would have acted... only... that very act would subsequently turn her son’s saved life into hell. This story often made me think of what, after all, was Vardan’s salvation? Is a devastated life better than death? Didn’t his mother choose death to save her own life from living hell? This is an impossible choice. I can’t begin to understand such things. One thing I know is that this story turned the mythical perception of the stories into a real and definite one. No one must ever face such choice.

The survivors in Armenia lived a life burdened by memory,

tragedy, and everyday thoughts about children left behind. Those Armenians who stayed in Turkey, typically Islamized women and children, but, men as well, lived through constant fear of death and suppression, all the while forced to hide their fear. They thought that by hiding their identities they were protecting their family, their future generation. This is how our 40 year-old respondent in Moush recalls his grandmother after hearing our question “When you were a child, were you aware of your Armenian origins?”

“Yes. My grandmother used to recount. My grandmother used to recount how my grandfathers lived, what took place... But she would recount these memories reluctantly. My grandmother lived her whole life with that psychology. Because once an accident takes place in front of a person, he/she cannot forget that for years. So you think about it. And when there were movies, movies about war, etc. my grandmother would cry like a child. She told us that she went back to those times. I would ask why she cried. She was watching these Greek-Turkish, these Cypriot-Turkish movies. All that shooting. She would say: “Those moments play out before my eyes; I cannot erase them.” My grandmother was living with them, and she couldn’t break free of it until the day she died. Always fear... always, Will they will shoot us; Will they slaughter us again; Will they annihilate us again?”

1915 irreversibly changed the destinies of thousands of women. Our purpose is not to compare the lives of those who stayed and lived reclusive lives in Turkey against the exiles in Armenia. The first group had to learn to hide, to live in fear, to obey and do so in total loneliness. The latter group was forced to construct a life in the present constantly surrounded by the memories of unspeakable violence.

From a Bowl and Vineyard to Mount Ararat: Symbols of the Past and the Future

By Hazal Atay (Turkey) and Tatev Hayrapetyan (Armenia)

“This bowl is from *ergir*. I don’t remember if it was brought by grandpa or by my paternal uncle. I don’t really remember the story of how it got here. They say that if a person gets sick and they give him water to drink from that bowl, he will get better. We still have it. If any of us have aches and pains we drink water from it and the pain stops. This is a very saintly relict; a very rare relict. They took it to Yerevan to exhibit it in a museum [referring to the Armenian Genocide Museum Institute]. They brought it back the next month. I don’t understand what is written on it, but it is sacred.”

This is how David Hovsepyan, a resident of Dashtadem village in Armenia described the bowl brought by his ancestors from Moush. Unlike in some other places in Turkey where Armenians were deported and forcibly walked on death marches to the Syrian desert of Der-El-Zor during the First World War, the rare survivors from Moush recount entire villages being burned. It is hard to imagine how in the process of trying to survive, anyone could also manage to preserve items from their village. Therefore, when asked whether their ancestors were able to preserve anything from Moush, people often became emotional, recalling family narratives of survival. The question was how anyone could bring anything at all in such difficult circumstances when they were not even able to save their own family members and loved ones.

David Hovsepyan’s paternal family was from Erisher village of Moush and he recalls how his grandfather had managed to survive:

“Our people have seen so many massacres before the exodus, Turks burnt our household, they locked people in a cow house in Erishter and burnt them, no one escaped, all were burnt... As to my grandpa, his little brother wanted to go for a pee... Hakob [the little brother] started to cry; they took the child in their arms, took him to the door and asked the Turks to let the child go. My uncle and my father ran off to mountains. They say the house was burnt when they reached there... Everything had been burnt, and then two orphan brothers were trapped over there, staying in this or that house before the Russians came. They came here with the Russians and were taken to the Ashtarak orphanage. Their uncle Mickael Mickaelyan took them from the orphanage.”

David knows the story of his grandfather’s survival by heart, but he does not know how the magic bowl, which became the symbol of Moush for him and his family, was brought to Armenia. He also doesn’t know what the function of the bowl had been back in Erishter. Actually, as with many others, his first reaction to the question what your ancestors brought with them from Moush was “No ... they brought nothing.” Only later did David mention the bowl. Talking about his parents’ and grandparents’ stories, David was very emotional and at points he could hardly hold his tears back. Then, while describing the “unusual and curing abilities” of the bowl, he explained that he believed the bowl was extraordinary and moreover that it was something sacred to him and his family. And it really was. As we saw in many families in the villages of Moush origin in Armenia, simple things brought from *ergir* would become something very unique and significant for people whose ancestors had managed to survive the Genocide. For these people, such items symbolize not only their lost homeland and the lives of their ancestors in Moush, but the continuation of their generation and their connection to a place they have never seen.

We met an 89 year old grandmother named Khatun



who lived in Katnaghbyur village of Armenia. As with many descendants of Genocide survivors, the first thing she told us was the story of her parents' survival.

“My father was from Aner village of Moush, and my mother was from Sulukh. When the carnage started, they fled. During the massacres, they [Armenians] were gathered in the church and set on fire. There was a good Turk there, an acquaintance of my mother's father, who released my mother and another Armenian woman. They escaped at night and reached Karabakh, I don't know if they traveled on foot or by carts... I've forgotten how long they stayed

in Karabakh. Eventually they left again and reached Ujan village but my grandfather didn't let them stay there, he said, “No, don't stay here, let's go to mountainous villages.”

This is how they ended up in Katnaghbyur. One wonders, how can a person bring something along an escape route from Moush to Karabakh to Ujan and then to Katnaghbyur. Khatun's mother had a necklace from ergir that she would always carry. After her mother's death, Khatun wore it. According to the family story, the necklace was brought by Khatun's father who found it back in ergir and took it with him all the way to Armenia.



Grandma Khatun's daughter-in-law hesitated a lot before showing us a box with things brought by her in-laws from Moush. Later she explained that Khatun kept this box hidden and avoided showing it even to her family members because the box was a treasured relic of her mother's. Khatun kept her mother's passport which said that Khazal Grigoryan was born in Turkey in 1887, although the passport had been printed in 1949 during the Soviet period.

Throughout our interviews and fieldwork in the Armenian villages, we learned that many people keep documents pertaining to their forefathers as if those items are the only remaining proof of their connection to their lost homeland. In a world where one side of the border still denies its history, the victims of that history living on the other side of the border, are desperately trying to gain recognition of what happened to them. Although the documents they keep as proof are usually not from Moush, they do demonstrate that their owners were originally from what they refer to as Western Armenia or ergir.

The documents are not the only symbols of belonging and the abrupt cut from their roots, however. Gravestones in local cemeteries are probably the most vivid proof of their

existence. In Armenia, one can reconstruct a map of an entire village populated by the survivors after only walking through the village cemetery. Simple engravings on the gravestones track the roots of their owners. The scripts on the graves silently tell the history: "Mesrop Mkhitar Gasparyan, born in 1903 in the Tsrunk village of Moush, died in 1937." Much the same as the documents, these gravestones give a voice to the untold stories of their owners. Together, these items are symbols of being transplanted from one place to another and represent the strong desire of maintaining and even publicly declaring a connection to the former place. We were touched by some seemingly illogical and extremely emotional stories of people who travelled to Western Armenia and brought back soil to pour on the graves of their parents or grandparents. Symbolically this soil re-connected the dead with their much loved, dreamed about and yearned for homeland. As our respondents told us, their grandparents died "with the thirst for their homeland in their hearts." Some people even believed that the soil from ergir could heal the wounds and somehow numb the pain of their much suffered souls, so they could finally rest in peace.

We discovered there was even more to it than that. In the Armenian tradition it is very important to be buried in the homeland and since this homeland is not accessible in this



case, the soil from the homeland symbolically serves this purpose.

Aramayis Israelyan, a 78 years old man also from Katnaghbyur village keeps a belt that his mother brought from ergir. Aramayis explained:

“This was given to my mother by her mother on her wedding day, and my mother brought it with her from ergir. The belt was gilded, but now it had lost the color. My mother used to wear it. When I was young, all villagers would go to weddings. And after the feast, at night, everybody would gather in the collective farm’s barn to dance. They all went to dance that time. My mother’s mother put the belt around my mother’s waist and took her to a wedding. My mother instructed me to keep it for my daughter-in-law.”

He was sure that the belt was made by Armenian masters. In addition to the belt, Aramayis also has a carpet from ergir. The carpet was a gift from Isro of Petar, a well-known fedayee back in ergir. Isro traveled throughout Western Armenia in search of Armenian orphans who had been kidnapped or hidden among Muslims, offering to pay one gold coin per a child. While facing persecutions with the Soviet authorities, Isro received some help from Aramayis’s grandfather who was a miller.

“He always came to my grandfather at night and provided for his family. My grandfather helped him with everything. He brought this carpet from Turkey. And he gave this carpet to my grandfather as a gift.”

The carpet was kept in the family as a relic from Western Armenia, but at the same time it created a lot of problems for the family because by accepting a gift from Isro, the family was automatically considered Isro’s associate by the Bolshevik regime, and thus guilty by association. The family



could not throw the carpet away since it was a relic from ergir and also from Isro, but at the same time they were scared to keep it at home. It was only after some time that the carpet was eventually considered a legitimate possession.

Because of this same fear of the Bolshevik ruling elite, many people destroyed family heirlooms from ergir. Some went so far as to cut all ties with their past. Mher Vardanyan from Tsamakasar village, whose paternal and maternal ancestors fell victim to the massacres in Tsrnk village of Moush, told us the story of his father who was orphaned during the Genocide. He later learned that some of his relatives had survived and were living in Istanbul:

“I know that the one from Istanbul would always talk to my father, he would write letters and so on, but then he [father] burned all the letters because of fear, to avoid persecution [by Communists]... They brought photos from Moush. They have burned them all because of fear.”

Apart from those materials and tangible symbols, certain traditions have also gained symbolic meaning for Armenians



of Moush origin in Armenia. One of the best examples is the story of Taron Muradyan from Irind village. Taron told us that there was a tradition in his family to light the tonir every day and that this tradition came from Moush. It was strange because usually people make bread in tonir once a week, not every day. “My grandfather made my grandmother light the tonir every day, even during the winter months. This tradition comes from ergir. Everyday my grandfather longed for the smell of fresh lavash.” Taron explained that due to this tradition his grandfather kept the connection with his homeland Moush and somehow satisfied his yearning for it.

For many families, the process of preparing certain types of foods, which were common among Armenians in Moush, is also very special. David Hovsepyan told us that in Moush, mainly Armenian men used to prepare harisa, and that the process of preparing it was something special to them.

“When my father was the village head and a delegation was to come from Yerevan, my father served harisa to them. He cooked it in the tonir and would transfer it to a big bowl until it reached a certain consistency... They cooked it all night long and when my mother went to see if it was too dense, she would sometimes add more water. The men were in charge of this process. When it was cooked in the morning they brought kangar to stir it, it was called trkots. They stirred it until it became runny and flowed.”

These traditions somehow managed to keep people symbolically connected to Moush and to each other. Repeating the same things that their ancestors used to do in Moush they are able to maintain a level of feeling, empathy and practice that gives them a sense of belonging to Moush.

In addition to personal and family traditions and symbols, there are some commonly shared public symbols that unify people from Moush and Sassoun in Armenia. Those symbols were created later in Armenia and are now important part of

these descendants' identity. Interestingly, these commonly shared symbols seem to be trying to keep a connection with the past and are mostly associated with the Genocide or the time around the Genocide. The symbols vary from maps of Western Armenia hanging on the most central walls in homes, to monuments of heroes and Armenian fedayees such as Andranik and Gevorg Chavush located in village centers. The villages even compete among each other arguing about which monument was erected first. For example, people we met in Voskehask village claimed that their monument was the first full-body monument of Andranik, compared to the one in Ujan, (widely considered to be the first monument to Andranik in Armenia) is merely a bust. If personal and family possessions help people to keep their connection with their homeland and roots, then common or public symbols, such as these monuments, help them to remember the Genocide.

The most important commonly shared symbol is probably April 24. While April 24 is the date Armenians worldwide commemorate the Genocide, the ways Armenians commemorate this day are different. When asked what traditions are common and well preserved in their village, Jivan Yeghiazaryan from Tsamakasar replied:

“You mean customs from the Moush Valley? Mostly, it's throughout Armenia but April 24 is special here. The fires, for instance. We build them for the Turks across the border to see. It's not common in many other places. For instance, we also communicate with people from Leninakan [Gyumri] the villages of Artik and they say, “No, what a stupid thing to do!” So, on April 24 we use everything we can to make a big fire – worn out tires are the best for this. For instance, I walk around the village and if I see any that are not destroyed but are only worn out, I'd even buy them for 500 drams and send it on. Everybody brings something and puts it into a big car which we drive to the mountain top to burn in effigy of what took place in 1915. This act says “Look! This is our territory, can you

see this mountain? [showing the mountain]. The fires are made on top of it, that's the highest point that can be seen and this side is covered with fires. There are fewer on the other side: closer to Aragats, fewer they become... All of this effort is to say that “We haven't forgotten it [says with an emotional sigh] irrespective of our age, and it doesn't matter whether we witnessed it or not.”

These mountain-top fires are a common way of remembering for the residents in many villages on the border with Turkey. As we have not been to the villages directly on the other side of the border, we do not know exactly how the fires are interpreted there.

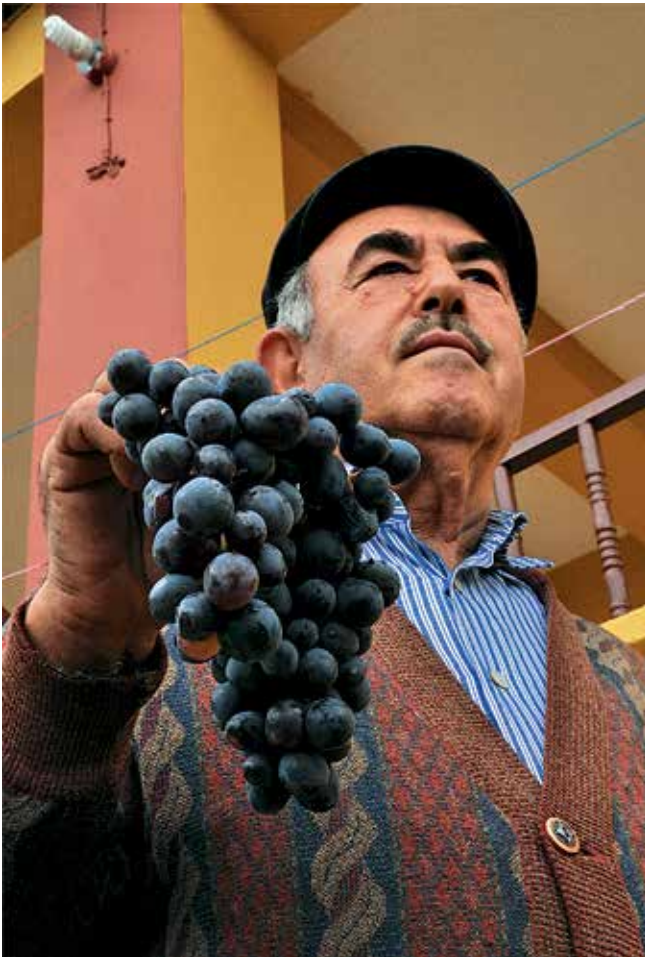
Family items and traditions, as well as the symbols in public spaces are sacred to Armenians. Those items and traditions have helped Moush Armenians keep their memories about Genocide and lost homeland alive, and these feelings have been passed from generation to generation. Probably that is why while telling the stories of their grandparents and parents the people we had met in Armenia were representing the story as if they themselves had passed through those stories and were witnesses to the violent destruction of Armenians in 1915. Due to this material culture as well as lots of traditions, Moush Armenians maintain their hope to return back to their homeland, and continue their lives on their ancestors' land.

In Moush, the things left by Armenians such as their homes, mirrors, vineyards and churches not only material culture representing history, but have also become the symbols of the existence of the Armenian population in these regions. Respondents in Moush repeated phrases such as “this place belonged to the Armenians,” or “this country is yours [referring to Armenians].” In Moush, the memories about Armenians are mainly associated with Armenian possession left behind, while the items brought to other places are the last remaining symbols of Moush life for Armenians and connection to their homeland in Moush.

People we met in Moush and Armenia talked about simple

things, such as bowls, mirrors and chests as something sacred which couldn't be shown to us at first. Eventually we were able to understand their feelings and how these items came to bear so much significance for their owners. For Mshetsi Armenians living in Armenia, these objects are the only things left from Moush. They remind their owners of lost people and places, and thus have great emotional value. Meanwhile, the objects left by Armenians in Moush remind current residents of Moush that Armenians once lived there.

In Moush, we observed attribution of new and deep



meanings to items from the past. People living in Moush nowadays, especially descendants of older generations, have sensitivities towards Armenians originating from the Moush Valley. They associate Armenians with both material culture and certain professions. This is one way the destroyed churches, vineyards, mirrors and other items left by Armenians help keep the memories about them alive in Moush.

During our stay in Moush, we visited vineyards situated high in the mountains between Moush and Sassoun. We were inspired by the beautiful landscape. Once we reached the vineyard, we met Tevfik Renschber, a Kurdish resident who maintained the vineyard. When we introduced ourselves and Tevfik, he became aware that there were Armenians among our group. He became emotional and said, "You're asking about this place; who this place belongs to, well this village belongs to an Armenian. Do you know what hak [justice] means? Hak is the name of Allah. This place belonged to an Armenian. But today it doesn't."

This is how Tevfik started his story about the vineyards that once belonged to Armenians. Our respondent was able to recall the details of his father's stories and even told us the names of the individual Armenian owners of the vineyards. He was excited and wanted our group members, especially the Armenians, to eat the grapes. "Now you eat these grapes, these belong to your fathers and grandfathers." As he told us later, neither Turks nor Kurds dealt with viticulture very much.

"It was the Armenians who grew grapes in order to make wines. My father was among the few Muslims engaged in viticulture. This land is my father's property; he bought it from the Treasury.¹ It belonged to the Treasury because it was Armenian property. The Treasury sold it to my father. At that time, those who had the means could buy the seized land from the Treasury. My father's land belonged to Sepan."

¹ Property seized from Armenians was first registered as "abandoned wealth" then taken under State Treasury. Most of the wealth was given to refugees from Balkans or Caucasus. The rest was sold under different programs, mostly under the title of "Nationalization of Economy."

As he recalled the names of previous landowners, it was evident to us that he associated Armenians with wine-making, or viniculture. The fertility of the land helped Tefvik keep his memories and the stories told by his father about Armenians alive. “These lands are very fertile. Even though you don’t plant anything it still produces fruit. The roots are like snakes. When spring comes, they shake off their skin and freshen up,” Tefvik explained, adding, “These have been cultivated for over two thousand years. This area must be at least a thousand years old.” In fact, he didn’t refer to his grapes as *uzum*, which is Turkish for grape. He used the Armenian name *khaghogh*.

Now there are only a few vineyards in Moush. But the heritage of Armenian land owners hasn’t faded. There were once six wine factories in Moush. “They used to send the wines to Europe, to France.”

Apart from the grapes, Tefvik wanted to offer us some tea and coffee. But we were many and he didn’t have enough cups. A saying in Turkish equates one cup of coffee with forty years of friendship. In fact, we drank neither coffee nor tea, but we found that a bunch of *khaghogh* is more valuable than a cup of Turkish coffee, committing one to at least a thousand years of friendship! So, we were lucky enough to taste the grapes and as we left, Tefvik conveyed his regards to Armenia. “If they come here, everything I own is theirs. I will show them all of these vineyards”, he said.

Later, when we went downtown to visit the old Moush, we came across a house which attracted the attention of our entire group with its beauty. As we walked around the house, we met Salim and his family. Salim, who collected Armenian items with care, lived in an Armenian house whose owner was known as Petros Efendi.

“This house was built later. I was born in this other house which you can see there. But now there are only ruins. My ancestors inherited this place from Petros Efendi. I haven’t heard from him. But there is a tourist group who



came from Yerevan to visit the Church of the Virgin Mary. One of them lived in San Francisco and he told me that he knew Petros. They told us that one of his grandchildren lived nearby in Georgia.”

One large mirror has taken on great significance for him and he said that he will keep the mirror and wait for the Armenian owner’s descendants to come to collect it.

“That was left by my father’s father. I know that mirror came from the house in which I was born. It was left to my father, and from my father it has been left to me. Perhaps it will be left to my grandchild.”

We learned that the mirror was not the only thing left by Armenians. “There is the wardrobe, that tray and a washbowl. There is a copper cauldron and a saucepan... now only two of the cauldrons and one of the washbowls are left there, nothing else,” explained Salim’s wife.

Salim didn’t clarify what happened to the other cauldrons and washbowls, but it is likely that some of them were stolen. As a result, they keep the remaining items hidden in the roof of their home. Salim also introduced us to the neighborhood as he heard about it from his father. “The Muslims lived on the upper side and behind the castle. And the Armenian neighborhood was down below, covering the area from the wheat field to the creek over there. Just across the road, there was a French school and a German hospital.” When we stood up to see the stones left from the school and hospital, Salim asked his wife to bring something from inside. She brought a personal card with a name and some contact information.

“There was a German [referring to the Norwegian Bodil Biorn] nurse who lived here named Bodil Biorn. Her grandson



visited me. He came here and we hosted him as our guest and stayed for a while. In fact, he even invited us to Norway but you see our conditions, how can we go all that way? My father told me that Bodil Biorn was really beautiful. And she was a talented horse rider. My father was the only male child of my grandfather, so he wanted to give him a nice present. Thus, he asked for Bodil Biorn’s horse. But she refused because the horse was given to her by a priest. She told to my grandfather that she couldn’t sell him her present.”

So, for Salim living in Petros Efendi’s house, the mirror and other items have a dual meaning of personal as well as cultural history, which he carefully holds on to for future generations with the hope of giving it to its rightful owners one day.

While in Moush, we also organized interviews in the surrounding villages. In a Circassian village we interviewed Mumtaz who is of Arabic origin. He also had many stories about Armenians which he had heard from his father and grandfather. “There is a church in Chengilli which was actually previously a pagan temple. As the first Christians, Armenians converted the building into a church. Armenians were here before Christ,” Mumtaz explained.

Mumtaz was told stories by his ancestors about the professions and daily chores of Armenians.

“There was viniculture and the wines of Moush would sell like hot cakes in France. Those vineyards across there are the Incebel vineyards. There are the Pamuk and Mongok vineyards. Armenians would also engage in artisanship and ironworking.”

While discussing Armenian life in Moush further, Mumtaz’s son played the duduk and said, “We call this the Armenian instrument, so we know it’s Armenian, but its name has changed in the meanwhile. Now it’s referred to as mey, but we know it is Armenian.”

In Chengilli, the village whose name was derived from the bell or *chan* of the church (as the young primary school teacher told us) we had a short tour by the ruins of the Saint Karapet Monastery. As we walked, we realized some stones on house walls, which appeared to be different than other stones of the houses. On some of the stones, we saw Armenian writings, inscriptions, letters, Christian symbols, carvings and dates. It looked like the stones had been taken from the monastery. There were other symbols and carvings on the walls, indicating the date of the house's construction. For instance, we noticed that many houses in Chengilli show the date they were constructed, for example 1962. We didn't see this in other villages of Moush. We encountered other religious and cultural symbols which were converted and changed according to the village's new life and new inhabitants, after 1915. Much like the gravestones and personal records such as passports in Armenia, it seemed that people were trying to symbolically maintain their connection to Moush by making these notations on the houses. It seemed as if the dates written on the walls represented a wish to restart the history from that point in time, but yet among the physical ruins and evidence of a past.

In the Goms village of Moush we interviewed Mehmet Koch who told us the story of "saving" the Armenian symbol.

"There is a stone here. I was at the top of the hill, villagers brought it to the village. I saw it in the village and brought it here. I brought it here and secured it. It's a historical artefact, there is also an inscription on it in Armenian. There is also a cross on it and something underneath."

At the same time Mehmet was recalling what his father told him about the main features of Armenians. "My father used to say that the Armenian people had mercy, compassion. They were good people. They were hardworking."

With very pleasant stories of Armenian residence in Moush, Mehmet Koch was preserving the heritage of Armenians in

Goms. All the stories above show that many people living in Moush today maintain a connection to Armenians and the history connected with them. Many Armenian churches, which have largely been destroyed, Armenian houses, properties, and possessions are reminders to current residents of Moush of a painful past and the forced removal of their Armenian neighbors from their homeland.

At the same time, among the villages we visited in Armenia, nearly every family has preserved their ancestor's memories through cherished objects brought from these lands. Indeed, all the pieces that they showed us were unique and clearly full of sentimental value, representing the beauty and fertility of a homeland, passed from one generation to the next.

During our stay in Moush and Armenia, we discovered that history is not intangible. We learned that there are some tools which help make accessible, the seemingly intangible. In our interviews, we saw the symbols and artifacts that connect our interviewees to their past and bring that past to life for all of us. At the same time, we learned from stories of violence and the strength of the human spirit. We met with every emotion and people who were unable to hold back their tears as they retold the stories of their ancestors who managed to survive in 1915. Although nearly a century has passed, the history is not forgotten and for many, the deep pain of loss is still very fresh.

It can be hard to really understand why our respondents from Armenia were so deeply connected with the lands in Turkey, which many of them have never seen. The tragic stories of their parents and grandparents will never let them forget history. The memories are alive and the stuff brought from Moush is one of the reasons to remember. That is why many people in Armenia identify their pasts and descendants with those unique objects they brought from their Motherland. While those are very few and little, they still carry a big hope regarding other things they left.

However, there is something which Armenians, and not only Moush Armenians, brought from ergir. That is Mount



Ararat. Though Mount Ararat is generally considered in a biblical context, it is something sacred for Armenians. That is why people from Armenia are greatly interested to have a view of Ararat from the balconies of their houses. In fact there are lots of other mountains in Armenia, as it is a very mountainous country, but still Armenians are yearning about Ararat. It was interesting that one of our respondents Hakop talking about Moush looked back towards the window with a wonderful view of Ararat and said: "And if I ever go there, I also want to see the back of Ararat." In fact Ararat is a living history for Armenians, it creates close connection with their homeland, which they were forced to leave. Our respondents from Armenia showed us different symbols for their homeland. For Davit Hovsepian it was a bowl, for Aramays Israyelyan a belt and so on. But above all these personal items which individually represent ergir, the symbol of Mount Ararat is the most commonly known and unifying symbol of ergir, which, for all Armenians, embodies the past, present and future of the nation.

We had a chance to meet people from both sides of Ararat, who shared their unique stories and contradicting emotions. With regard to all of them we, the students from Armenia and Turkey passed through the history together. As a result, we understand that it is impossible to create peaceful future without accepting the pain and tragedy in our shared history.

Our experience showed that history is not something stagnant and abandoned in the past. It is kept alive by those who can recall the memories and stories of their ancestors. The material culture we discovered on both sides of Ararat, whether a bowl or a church, preserves that history. The deep personal attachment to those memories and objects gives us hope that everyone wants a better future in which the past will not be forgotten, but will be commemorated. Such simple things would have a great ability to represent history, embody the past and symbolize the future.

A photograph of a stone archway leading to a valley with mountains in the background. The archway is made of rough, layered stone blocks. The ground in the foreground is covered with rubble and debris. The valley beyond is filled with green and yellow vegetation, and mountains are visible in the distance under a clear sky.

PHOTOGRAPHY



Introduction

This local history project was about visualizing and documenting memory in everyday life in the Moush Valley and the regions of Armenia populated by those with Moush ancestry. As a separate photography group of participants from Turkey and Armenia, this was our main task. Each individual group had its own way of collecting data, doing fieldwork and presenting outcomes.

One of the most important lessons learned during this project is that our own life experiences, the stories we hear and tell, for example, leave images in their wake. We learned that remembering is sometimes a very private experience. We discovered that sharing stories across boundaries, whether those boundaries are real, cultural, emotional or metaphysical, is a complicated process. Through our work, we discovered the power of photography as its own narrative different than speech, text or performance.

Photography imparts a likeness to objects that may only have a slight affinity. Different and unrelated objects, when reproduced on the same page, may seem similar and related. Each object loses its independent colour, texture, relative dimension and volume, but they gain a common style. Thus, nothing in a photo frame can exist without being in relation to other things that are captured in the very frame. Also, the political agenda, personal baggage and style of the photographer make any single item impossible to appear as random in photography.

From this perspective, what we produced as photographs in the Moush Plain and different places in Armenia have been more than bunches of scenes and portraits that were aesthetically worthy of capture on film. Different time zones concentrated in one place, interpretations of old “hi-stories” opened themselves up for us, and photography was a tool that gave us an opportunity to develop an alternative visual approach to understand, perceive and share all these cases. Moreover, photography as a tool connected eight different

people, all amateurs in photography, but enthusiastic in adopting the new role as “photo-documentarians.” Here it is important to mention the participants concerns and their worries when using photography as a communication tool with surrounding and especially with local people. The main feeling that most of our photographers had was connected with ethics of photography process, as once was voiced by one of the participants – they felt as if they were stealing the photographed people’s moments in life. This is one of the difficulties faced by photographer during this type of work. As the well-known American writer and literary icon Susan Sontag, suggests, to photograph people is to violate them by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. This feeling most probably shows the real involvement of the participants into their roles.

Adventures and stories that we passed through were diverse and colorful. The photo-essays mainly concentrate on the material culture that was adapted or abandoned by next generations, about people as carriers of narratives and memories, about our feelings - how we perceive communications between these people, how we felt fear, distrust, mental borders - but at the same time a longing for change. The format of essays for photography group inserts an anthropological approach to our stories as well, in addition to the visual representation. All these experiences, stories, memories, associations, events that prick our consciousness were arranged within the frames of alternative, mental maps by all our groups.

One of the major goals of this project has been to show that a city does not only correspond to a piece of land. Each city occupies an area on the Earth’s surface; however a city is always something more than this. A city also occupies space in our thinking and memories even if we are materially far away from it. This book in general, and more specifically the following photography section, is intended to display how the contemporary city of Moush with its surrounding villages expands into everyday life, takes form, and is then

also experienced in another context, as in the villages of Armenians with Moush origin in the Republic of Armenia. This “expansion” becomes possible through the transmission of stories from generation to generation (through memory), making use of the objects brought from there (material culture), and encounters with people who are still connected to the places left behind.

We not only prompted these above-mentioned encounters with the people in Armenia (and in Moush as well), but also we attempted to visualize how Moush extended into Armenia in everyday life through memory and material culture by our photos. None of our photography participants had professional photography experience prior to the two week long fieldwork in Moush and Armenia. They came from different backgrounds, however they realized the main tasks of our initiative which was to document and interpret the still existing but vanishing connections between the people and the land. Moreover they managed to bring insight on the contemporary lifestyles of the people that live in the Moush Valley and respective villages in Armenia. Thus, together, we created a complete image of our experiences gained during these two camps.

One issue that emerged during our group work was that participants didn’t have much to discuss, share or even debate with others: it was either a matter of individualistic perceptions to the stories that were not easy to digest, or the impact of the photography that each of us had seen or shot. The images were so close to participants’ hearts and imagination that they couldn’t turn it into a subject of broader discourse. That’s why the photo-essays in this part of the book are relatively abstract and descriptive; they might even seem soft or naïve at first. They don’t provoke the reader to have sharp emotions, but rather lead one to observe a calmer presentation of sensitive topics. Photos are the main actors in these essays; they speak for themselves and are open to the various interpretations of their viewers.

Un-bordering the past; Bringing the present back into focus: Mapmaking and Storytelling in the Era of Nation-State Borders

By Betul Kaya (Turkey)

This project led me on a multi-directional journey into the past of a city. Travelling across time zones was complicated enough. At times I felt the past hidden among contemporary discourses and the need to search for clues to get closer to discovering it. Before I worked on this project, I had no deep interest in visiting Moush. Visiting the city and speaking with the people I met through this project made me to think about the notion of a city, and the constraints of language, space and time on the idea. I thought about what Moush might look like if we could transcend these limitations and include the missing parts, absent people, languages, cultures and histories. When we expressed how interested we were in listening to people's life stories, the enthusiasm to talk about family and life grew immediately and became a huge step towards creating a path beyond these limitations.

In the course of our conversations, I was shown personal and family possessions such as belts, carpets, diaries as well as church ruins. This helped me develop a map of Moush in my mind that was not confined by space or time or language. The project was a physical and metaphysical journey through which I was introduced to the much-beloved and remembered "glorious days" of Moush. I was introduced to the Moush Valley, known for its wine. I was able to imagine the time when it was covered by vineyards. I was introduced to songs from generations ago which are still remembered and sung. I even learned the traditional dances of Moush. I had these experiences both in the Moush Valley and in the villages of Moush origin in Armenia. This duality helped me piece together a joint map marked by our speaking, singing, dancing and discussing together in both these places.

This new illustration of Moush consists not only of our personal stories, but of the memories shared with us during our travels in Turkey and Armenia. In Armenia we met people for whom Moush was their homeland: A place where their ancestors had lived for generations, but a place their grandparents were forced to leave.

The political borders between Armenia and Turkey are closed today, but for many people with Moush ancestry in Armenia, and for those currently living in Moush, Turkey, the border remains open through memory. For these people, the notion of "homeland" was developed long before today's political maps were determined and drawn. People we met in Armenia would probably choose to locate the village in which they live today as close as possible to their ancestor's villages in Moush despite the material borders. It is no coincidence that in contemporary Armenia, those with Moush ancestry are still called *Mshetsi*, which means people from Moush. In this way, they easily break the "real" borders imposed on them.

Mapping a homeland in the Moush Plain expresses both a feeling of home and a feeling of displacement. Borders intrude on *Mshetsi* villages, on their ideas, their feeling of home and of being away from it, and are recreated in this way in daily life. But this is not a simple experience. While the idea of borders seems so easily demolished in our personal maps, one cannot ignore the reality of separation.

An 80-year-old man from Katnaghbyur in Armenia said, "They planned to return when the road opened." So they built their life accordingly. One village for example had no cemetery many years because they expected to return. Villagers carried the dead to a village near the border so that when the border opened they wouldn't have to leave their ancestors behind. Such experiences reinforced feelings of attachment to those physically far away, but mentally close to places. This was done through the reading of grandparents' memoirs, remembering their stories, preserving carpets, vases, pots, habits, customs and so on. These are some of the everyday practices performed to lessen feelings of displacement and detachment.

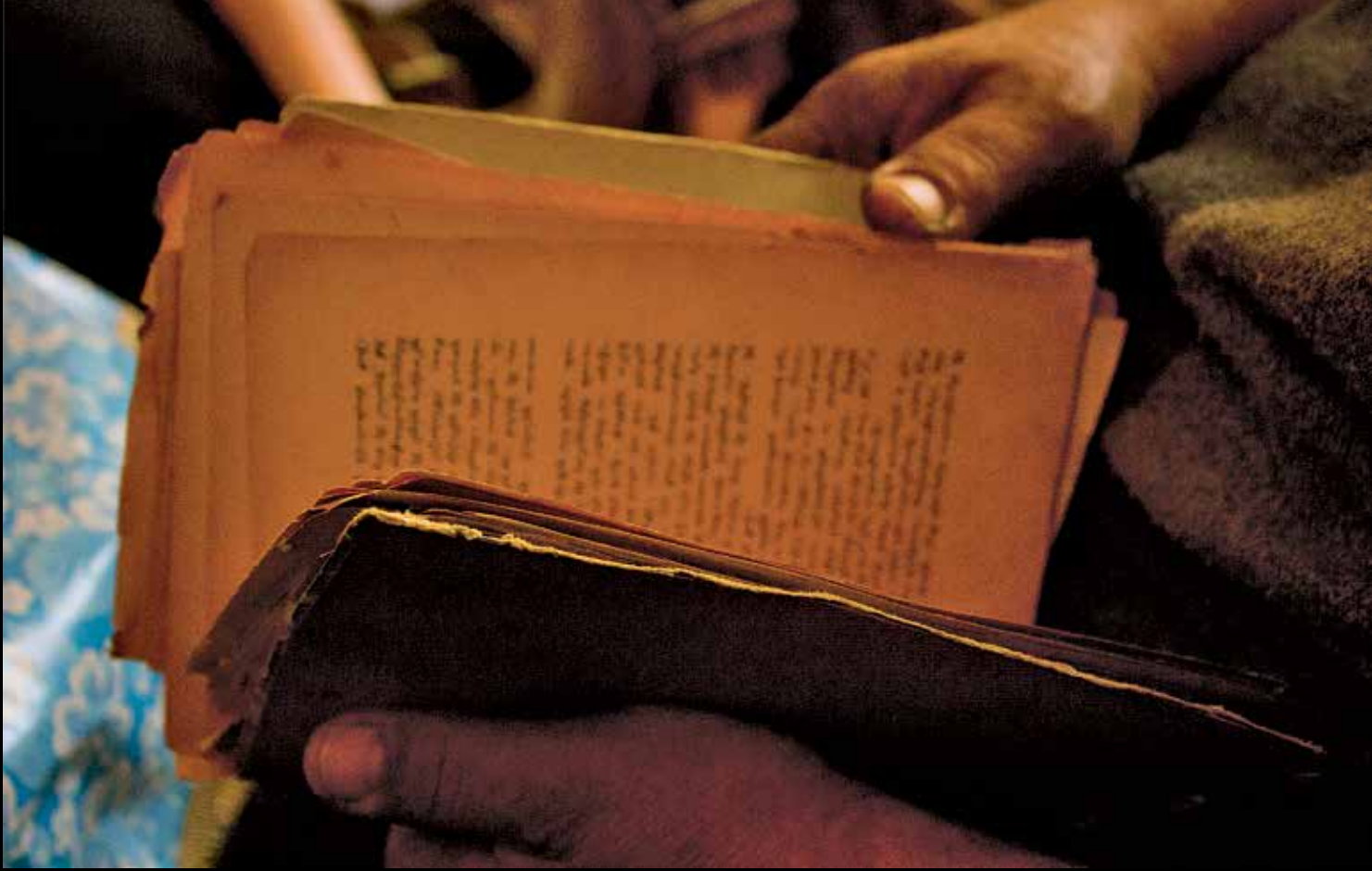


This is a wall of a house made of stones from the Armenian monastery of St. Karapet in Chengilli, Turkey. Stones collected from among the ruins of the St. Karapet monastery have been recycled and built into the walls of new homes in Chengilli. It is ironic that the past has been deconstructed and rebuilt into the present. For Armenians, however, who do know the monastery's history, the use of those stones to construct houses (and especially barns and cowsheds)

creates harsh new borders. They feel that their culture, history and memory have not been respected. Is it possible these stones, which simultaneously represent the past and the present, are breaking down borders between the local residents and visiting Armenians by their very existence? Will we come to realise that the past belongs to us all now just in different ways?



Family photo albums were shared in many of the homes we visited in Armenia. The albums were reminders of memories of their old or late family members. These photographs are in fact the indicators of many details in these people's maps.



The Moush Valley is the birthplace of the theologian and linguist Mesrop Mashtots, who is known for inventing the Armenian alphabet in 5th century. Following this linguistic development, many churches in the Valley transformed into educational centres containing extensive libraries. This network of schools provided the locals with a culture of writing. Today these examples of written culture, such as memoirs, very old bibles, hand-drawn maps, personal notes in books - sometimes even written in Turkish - are records across borders. They breathe life into the stories that have come down through the generations. Since these are tangible materials and have their special places in homes, they are daily reminders of memory.





“Let me tell you a story”, says an 80-year-old man from Katnaghbyur, Armenia. In that moment, I realize that every mapmaker is first a storyteller. Through their memories and stories, people themselves are both the objects and subjects of stories and maps. Lullabies, songs, little words, maybe in

an unknown language, probably Kurdish or Turkish, learned from previous generations and remembered so clearly today, never lost their meanings. Even though people cannot understand the language, they can appreciate feelings and states of mind transmitted through them.



When memory is so well preserved on the Armenian side of the border, it is painful to know that those living on the other side are still suffering from the lack of recognition and transmission of a memory, which has been damaged and suppressed for a long time.



Cemeteries also become a part of a homeland because they are a record of the past. Armenian cemeteries we visited in Moush have been destroyed, leaving graves without owners. This reminded us of people like Rafik Avagyan, a 77-year-old man from the Voskehask village who commemorates those who were killed in 1915 as “Armenians without graves.”

Scattered Pieces

By Ozge Sebzeci (Turkey) and
Ruzanna Baghdasaryan (Armenia)

The Saint Karapet Monastery is one of the oldest Armenian monasteries in Moush Valley, dating back to the 4th century when Gregory the Illuminator, founder of the Armenian Apostolic Church, is believed to have buried the relics of Saint John the Baptist (Karapet) here. The site, well known for its nine natural springs, was once a pagan sanctuary and has been considered a sacred ground by successive religious traditions over the centuries. The monastery is enshrouded in folklore. One Armenian legend says that the day after Gregory the Illuminator started building the Saint Karapet monastery, he found it ruined by the evil spirits living there. He dug a hole to try to bury the spirits, but one of them asked for mercy. Gregory the Illuminator granted the spirit mercy on the condition that it would stay in the monastery for the rest of its life. Over the centuries, people have continued to believe that the spirit is still in the monastery. Another legend about the monastery is about a village girl who enters the Saint Karapet chapel when it was forbidden for women to do so. St. Karapet was known to be a very cruel saint towards women and in this time, people believed that a woman would be cursed with insanity if she entered the chapel. The girl asks Karapet for a husband, but the Saint is so angry at her for entering the chapel that turns her into a hermaphrodite. Many legends still told about Saint Karapet include elements of fantasy, urban legend and history.

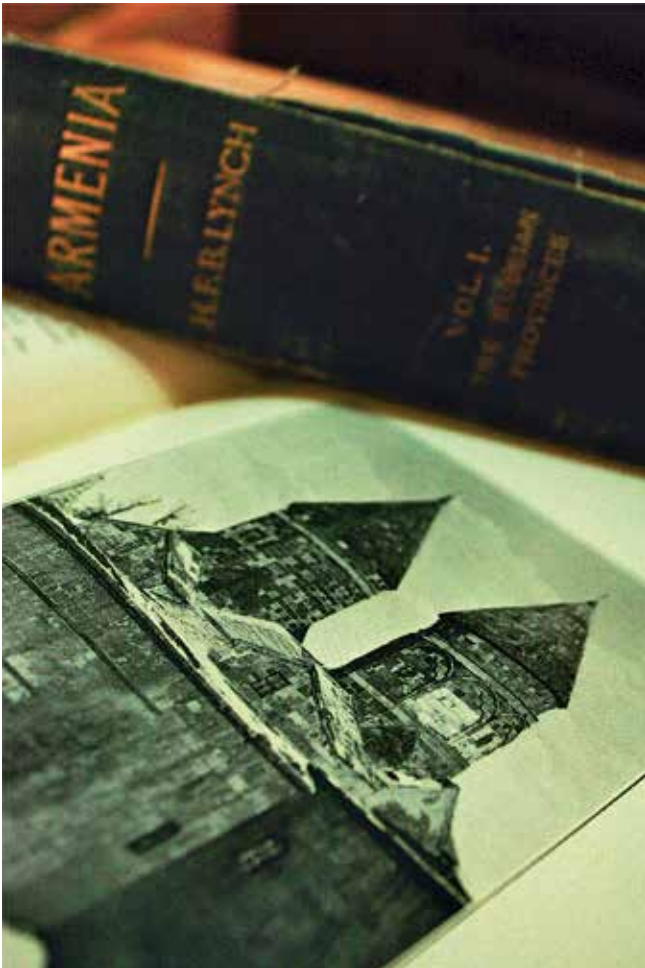
Over the centuries, the Monastery has remained one of the most important spiritual and educational centers in the region, known for its library and printing press, as well as its numerous *khachkars* and unique architecture. The building was damaged by several earthquakes in the 18th and 19th centuries, but was reconstructed each time. The monastery was leveled by the Ottoman army after the extermination of the Armenian population of Moush.

New inhabitants eventually settled the area and founded a village called Chengilli on the ruins of the monastery. When we

visited houses in Chengilli, we could see the years they were built, for example, 1962, 1981 or 1991. Initially, it looked to us as if there was no trace at all of the fact that the Saint Karapet has stood there. But we soon realized how wrong we were. We discovered that even the name of the village “Chengilli” comes from the Turkish *chanli kilise* meaning “church bell,” the sound of which used to echo from the monastery throughout the Moush Valley. Moreover, lots of houses carried a mark of the past, both in terms of memory and actual stones. *Khachkars* and stone blocks from the monastery had been dispersed and used as building material in the new village. We could see these stones among newer ones in the foundations and walls of homes in Chengilli.

The inhabitants of Chengilli seemed conservative to us at first. They live in a small and isolated community, but they also come into contact with outsiders through a vibrant tourist industry. During our visit, we observed that some villagers kept their distance from foreigners. One of the village men expressed discomfort after seeing our group with cameras and recorders and he began yelling various things about us being “Ermeni” (meaning Armenian) guests. In contrast to his reaction, we met an older lady (the man’s neighbor) who invited us into her home. She was making yogurt and passed around a big wooden spoon for us all to try it.

Unlike the older generations who spoke only Kurdish, many children spoke Turkish as well. They were curious about strangers and they were eager to help us discover what makes their village different from others: Armenian *khachkars* and carved stones scattered throughout the village. After some time, children and other villagers invited us to a chapel which had been transformed into a barn. They appeared proud that their domestic building was of so much importance for our groups of foreigners. They explained that some people take care of the old monastery remains and understand the importance of it not only as a part of their property, but in terms of its historical value. Villagers said that if they had not put the *khachkars* into the foundations of their homes, these very last remaining small pieces of Armenian memory would have been lost as well.



H. Lynch "Armenia, travels and studies. Volume II: The Turkish Provinces" (1901). The photos in this book are a record of a once noble and prospering monastery.



Local people try to preserve the ruins for their historical significance. Some of the villagers turned the buildings pictured here into barns.



Villagers built their first homes using the stones of the Saint Karapet monastery. Other parts of the village are famous for Armenian cross stones (khachkar) and other carved decorations.

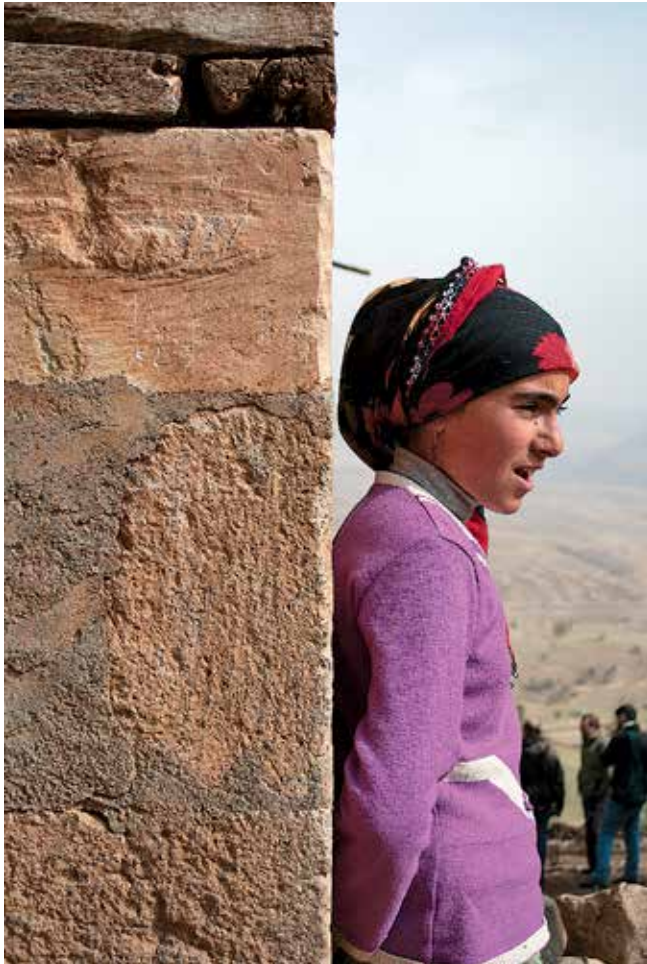


They are scattered through the village. We discovered that some of most beautiful masterpieces were hidden in unexpected places.



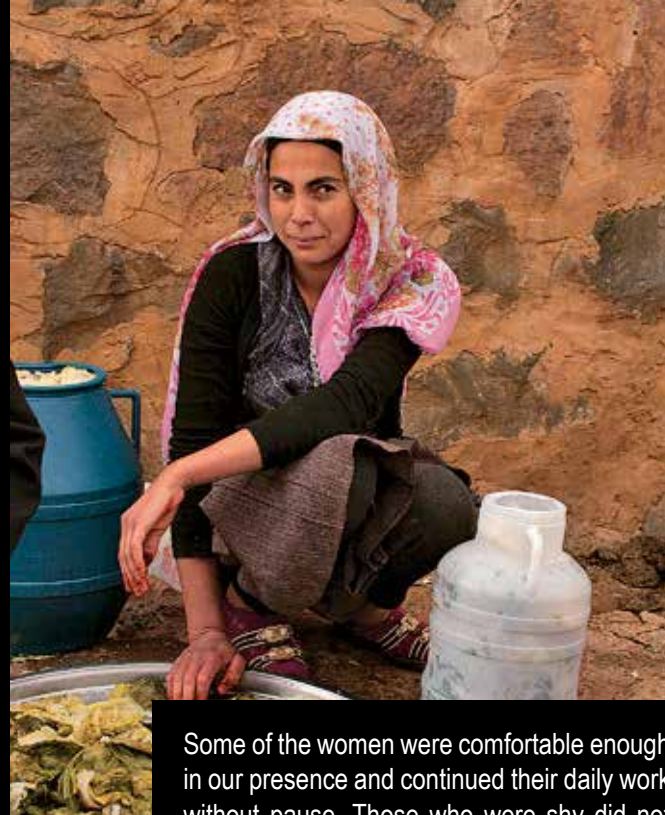
In the absence of a common language, tourists, who are often English speakers, communicate with local children through a series of gestures and some well-known English words. Local children we encountered had interacted with many English-speaking tourists and thus had developed the idea that this land had once been under English rule.

There is only primary-level education in Chengilli. For secondary school, children go to the Moush City center. Girls are mostly not allowed to go out of the village for secondary school and thus marry and have children at a young age.





For many of the women in Chengilli, the day-to-day entails carrying out housework, baking lavash, knitting or preparing for winter. Here they enjoy a much-needed break.



Some of the women were comfortable enough in our presence and continued their daily work without pause. Those who were shy did not want to be photographed, while others were more than happy to be photographed and asked us to send them the photos.



Unreal but Alive: Real but Dying **By Armenuhi Nikoghosyan (Armenia) and** **Betul Kaya (Turkey)**

The Arakelots monastery is seen as a protective home in Armenia. In 1915, Eastern Anatolia was racked by destruction. Villages were uprooted, families were displaced, scattered. Dreams and memories were left behind as Armenians were forced to flee. With no idea about the possibility of return, everyday items such as pots, scarves and books were grasped without deliberate thought. Nowadays, those icons rescued from Arakelots occupy the most valued places among their owners' collections.

The story of Arakelots made us recognize two ambiguities in people's life in Moush, Turkey, and in the villages of Moush origin in Armenia.

The first ambiguity is related to our journey to Arakelots. We were led there by local guides. We didn't know the exact location, but after a kind of pilgrimage with our photography group, we came upon the old and dilapidated church. When we went back to Moush City, inconclusive discussions took place among us. There had been a kind of uncertainty about the church's exact location: we were simply told that it was not where we went, it was somewhere else. Taking many photos, talking to shepherds and experiencing this trip reinforced our belief that it was Arakelots for sure. At least it was Arakelots to us. But still, sometimes we doubted it seriously as during a preliminary research some organizers had previously visited ruins of a church and they were also told that it was the Arakelots Monastery. However, now we are sure that what we "discovered" was the Arakelots Monastery, as later on we had the opportunity to compare our photos with historical photos of the monastery.

Probably all of us expected that the story of Arakelots would end in Moush as a photography subject, but in fact it didn't. We kept taking photos of icons brought from Arakelots in many houses in the villages of Armenia. We discovered

that most of them might not really be from Arakelots. This was the second ambiguity and a turning point for us. We realized that this plurality and uncertainty of icons attributed to Arakelots in fact displays the level of embodiment of an attachment to that place.

Arakelots monastery for Armenians was not only a religious place, but also a big educational center, where people could get higher education. Here was situated also a scriptorium where many masters were working on manuscripts. One of those manuscripts – Moush Homiliary (Msho Charyntir) is kept now in Yerevan, in Matenadaran, the institution for manuscripts. Another item from Arakelots – its wooden carved door is now kept in the State History Museum of Armenia. Many people whose fathers and mothers, grandfathers or grandmothers escaped from Moush and nearby areas keep those pieces brought from Arakelots with great care and love. They can describe not only the church itself, but the way to get to it as well. They believe they know every corner of it and have the same belief that guides people to Arakelots. Why does it guide? Because the pieces and icons are mental tickets to this sanctuary: these people visit Arakelots through their minds, memories take them to the monastery that in reality is alive only in books – in pictures.

Where once stood Arakelots – a great monastery of its time – one can now only find ruins. While people in Armenia preserve the Arakelots monastery through their memories of it, the remaining ruins of Arakelots in Moush require real preservation. These ruins are the voice of the past and if they don't receive appropriate care they will no longer be able to talk to those who frequently visit the Arakelots of their memories, and who may one day return to see the real Arakelots.



The unreal but alive Arakelots from the book that people in Tsamakasar village of Armenia keep with care.



The door of Saint Arakelots Monastery, State History Museum of Armenia.

The real but dying Arakelots that calls for preservation.



Arak village, Moush. On our way to the real Arakelots. Frequent mental visitors know the way to Arakelots quite well whereas the people in the Moush region could hardly tell where it was situated. "Beyond this hill! Up there! It is after you arrive to that tree." said our guides while pointing a spot in the distance. They themselves were not sure where exactly Arakelots was. We had known just the direction and kept going up.



Suser village, Armenia. Icons and photos assumingly brought from Arakelots after 1915.



Voskehask village, Armenia. Many people have a "saint's corner" in their houses in Mshetsi villages of Armenia.

Fear

By Armenuhi Nikoghosyan (Armenia)

Life has been generous to us presenting with a bunch of feelings to guide our way in this world. Man has a power to play with feelings, but feelings sometimes may turn out to be more powerful by playing with the victims carrying them. Such feelings can be associated with parasites, the ones that benefit at the expense of the host. Fear is a kind of such parasitic feeling. Fear lives inside the host and feeds on his heart and mind. Moreover, if the host is unable to fight against that parasite, it will transmit from the host to other people affecting the soundness of their mentality and behavior. There is undeniably a parasitic fear transmission among the representatives of the two neighboring nations – Armenians and Turks.

The first time I met a person from Turkey was during a project where I was engaged in organizational activities. I was very busy so I didn't have much time to communicate with the participants, and not too much eagerness either, I must admit. One day, one of the participants asked me to help her find her scarf which had been lost in the conference hall. As she spoke to me, I looked back at her with don't-know-how-to-react eyes. I thought to myself, "This Turk is asking me to do something for her; a Turk is asking me something!"

The scarf was found, but not my adequate human behavior... And already prior to getting prepared for the Moush camp, I very often caught myself fighting inside with what I felt – fear, fear to confront the reality that planted seeds of hatred and distrust in me towards Turkish people. But... I wasn't going to live with that parasite in me any longer; it was time to find a medicine against it as I wasn't the only one who suffered from it...

"Turks and Kurds use this insult Ermeni Ođlu Ermeni [son of an Armenian]. They insult us [people of Armenian origin] to our face. Years ago we couldn't say that we are Armenian; we could only say it to our friends and no one else. If you say you're Armenian, some people perceive you as if you are some kind of

enemy. We are still afraid. We're afraid because there are a lot of ignorant people." These words were freed from the heart of Hikmet, an Armenian living in Turkey. He has seen how people of Armenian background living among Turks and Kurds are still afraid to reveal the Armenian part of their identity. "There are a lot of people like us in Moush but because they [Turks and Kurds] still see being Armenian as a bad thing, we are afraid..."

In Moush and the surrounding areas, people with Armenian origin live with the fear of being treated as "others." They don't want to be considered dishonest, so they hold back.

In the long journey into understanding the nature of my own fear, I learned that there were Kurdish and Turkish people living in the Moush region who wanted to help their neighboring Armenians during the Genocide, but... there was fear. "Why are you helping Armenians? Why do you help the enemy here?" reflected the owner of the vineyards in Moush that had once belonged to Armenians. People were killed for getting caught helping Armenians.

Fear has transmitted from generation to generation, through time and space reaching to one of the places in Armenia settled with those who managed to survive the death marches of Genocide – Dashtadem. Grandfather Khoren has a unique corner of his creation, a room like a museum - old family photos, photos of famous and influential people, plenty of books, and many other things speaking of old days and life. The 88-year-old grandfather guards his property with great care and attention: he follows every breathing creature in his room with careful eyes so nobody can take a thing. But accidentally a secret was revealed (perhaps it wasn't the only one) – there was a cellar in the very room which made itself known regardless the wish of Grandfather. One of our group members stepped on its cover unaware of it and hardly managed not to fall into it. The eyes of Grandfather got wider immediately and there was unwillingness in them as "the secret" was revealed. "I put those who behave badly into it" these were as if excusing words for explaining the existence of the cellar to me. These words were expressed with a

smiling look in his eyes and a cunning smile on his face. When Grandfather left the room, his grandson explained that it had been built as a place to protect themselves in case the Turks ever attacked. They are still afraid that the past will repeat itself. They are afraid of living through what their fathers and grandfathers had lived. They should be ready... as they are afraid.

Consciously or not, people from the Moush and Talin regions expressed a more-or-less constant state of fear. The factor of fear existed and still exists, and this fear has led to a lack of trust. There is fear to lose the peace of mind in case of communication. In this context, Armenians and Turks face challenging questions about their own notions of each other; an Armenian mind may struggle with how to think about Turks who do not fit the mold of those who deny the Genocide. He may think about whether it will influence his general opinion of a Turk to know that the Turk recognizes the Armenian Genocide. And then he may wonder if this makes him a traitor to his own people. What if he finds out that his forefathers also killed Turkish or Kurdish people? Even if this was done to protect their family and property, would it be excusable?

Similarly, a Turkish mind may wonder about the implications of recognizing the Genocide. Will there be demands for lands to be returned to Armenians? How would Turkey deal with that? And what about the people living on those lands now; what would they do and where would they go? He may wonder whether the houses of his forefathers were built over Armenian ones. What will the impact be if his viewpoints change; if he openly recognizes the Genocide, will he be considered a traitor by his own people?

This is not a complete list of the questions we may find ourselves asking, but one question is clear, and that is the border question: if the borders between Turkey and Armenia finally open after decades of closure, will we, the two neighbors, be able to communicate and build trust, untainted by the stereotypes we have been exposed to all our lives?

There is fear in the hearts of people in Armenia and Turkey

that is transmitted to their each cell through blood giving ground to single out two variants of fear - Armenian and Turkish. We Armenians have fear in losing the past as it hasn't found its face. We do not let the past rest in its time zone; we lug it throughout present not allowing the latter to have its own bibliography. Tears filled the eyes of an elderly woman in Talin who asked, "How did they [the Turkish participants] dare to come here?" This sentence seemed to burst out from her chest with pain. "I can't forget what happened, it's so painful." She uttered these words and let out a heavy sigh from the remembrances her family passed on her, at the same time looking at the Turkish participants as if trying to find out how such a cruelty could have been realized in 1915.

People in Turkey have fear in losing their present because of the past. They are unwilling to accept that their history could have made unregistered mistakes; they want to believe in the powerful history of their country and leaders that led to their prosperous present; they are afraid to lose the face of their present. "The past has a version which isn't written; it's not recorded in history. Some things are being told, but there isn't anyone who knows the truth; no one told me the truth" an old man in Derik village confessed his untainted desire to discover the truth, but at that moment another man came to rescue their shared truth. The man who wanted to unmask the present at least for himself was taken away and silenced. People are afraid to alter what they know, even if they may feel that perhaps it's not the real truth.

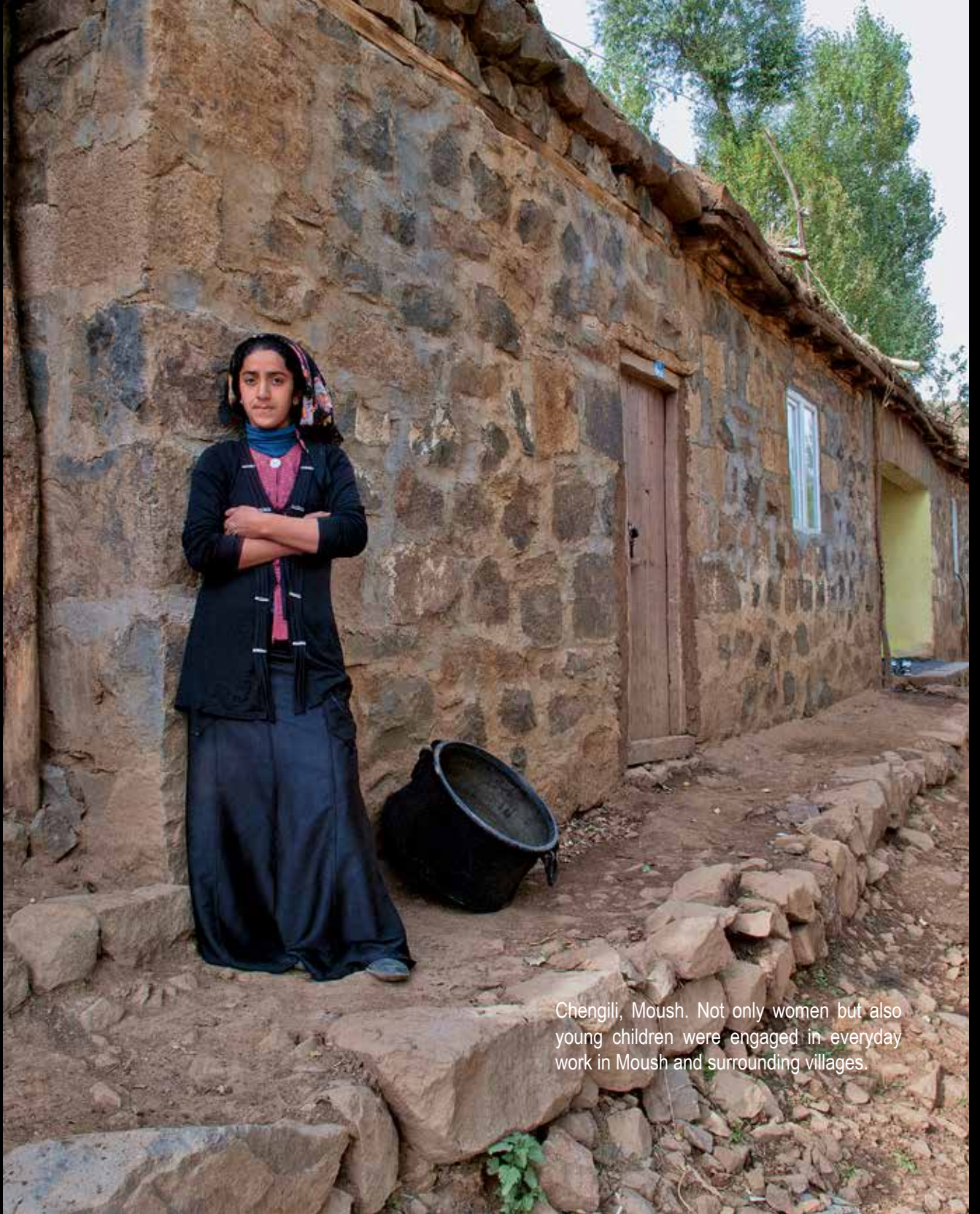
These two types of fears collide leaving a wall of stereotypes between us. When my roommate made the statement, "Your so-called genocide..." on the first day of the camp, I felt that any hope for me to build trust with the Turkish participants had been eliminated. But despite my roommate's view, we managed to enjoy our talks and even had some common thoughts and desires. We looked upon each other not with "Armenian" and "Turkish" labels but as human beings. And the trust came to our room by itself. I think many of us found trust in others as we were looking for the medicine; medicine that is of high demand in our countries, the medicine called "Trust."



1. Arakelots monastery in Moush used to be one of the most important pilgrimage sights where Armenians went to with families.

2. Chengili, Moush. Unlike children in Moush City, children in the villages at first somehow held back, then gradually overcoming fear and awkwardness they began to follow us wherever we went.

3. Chengili, Moush. It was easy for him to "communicate" through the wires keeping distance.



Chengili, Moush. Not only women but also young children were engaged in everyday work in Moush and surrounding villages.



Chengilli, Moush. A house where stones from St. Karapet church were used as ordinary material for construction.



Derik, Moush. Kurdish schoolboy and an Armenian church that has lost everything except its stones. It is now converted to a barn for keeping barley and wheat.





Dashtadem, Armenia. Khoren Zakaryan's house. The room that comprises many interesting things and stories.



Objects and Structures as Transporters of History and Memory: Interviewing Ourselves

By Atak Ayaz (Turkey) and Sofia Manukyan (Armenia)

Family heirlooms, personal objects, buildings and remains of other structures share the common feature of reminding us of history, major events or childhood memories. The feelings they evoke may be positive or negative, but they will stir emotions. This is why we decided to concentrate our photographs on ruins and other objects which are powerful transporters of memory. Through our dialogue we will travel from Moush (Turkey) to Gyumri (Armenia) and back, revealing the inner world of these great bearers of history. This interview will thus transfer the atmosphere that we felt during the project through the photographs we made.

Sofia: Atak, in your photographs you touch on two topics, namely the 1988 earthquake in Gyumri and the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Do you see a connection between these two events?

Atak: After I decided to write my photo-essay about ruins, I thought about the similarities between natural disaster and what we can call “human disaster.” My thinking was affected by an event early on in this project. On October 23, 2011, during our fieldwork in Moush, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.1 hit the city of Van, located 220 km east of Moush. The earthquake killed 604 people and left nearly 60,000 homeless. The earthquake, which was felt by our group from this great distance, had a powerful emotional impact on a number of members of our team, especially since Van was one of the first places that the group from Armenia visited in Turkey.

In this way, the Van earthquake is one of the starting points of my story. The group was gathered in Moush when

the earthquake struck Van. We observed the destruction and how people were affected. Most of the victims were of Kurdish origin and had suffered even more due to their ethnic and political background. We observed that aid was poorly distributed, that there were many people who did not have a place to stay, and that the majority of them remained in tents through the winter. In many ways, they were pushed to face death.

In my mind, the scenario was familiar to something else. In the same region (southeastern Anatolia), something similar happened to the Armenian people in 1915. People were massacred and deported because of their ethnicity. The difference between the two events is that the earthquake in Van was caused by natural forces, even though, the rest of the process, such as distribution of relief, was manipulated for political reasons to limit what reached the Kurdish people. This approach was similar to what was done to help those in the Armenian Genocide.

The results of an earthquake as a natural disaster and genocide as a human disaster share another similarity: ruins. As a photographer, I see ruins as a witness to past events. Unfortunately, there is no photo from the Van earthquake in this photo-essay because I was unable to reach Van in the aftermath of the earthquake. Then, I decided to focus on an earthquake which shapes today’s Armenia dramatically, the 1988 Gyumri Earthquake. By focusing on two important dates of Armenian history, 1915 and 1988, I had the aim of revealing what had transpired.

Armenian houses, churches, schools, or better say, the remnants of these buildings are still there in Eastern Turkish cities like Moush, Kars, etc. even though most Armenians are not in these cities anymore. The earthquake that happened in 1988 in Northern parts of the Republic of Armenia, including Gyumri, in its turn, resulted in collapse of many houses and factories and many of the ruins are still standing in these places.

Today, local residents have found new uses for old

buildings. Ruins which have not been cleared preserve the memory of past days and also the people who have since passed. I thought this was powerful and I decided to depict it in my photos. One day these ruins could be replaced by new constructions, and these images will help us to look back into this history.



This frame was shot when a local person from Moush was giving directions to us.

Sofia: I see. How did it become possible for you to reveal the stories behind the ruins? Did you talk to locals? I didn't know much about the ruins in Moush or Gyumri, so I am curious about your approach.

Atak: Well, I hadn't been to either Gyumri or Moush before this project. I was not familiar with the history of these places. I did find a certain similarity among the ruins of Moush and Gyumri, however. Even though my knowledge of architecture is quite limited, it was clear to me that the buildings in Moush had been built by Armenians. You could tell from the color of the stones and the shapes used as ornaments are similar to each other. Unfortunately, at the moment, the buildings which are still standing and ruins are filled with rubbish and graffiti and it was not easy for me to identify them without the help of local people. But I found the locals both eager and helpful; they opened their doors and shared their food and knowledge with me. We not only talked about old buildings and ruins, but

we answered each other's questions. We discussed Armenian culture and the current situation of Armenia. Generally, in Armenia, people were interested in the places where their ancestors had lived. On the other hand, in Moush people seemed to be more interested in why we wanted to learn the local Armenian history.

Without the guidance of locals, I would have never known that the Shirak Hotel, the ruins of which are still standing in Gyumri town, was once an important and luxurious place. Similarly, I was informed by locals in Moush that an old house has been converted into a storage space for a restaurant. If I had seen that building but had no guidance from locals, I could not have known that I was looking at what was once the house of the renowned Armenian opera singer Armenak Shahmuradian. These are just two examples of how important it was for me to hear local history directly from residents.



Gyumri: ruins of the Shirak Hotel in a cloudy day.

Sofia: My understanding is that local residents were hospitable and ready to assist you with your work.

Atak: Yes, and I think this is a crucial point. I do not know whether participants from Armenia experienced any problems in Turkey, but I did not experience any issues in Armenia related to myself being from Turkey. Especially in the villages of Armenia where people from Moush had settled after their escape, residents told me that we were the first people from Turkey that had come to speak with them.

One of the interviews we carried out was quite different from the others. The person we interviewed can be described as nationalist. I could sense this in his voice and his attitude which was cold towards us. Before we began our interview, he asked whether we were hungry or would like a glass of wine. I was surprised and pleased by his hospitality.

Overall, respondents were very welcoming. Thanks to their help I discovered obscure stories in the villages around Moush and in Armenia. As a result of their help, the places I was able to visit were very useful for our project. They explained what they had learned from their parents and relatives. For example, they told us that years ago, the “Old Moush” was full of Armenian houses, schools and churches. Now, however, only some of them still stand.



Local people were welcoming both in Moush and Gyumri.

Sofia: And what is your impression? Why have some buildings collapsed or been destroyed, while others remain?

Atak: Of course the reasons for the ruins around Moush are different than for those around Gyumri. There are some similar reasons such as that some old buildings continue to stand because people move into them. The buildings may be very old, but the people who move in do take care of them. Sometimes they even carry out some renovation in order to keep the building structures strong.

Following the Armenian Genocide, society changed dramatically in Moush in terms of the dominant culture. The change in religion, for example, plays a significant role in that process. Most people who live in the Moush Valley today are Muslim. This is possibly one of the reasons why the Armenian Church of Moush now serves as a barrack and is a source of horror stories for children. Parents warn their children to behave or else the ghosts from the church will haunt them. For the same reason, this change in the dominant religion, churches are generally not functioning and people have stolen the stones of the foundations to build their homes or other structures such as stables.



The home of opera singer Armenak Shahmuradian.

You can see a stone which has a cross on it and was used in the construction of a stable wall. I don't believe people made use of those ruins in order to insult Armenians or Armenian culture. It was probably the lack of economic resources that resulted in this current situation. Of course, some people might have destroyed the Armenian buildings due to nationalistic tendencies, but we cannot generalize for all situations. However, I blame the state for the situation of the Armenian buildings in that territory. Some interest or concern could have been shown for preserving the last remnants of this history.

Whatever was the function of these buildings when Armenians were living there, these ruins fulfill an interesting

task nowadays: they make people think and talk about the past especially about genocide. In this way, many people from Moush who live in such old buildings are aware that their houses once belonged to Armenians and that Armenians suddenly vanished from the area.

There are many factors as to why the ruins in Gyumri are still visible. The change in the ruling system played a significant role, for example. When the 1988 earthquake struck, the country was under Soviet rule. After the collapse of the USSR, the factories that were affected by the Gyumri earthquake ceased to function. Perhaps the economic and political factors played a major role in this situation.



The church of St. Marine in Moush.

Sofia: Do you think that the ruins continue playing the role of information carriers, despite how their use has changed over the course of time? What do they tell us as carriers?

Atak: I think they do. The reason I focus on old buildings is that they give us signs about the past. After seeing the ruins and learning the history behind them, I started to think about the earthquake in Van. Then I tried to understand what people must have felt in 1988 and what they must feel when they see the ruins. I think people remember their loss when they see the ruins.

On the other hand, the ruined houses in today's Moush region were once the homes of Armenians. Armenians no longer live in those houses but it is not difficult to find signs showing that they had lived there previously. In other words, these buildings preserve Armenian culture and Armenian presence and they are still visible in the eastern parts of Anatolia. When I spoke with Moush locals, I found out that TOKİ, Turkey's housing development administration, was looking to destroy any remaining buildings from that time and replace them with new ones. In a couple of years we might not be able to see the signs that are present today. These photos will be evidence of Armenians' existence there, however.

Sofia: Indeed, ruins of old buildings keep us constantly aware of the past and of the history they have behind them. Demolishing them would mean turning the page of history and maybe forgetting some aspects of the past. What I revealed during our trip to Moush and Gyumri, was that like ruins, old objects also have interesting role in preserving the history.

Atak: And what objects did you find?

Sofia: I found various objects especially in Armenia, which were brought from *ergir*. There were some objects left from Armenians in Moush as well, although not many. For example, this photo is taken in a tailor's shop in Moush. According to its owner, this is an old picture of Moush. When I was in Tsamakasar village in Armenia, I remember there was a man saying that his grandparents' who were from Moush, had described Moush to him. They said that in old times,





serves as a sort of evidence of that statement. Today, Moush has spread further into the valley. Still, on the hillside, one can find old houses, which one day may become nothing more than memories depicted in our photographs.

Atak: Yes, I felt the same when photographing the ruins. What other objects did you find there?

Sofia: Well, we found the remnants of kitchen utensils. They are depicted in the photo. Not much is known about the owners of these items but they seem to know that these once belonged to Armenians. For me, these remnants are a kind of figurative evidence of Armenian heritage in ergir.

Here is a mirror, which is evidence that Armenians once lived in Moush. The owner of this mirror told me that he also owned a wardrobe, a tray, a washbowl, copper cauldrons and a saucepan, all previously belonging to the Armenians of Moush. He said many of the items were eventually stolen, leaving only two cauldrons and one washbowl. The owner had originally put them in his shop as ornaments, but he decided to hide with the hope that the Armenian owners would one day come back for them.

Atak: Did you find anything else from Moush and the nearby villages?

Sofia: In fact that's all I found. I don't think many objects from Armenians remain in ergir, despite the fact that Armenians had no choice but to leave their belongings in 1915. It is sad to me that so little remains of the Armenians who had lived in Moush for centuries. If not for the memories of people, one would not believe that Armenian books were written in Moush, there was an Armenian theatre and schools. The Armenian alphabet was created in this same place in 5th century and the Armenian philosopher David Anhaght was born there in 7th century. There would be no sign that this was the birthplace of Armenian noble Mamikonyan family. I was sad to discover that for many residents in Moush, the city has no "yesterday."

It is interesting that although very little was brought from ergir to the modern republic of Armenia, the things that were brought have been kept very well. I assume that's because



they are valuable reminders of the past. For example, a woman from Suser holds a cup brought from ergir. According to her husband, this cup was used for measuring liquid, flour or other ingredients. They said that it is one liter sharp, so women in the past when making bread, used to measure how much flour they needed with this cup.

Atak: That's interesting. Who is the woman with the white cat?

Sofia: She lives in Voskehask village in Armenia. She told me that her cat was brought from Van in Turkey. So I decided to take a photo of her with her cat. She also showed me a big jug and a round stone, which were both brought from Kars (Turkey). The jug was used for making and storing cheese inside it and the round stone was used for grinding wheat and making flour. The stone is not in use now, but she still uses the jug for making and storing cheese.

Atak: I noticed your photos are mainly of women. Do you feel they play particular role in preserving culture?

Sofia: Yes, I do. In the villages in Armenia, I noticed the distinct role played by women in preserving these objects and the stories connected to them. For example, here we see a woman from Voskehask holding a picture of Saints to her chest. This picture and the prayers were all brought from Kars in northeastern Turkey. According to the stories she heard, these relics had the power to heal believers and those who prayed with them. Another holy item in Voskehask is this book called Narek named after its author Narekatsi. The book was preserved because it was kept by those escaping Moush in 1915. It is believed that those who pray with Narek will have their wishes come true. In the home of the woman who showed us this book, we noticed that it was kept in a special corner, in a box, on which there were crosses and a painting of Christ.

Atak: After our encounters with local people in Turkey and Armenia, I realize that no object is ever just an object. A book is more than just a book, a cup is more than just a cup, and a building is more than just a building. These items are inanimate witnesses of history and they accompany us





through the course of our destinies, whether fortunate and unfortunate. This is why I think the preservation of these items is a substantive investment in history.

Sofia: I agree. Ruins become more intriguing after you learn the stories behind them and I think there is genuine value in our efforts to try to uncover some of the stories behind these artifacts.

Gateways in the Crumbling Wall of Silence

By Ruzanna Baghdasaryan (Armenia)

As I walk through the villages of Moush Valley in Turkey and among people of Moush origin in the villages of Armenia, I observe abandoned and now ramshackle doors and windows: constructions of entry and exit. I think to myself that these structures, although so common in our daily lives, may also have some sacred or historical meaning. What is a door but a portal that separates one reality from another; isolates but also provides a point of entry from either side. I think about through which door one might pass, or not pass through at all.

Windows are another gateway through which one can observe; a gateway through which one is introduced to an alternative space without ever entering it. There are limitations to mere observation, however. One can find only a partial display of the reality through a window, just a cropped, framed image of the whole picture. I think to myself how I can interact with something I know so little about?

At the moment, and for generations, there has been no direct gateway between Armenia and Turkey. The countries represent their contemporary realities in ignorance or disinformation about each other. As I walk among the villages of the Moush Valley and among Armenians from Moush, I feel a sense of urgency for these people and their realities to be reintroduced to each other. In the century following the events of 1915, these societies have built increasingly higher walls between themselves. On one side, tremendous efforts are made to forget, while on the other side, equal effort is put into remembering. In this way, both sides' "presents" are intimately connected to a shared past. Every moment that passes adds another brick to the opaque wall of silence between modern day Turkey and Armenia.

We are influenced by our pasts, whether we speak of them or not. Our identities are shaped by many things, including our historical, collective and personal memories, even when those memories are tangled and difficult.

I would like to see a dialogue between these two countries, whether it starts through a window or an open door. I believe only this will enlarge our vision about each other and bring to a mutual understanding.



Abandoned gateways:
Gyumri door, Moush window





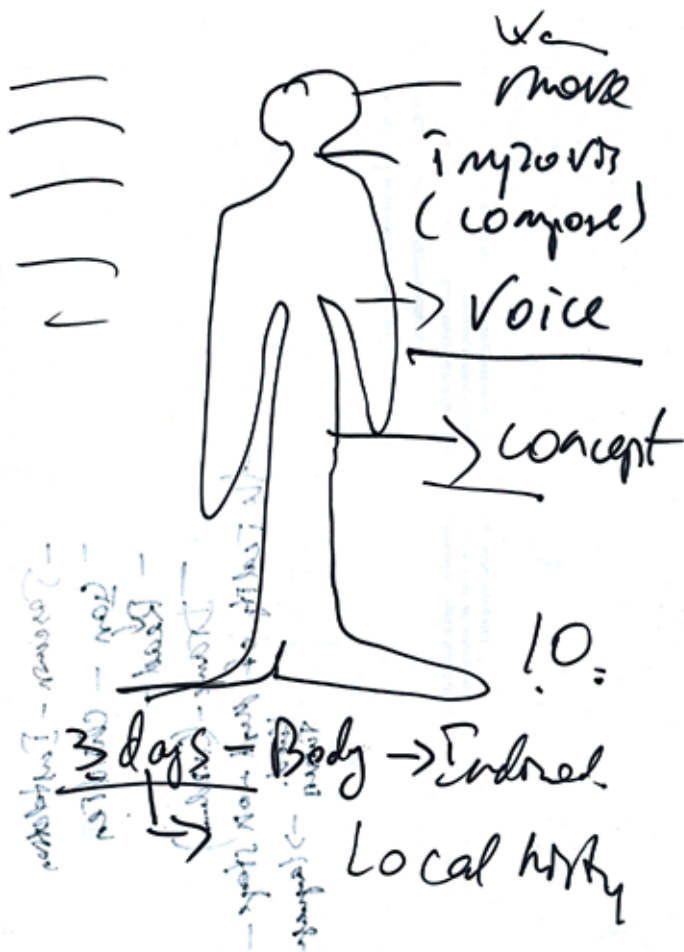
Sealed door, open window



The crumbling wall of silence



PERFORMANCE




Introduction

It was a real challenge for our performance group to find the appropriate approach to address both the history and various aspects of our collective traumatic memory. In our performance we wanted to reflect the reality of what people remember, what people know, what people embody and how they live with all that memory now. We wanted to avoid interpreting dramatically and be as exact as possible by becoming researchers that go out to the study field and bring that field back to the larger audience through performance. Performance for us was not only a final production, but a process of everyday research when you deal with a real life context and that context also affects you. You

share, you disagree or rethink; you connect and reconnect with the people you meet so that at the end it all develops into a process of becoming: a departure point to recombine yourself with the new reality you have just learned about.

The process of searching and dealing with real life and human narratives is very delicate and personal. We had to find a way and a form that would allow us to keep track of what we did, heard, saw, learned and felt during the day. At the same time we were a group of people trying to become a team, a jointly creating collective - so it was not only a personal experience but also a reflective group experience. In addition, we needed a tool to 'inform' other groups in the project every day about what the performance group did so they could see our way of thinking and doing. As a performance group that always finds an alternative way of thinking and doing we couldn't simply keep a written diary. We thought of a diary, but an alternative one. We decided to draw our day and give its entire picture through our drawing. In Moush, every day one of the participants was responsible for drawing a diary for the entire performance group. In Gyumri, we asked them to do it in pairs: an Armenian and a Turkish participant would decide and draw their day. The performance participants all had the freedom of choosing the way they wanted to draw the day and if they used words it was only for completing or characterizing the process. Those diaries are presented in the following pages to show what was happening for the performance group almost every day of the camp such as the ritual of greeting the sun in the morning, learning how to move and act during the day, finding the opera singer's house, etc.

We also considered the group (and each participant) as a working material able to move (i.e. body), be spontaneous and improvise, by operating within certain areas (i.e. space) and creating context for certain moments (i.e. time). So, we used our bodies as a recorder in the field, documenting narratives, themes, sounds, colors, smells, feelings, space and time. The same recorder (the body) would then bring the experience back to the group and to the stage by performing the field in a very specific time and space. The participants would propose starting



points, sources, ideas or structures from which the group would then generate the basic movements, sound and rhythm for themselves. This method expanded our creative possibilities by integrating the whole group in the process of proposing ideas. As far as possible we have applied an open dramatic structure that consisted of its 'tale.' Our field was mainly narrative, meaning that we had to tell a story or transmit a logical (including verbal) message. The performance (movement, voice, sound and video) allowed us to observe dramaturgy in the development of the 'tale.'

Another important principle of our group work was that tutors' and expert's personal aesthetical judgment was part of but not the only ruler of the game. We believed that composition was like a game, an experience to go through and enjoy. We also had to deal with and effectively manipulate two common trends in contemporary composition: individual creation and collective creation. So we improvised in the search for movement, sound, voice, words etc., imagining that composing a performance was like assembling a puzzle and documenting it. Different kinds of pieces were used and put together to create an organic unity. Improvisation before composing usually relies on ideas, voice, sound and possible music or any kind of association related to the piece that is being created. In our case, there were as many ways to compose, as long as the process existed. This way all 'body and space puzzle pieces' could be manipulated in terms of their timing. The same story and movement could be as long as we wanted to create different qualities of action or movement. We could vary the tempo, and by doing so, decrease or increase the speed throughout the whole performance. We played with the puzzle cards (the participants), experiencing the sense of being the center, being the frame, leading and leaving.

The basic approach was to document only the authentic material taken from the field, including stories, conversations, music, visual fragments and everything that directly reflected the actual experience of participants.

The Moush camp was a real challenge for the entire project. Just four days after our arrival in Moush, the earthquake in Van tragically took the lives of thousands of people and left many

families homeless and in need of immediate aid. This tragedy caused for one of the participants to discuss the possibility of dropping out and going to Van to help. Emotionally people were confused what to do and how to react. It was the first serious tension within the group, putting Armenian and Turkish participants into different dynamics. Armenian participants were in Van just a couple of days ago and they had the memory of Gyumri earthquake of 1988. Now, together with the Turkish group, they were faced with the very moment of drama taking place in Turkey, the country where they all came to explore a not less dramatic common past. So it was decided to contribute to first aid packages going to Van.

It became even tenser when the PKK bombed a police car just 50 km from Moush. It was not safe anymore to go out to the field. It became especially problematic for the performance group. The Turkish participants started to get phone calls from their parents asking them to return home. "If we cannot walk in the city, if we cannot go out from the town... then the next we will not be able to leave the hotel. Why are we doing this project?" some participants were asking. There was no mood anymore to rehearse, dance or sing. From the methodology we drew up to the exercises we planned, everything became ridiculous.

We had to keep the group going and find a new working format to continue the project. Unfortunately, two out of the three participants from Turkey who ended up leaving the camp were from the Performance Group.

Only one performance student from Turkey, after long hesitation, decided to stay in Moush till the end of the camp. Armenian participants were completely stressed out and the performance component of the project was under question. The organizers had to find a solution. This is the moment when the problem became an opportunity to invite a local community of amateur artists from DAMLA (a non-governmental cultural organization in Moush) to join the group and contribute. This way we were forced to consider the locality and to include current inhabitants of Moush in our local history project. Although there was almost no time, people didn't know each other, there was

no common language (DAMLA people didn't speak English), and the methodology was completely new for them, everyone still found a common ground to create collectively, and the whole process of making the final performance was a joy.

Gyumri camp was yet another challenge for the performance tutors and the expert. It was the second part of the project and according to the plan we were supposed to continue our research and link the map created in Moush with the new spots mapped out in Armenia. But how could we do it, with completely new participants from Turkey? The last Turkish member of our Performance group who stayed till the end in Moush dropped out right before Gyumri and all three participants from Turkey were newly selected, plus we had one new participant from Armenia.

So, the Gyumri camp from the very beginning had four new members. We had to deal with what we got. They were people with different expectations, different experiences, and they were totally new to the project methodology. We, the tutors, took up the challenge, and realized that it was going to be a true experiment and that our method of using the body as a recorder would work anyway. Despite our concerns, overall the Gyumri camp turned out well. We recorded new stories, jointly developed a working script, involved some local people in our performance, and more importantly succeeded in staging a final performance based on our stories from Moush and Armenia.

How to read the next pages

The next pages will introduce you to the context of the performance production process for Moush and Gyumri separately.

The Moush camp started with introduction of participants. The first day they were asked to draw their childhood fears and share them with each other. That was the first attempt to get to know each other better from the very deep and intimate core. And now as a reader you have a chance to know our group through our fears. In Gyumri camp we did it a bit differently. This time participants were asked to draw their expectations of the camp and perform them. Isn't it the best

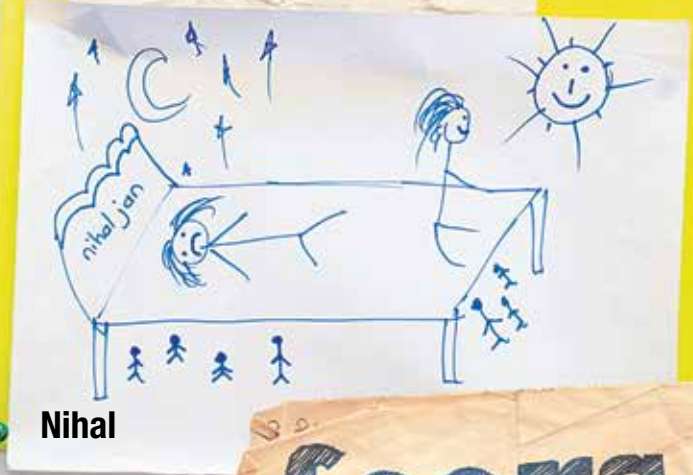
way to know a person by seeing what they wish to get from the process? So you can feel yourself as part of us in Gyumri through the colors of our expectations.

The drawings will guide you through our everyday experience and mood, first in Moush and then in Armenia. Going through the colors, words, symbols, figures and sometimes collages you will learn and maybe feel almost as much as our participants did. That means that all colors and symbols of participants' drawings are significant, at least for them. In this way you can also see how the narrative of the future performance was built. The chain of very simple, amateur drawings is like a film strip that takes you right into the context and the atmosphere of our camps. Each day, as if it were a dot on our alternative map, the performance script was collected through discussions and exchange of the experiences as well as regular rehearsals. You can see the blueprints and drafts of the performance script, which sometimes may be unreadable or not easily understandable but are still very illustrative. And when you finally reach the presentation of the final script of each camp performance, the puzzle will be complete and hopefully clear.

The script itself is divided up so that each scene corresponds to a place on the map, such as a hammam scene, or the house of hospitality, which are the main scenes in the performance. Each spot starts with a detailed description of the field experience. The scenes always start with a description of the source of the narrative, information and historical background and the reasons why it was chosen by the group to perform. Then the story, transformed into the actual performance, is described through the activities and performance actions taking place on the stage. The sound, video and all the technical aspects of staging are also described. Should readers decide to stage our play, they should please follow the scenario and add their part to the story and to the map.

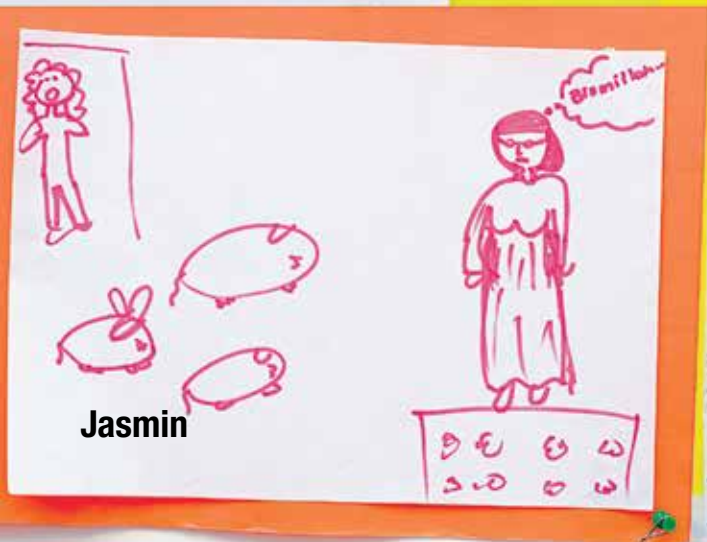


Anna



Nihal

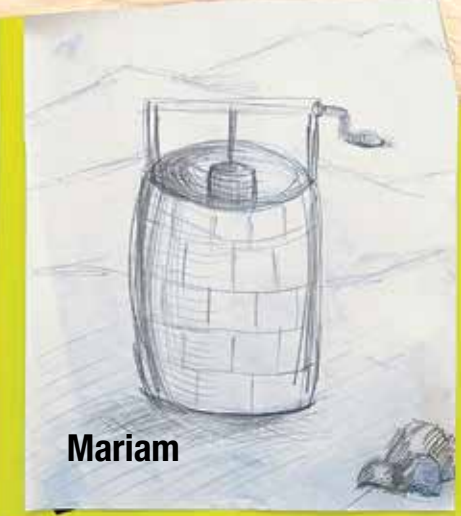
fears



Jasmin



Gozde



Mariam



Ariadna



Karen

**Moush
Day 1**



**Moush
Day 2**



go to the village of gengilli

talk to kids

gengilli of village

than → go to the Morat Bridge

than → go to the Damla KSM

eat to fish

we talk about our emotions about this day

we make improvisation

we folk dance in the break

in the end ⇒ we can back to hotel :)))

Moush Day 3

Brainstorming

Script Writing

Misunderstanding

Yes!

No! Menu

group disagreement

stressful situation

House of hospitality

Kale Park

negotiation

Damla's team works with the performance group Ideas, common solution

Group Eating

DAMLA

Moush Day 4

Moush Camp: Final Performance Script

By Ariadna Grigoryan (Armenia), Mariam Grigoryan (Armenia) and Anna Poghosyan (Armenia)

“What did you bring for me?”

This question was asked by the oldest Kurdish woman in Derik village of Moush. As we had some flatbread with us, a gift from another house, we told the woman: “We brought you some lavash.” She was not happy with it - it was not enough. Between her Kurdish language singing and storytelling like dengbesh,¹ she would ask this question. After one of her songs, she asked a guest to sing something in Armenian and he opened with Komitas. As he sang, she would interrupt him and continue her storytelling in Kurdish, improvising the melody. She was so deeply in touch with the music and it seemed so familiar to her. The more he repeated the song, the more she seemed to enjoy it. An interesting musical dialogue ensued between these two people of different generations and different historical paths. We stood witnessing a dramatic intersection of history.

When visiting the villages, we were always looking for the oldest person because they were likely to have the richest memories about the local people and also the Armenians who lived there. We hoped to find people who could connect us to the past. In Moush most of the oldest people do not speak Turkish and we needed double translation. In this house the old woman’s daughter-in-law explained what her mother-in-law was saying, so it could be translated from Kurdish into Turkish, and then to English. She asked her mother-in-law, “Why don’t you say you had Armenian neighbors in your home village?” Although the woman was reluctant to speak about Armenian presence in her village, her participation in this musical exchange obviously

¹ Dengbesh is an artist who tells epic stories and important social events through the kilam (poem) and stran (ballad). While they are an important part of Kurdish oral literature, they are also important for conveying the history from one generation to the next.

had helped her overcome the psychological barriers. We all witnessed a conversation between people with no common language using songs as a tool of communication.

All performers enter the stage and ask each other and the audience in their native languages and English: “What did you bring for me?” This question is directly linked to the answers in the finale.

Body/Movement: Disordered walking

Video: None

Sound: None

Text: Repeating the question to the audience in different languages (Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, English) “What did you bring for me?”



Church Becoming a School

One of the schools in the center of Moush was built using the stones of the Red Church, which was located 22 km away from Moush City. The church was first damaged by the earthquake and later blown up by the governor. Locals shared the story about this governor, whose mission was to demolish Armenian cultural heritage in the region of Moush in the 1960s.

With sounds of explosion the video projection starts. The audience watches the projection of a stone which is detached from the church wall and inserted into the school wall. At the same time performers ask each other questions in English, Turkish, Armenian and Kurdish: “Is this the Red Church?”, “Is this St. Karapet?”, “Arakelots monastery?” etc. Then participants of the performance move each other on the stage using their bodies as if stones.

Body/Movement: Using bodies as stones to create a wall

Video: The moving of a stone from a church wall to a school wall

Sound: Explosions

Text: "Is this the Red Church?", "Is this St. Karabet?", "Arakelots monastery?"

Dialogue at School

While trying to find any traces of Armenian cultural heritage, we visited several former Armenian villages. One of them was the Kurdish populated village of Chengelli, about 35 kilometers northwest of Moush City. It was a significant place for us, because that was the place where the famous Saint Karapet Monastery was situated. Today Saint Karapet consists of a few shapeless ruins, carved stones and *khachkars* which have been used as building material by the current Muslim residents (mostly Zaza Kurds), and are often found embedded in the walls of local homes and structures.

Saint Karapet Monastery was significant for our group, since there are several Armenian legends and folk stories connected to it and many folk songs are dedicated to it. Saint Karapet himself was said to be able to heal infertile women. For all the participants of the performance group it was a sad surprise to see how little remained of this once-huge and flourishing monastery complex. To our eternal disappointment we realized that once-sacred stones and parts of the church had been turned into the walls of cattle houses and storage buildings. When asked why the church was destroyed, and why they used church stones for their constructions, the current population explained that they settled there after the monastery had already been destroyed, and by using the stones they preserved them. Our visit to Chengelli village gave us a huge experience which became the basis for different scenes in our performance.

Wherever we went, we tried to get acquainted with the locals. Children approached us with curiosity and questions – and thus became our first respondents and guides. The children in Chengelli were used to having guests in their village and were curious to learn where we came from. One of the Armenian participants was surrounded by very talkative

children inviting her to their school. When she entered the school during the class, they asked her if she was a tourist from London, even though she spoke Turkish. (This happened many times in other villages). She answered in English that she was from Armenia, but the children had no idea where that was. Their teacher told them that she would explain it later. An interested child wanted to have a picture taken and the teacher mockingly told him "Say Sarkozy" instead of "Say cheese."

This experience of being considered as a tourist while visiting your historical motherland was common for the Armenian participants during the entire camp. This provoked conflicting emotions, because on the one hand the Armenian participants were seen as tourists coming from a different country, while on the other hand it was a reconnection with their ancestors who had lived in Moush for thousands years. This was the moment when we understood what happened during the first day of our camp, when we stated the reasons we were there. That day one of our participants from Turkey said that she came "to ask for forgiveness." One of the Armenian participants said, "I have come to Moush and have experienced great pain to realize that life in Moush for me was stuck in 1915. I have discovered that Moush is living and breathing, but it is not ours anymore." Here we have the question of how Armenians are perceived in modern-day Turkey. It is indefinite and uncertain both for Armenians and current locals.

The stage turns into a classroom and the audience becomes students. Performers locate among the audience. One of the performers enters the stage as a teacher and the conversation with audience takes place.

Body/Movement: Sitting among audience as if students in order to participate in communication

Video: None

Sound: None

Text: Dialogue

Participant: Çocuklar ne var ne yok? (Children, what's up?)

Student 1: Turist misin sen? (Are you a tourist?)

Participant: Evet. (Yes. My forefathers lived here.)

Student 2: İngiliz? Londradan mı geliyorsun? (Are you British? Did you come from London?)

Participant: Hayır hayır (No, no.)

Student 3: Amerikandan mı geliyorsun? (Did you come from America?)

Participant: Hayır Ermenistandan geliyorum, Yerevandan. (No, I came from Yerevan, Armenia.)

Student 4: Oh Ermenistan. Please take a photo of us.

Teacher: Oh yes, say Sarkozy!

Student 4: Ermenistan wouw!

Student 2: Ermenistan neresi ki? (Where is Armenia?)

Participant: Ermenistan, Yerevan.

Teacher: (angrily) Ermenistan, Iğdır'ın yanı, komşu ülkemiz bilmiyor musun evladım? (Armenia, next to Iğdır, it is a neighboring country, don't you know child?)



The Story of Hamam² and the Legend of Astghik

There is a beautiful legend of Astghik, Armenian pagan goddess of love and beauty related to Moush. When Astghik was taking a bath in the river Aratsani (Murad) she would cover herself with fog, hiding from men who fell in love with her and came to see her bathe. That's why the area was called "Mshush," meaning fog in Armenian, which later on became Moush. As we found out, the current inhabitants of Moush are unfamiliar with this legend. Instead, they have a very popular song "Yemen Turkusu" that today's locals consider to be dedicated to Moush. They said the song is about soldiers sent to Yemen during the war who did not come back to Moush.

² Hamam is a Turkish Bath.

However there is also a discussion about the song. Some say that the word in "Yemen Turkusu" is not "Moush," it is "Housh," which is a territory in Yemen.

Visiting different villages of Moush we heard a lot of legends. We specifically targeted the hamam (bath), because it was one of the oldest secular buildings in Moush City. The performance group was the only one to enter the hamam and explore it from inside. Our local guide Armen, an ethnic Armenian from Moush, showed us a stone which depicted grapes and two birds tweeting. He also recalled a legend in which the Armenian owner of the hamam caught his son watching women bathing and killed him for the sake of honor. Through this story we witnessed the connection between the past and the present state of the hamam, we found it appropriate to connect different legends in one scene.

Lights go off. Two candles are brought to the stage. Two performers appear and use their hands to make the shadows of birds singing. Afterwards, one of the performers starts to play the tambour. Then the doves become women. Another performer comes on the stage and plays the goddess Astghik taking a bath. Meanwhile others cover her with white sheets like fog. The shadows create an effect of prying into the hamam, and watching the bathing woman. To show the honor killing we used the effect of candles being blown away and a horrifying scream. In the darkness men's virile voices gradually emerge joking and laughing. With the men coming to the stage we wanted to show that for a long time this hamam in Moush (which was open for women in the past) has been visited by men only, and no woman goes there anymore.

Body/Movement: Shadow of hands, solo dance similar to bathing movements

Video: None

Sound: Rhythms of Tambour, scream

Text: None

Opera Singer Armenak Shahmuradyan's House



While walking around Moush in search of interesting stories for our performance we came across a local, who introduced us to the former home of Armenian opera singer Armenak Shahmuradyan, also known as "The Moush Nightingale." The building is now a restaurant. Armenak Shahmuradyan was born in Moush in 1878, studied under the famous Armenian composer Komitas, taught in Saint Karapet Lyceum and later on performed across the world. Before the genocide of 1915 he moved to the US.

We entered the house by the front door, which later turned out to be the back door of a restaurant. The waiter told us a story about an Armenian woman, who visited a while ago. When asked why she wanted to see the storage house she explained that this was her parents' home and she grew up there. Walking through all the rooms, she remembered what they were used for; remembered the location of furniture, resurrecting her past life in her childhood memories. According to another current local of Moush, the previous owner of the house suspected that when Armenians left they buried their gold somewhere inside. He tried to find it, but while digging he bumped into a grave and the stone fell. This was a sign that the digging should be stopped otherwise he would be cursed. He sold the place to a man who all of a sudden became very rich and opened the restaurant, and suspected that this man had finally found the buried gold. At the end of our visit, the current owner informed us that he is going to demolish the building and put more open tables to have more space. He was not even aware that this was an opera singer's house.

We decided to use the concept of reconnecting with the house of our own childhoods. The performing of lullabies, being the earliest memory of our childhood, was both a link to our past and to the story.

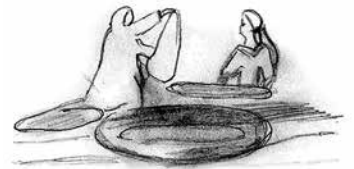
A silent video projection takes us through Shahmuradyan's house while in the background Shahmuradyan's voice performs an Armenian song. One by one the performers appear and sit on the stage with their back to the audience. They look like being in the house with their shadows. The camera wanders through the house, visiting the rooms. Each participant performs a lullaby of his or her childhood in a native language, one after another. A lullaby starts before the other finishes, so lullabies intervene each other. Suddenly the lights go on and one of the participants comes on the stage to interrupt the lullabies by reading of a menu. This reflects the transformation of the house into a restaurant. The noise of the kitchen completes the scene.

Body/Movement: Sitting on the stage with backs turned to the audience

Video: Video projection of Armenak Shahmuradyan's house

Sound: Lullabies, a song performed by Armenak Shahmuradyan (Armenia the country of paradise)

Text: Menu of the restaurant



House of Hospitality

We were searching for an Armenian church in Moush and a man looking from the window invited us for a cup of tea. Even though we were asking him to show us the way to the church he welcomed us so warmly that we couldn't refuse. In the middle of the conversation he told us that his grandmother was Armenian and he inherited a tray, a millstone and several other objects. While we were talking, his wife, a Zaza from Bingyol, was baking bread and proposed to teach us how to roll the dough. The man told us that if we couldn't make good bread, we would never get married. While we were drinking tea, his daughter, who was approximately 13 years old, wanted to surprise us saying that she knew who Armenians were.



In order to convince us she brought her source of information: her history textbook. It was really surprising to see how Armenians were illustrated in the book. Armenians were presented as betrayers in Russian military uniforms. Feeling uncomfortable, the head of the family spontaneously took the book from her hands and put it away. Upon leaving he suggested that we ceased wasting money on a hotel and stayed at his house. This house where we were welcomed so warmly was a place where you could learn cooking and being a good housewife. We decided to use this fragment in our script because it combined every kind of hospitality that we experienced in Moush. Choosing this spot in our performance showed the spontaneous manifestation of hospitality, where one can teach you skills, give you food and accommodate you and even take care of your future. The distribution of lavash and fruits is a sign of hospitality, and ensures interaction and connection with the audience.

The scene begins with one of the performers putting lavash in the middle. The whole group makes a circle around it. The person in the middle teaches the rest how to cook lavash. All are involved in the labor, singing a song called Mirkut which is a labor song in the Kurmanci language and usually sung while cracking wheat in the field and distributing lavash.

Movement/Body: Synchronized movements, gestures associated with bread making

Video: None

Sound: Live performance of Mirkut

Text: None

Facing the Barriers

Near the mosque in Chengelli village, a Turkish participant got into a conversation with a local child about the long hair of one of the group members. The child said that it is haram³ for men to have long hair. Ahmed, who was religious himself, explained to the child that he was misinterpreting the principle. It was an interesting coincidence, because the question was asked in the village where Saint Karapet Monastery once stood. Saints Karapet is a major figure in the Armenian Apostolic Church, and it is known from an old legend that he had

³ Haram (Arabic: حرام ḥarām) is an Arabic term meaning "sinful." In Islam it is used to refer to any act that displeases or angers Allah (God).

long hair and resembled to The Armenian Pagan God Gisane.⁴

Meanwhile in the same village another participant was asked about her origin. As the daughter of a Turkish mother and Kurdish father, she introduced herself as Kurdish, and was questioned why she couldn't speak Kurdish. When the villagers learnt that her mother was Turkish they jumped to the conclusion: "That's why you can't speak Kurdish." These dialogues were included in the script to represent the social barriers and stereotypes based on identity, ethnicity, religion, way of life and culture and the constant challenge to get into conversation in order to overcome these barriers.

All performers enter the stage and move randomly. Then they freeze, and three people perform the dialogue in Turkish, like in the village. The translator, randomly chosen from the audience, is brought to the stage to translate the dialogues into English.

Movement/Body: Random movements, stillness

Video: None

Sound: None

Text: Dialogue

Child: Welcome.

Participant 1: Thank you.

Child: How are you?

Participant 1: Thank you.

Child: Where are you coming from?

Participant 1: I am from Moush.

Participant 2: I am from Ankara.

Child: Are you Turkish?

Participant 2: Yes, I am Turkish.

Participant 1: No, I am Kurdish.

Child: So you are Muslims?

Participant1: Yes we are. Why?

⁴ Pagan Armenian god of Indian origin, (Dictionary of Armenian names of people) is a prince who fled from India to Armenia. The name "Gisane" is assumed to be derived from Armenian word "gis," meaning a tress of hair that the priests used to have.

Child: Well, I thought Muslims do not have long hair.

Participant 1: Who told you that?

Child: My elders.

Participant 1: Have you ever searched?

Child: No.

Participant 1: How can you know what is haram and what is halal without any research?

Child: Well, we listen to what elders said.

Participant 1: I guess, you should research first. For example, 1400 years ago our prophet had long hair as well. Agreed?

Child: Yes.

Dilemma: Hypocrisy vs. Hospitality

(This part was discussed and written by participants during the preparations for the performance process. Due to the time restrictions, it could not be worked out and was not performed in the final performance.)

When we visited Derik, a former Armenian village currently populated by Kurds, a very interesting episode took place which made the performance group reassess and revalue what they had so far seen, heard, experienced and learned in Moush. One of the participants from Turkey faced a dilemma when she visited an old villager's place and asked about Armenians and their historical presence in the village. The old man, bringing up specific examples and stories, openly told her how the Kurds who settled in the village after the Armenians were involved in massacres. On learning that there were also Armenians with her at his village, he immediately changed his face and tone and became scared, telling her that, "Armenians cannot be here!" He added that he wouldn't like to host an Armenian at his place, he was afraid that the Armenian participants came for his land, and he didn't even want to meet an Armenian. However, when an Armenian participant approached he could do nothing but invite her to his place and offer his hospitality. After treating her with some tea, bread and cheese the conversation turned to Armenians

previously inhabiting the village. He mentioned that his father was a serious historian, spoke about his admiration for Stalin, and explained that this was a former Armenian village, and the whole territory was once Armenian. He said that his father studied the genocide and blamed the Turkish government for whatever happened in 1915.

The thing that struck the participant from Turkey was how the man was able to change for the sake of hospitality to please his guest and how he was inclined to speak about things that his Armenian guest was expecting to hear. She didn't know how to deal with this dilemma and how to continue conversation with the old man. This case became a discussion point, because all the parties involved in this situation faced different problems which they had to deal with: the old man had to change his words to be politically correct; the participant from Turkey had to deal with the old man changing his "face" in a heartbeat; and the participants from Armenia had to tackle their perceptions of the hospitality of the man coupled with his hypocrisy.

The staging was not decided but there were some suggestions: painting one of the participant's face to show the mask of a person with two faces, creating a complication by using rhythm, voice and melody at the same time, painting everybody with different colors to show that we can all wear masks and be hypocritical and we can all embody dilemma.

Movement/Body: Seating on the stage, improvisation with colors

Video: None

Sound: improvised rhythm, voice and intonations

Text: None

Children, Thank You!

(This part was discussed and written by participants during the preparations for the performance process. Due to the time restrictions, it could not be rehearsed with children and was not performed in the final performance.)

Children became an essential part of our field trips as the guides, hosts, friends and the best performers in song, dance and acrobatics. The day we visited the former Armenian neighborhood in Moush became a kind of open air festival. We decided to bring this context into the final performance so the children could experience the pleasure of being on stage.

Performers recreate the same situation they experienced while visiting the neighborhood. Each performer invites children they know on the stage as their best friends and asks them to demonstrate their skills. At the same time photos of that day are distributed to them and their families as a thank you gesture.

Body/Movement: Dance and acrobatics by children

Video: None

Sound: Live performance of talking, laughing, singing

Text: None

Transformation from Cemetery to Prison and later to the Market Place

(This part was discussed and written by participants during the preparations for the performance process. Due to the time restrictions, it could not be worked out and was not performed in the final performance.)

One of the inhabitants of Moush suggested that we had to visit the city bazaar. On arriving there we were treated to some pears. The sellers would address the Armenian participants, saying: "These are honey-pears from your grandfathers' gardens." They also told us that the market was once a cemetery and the town was situated up on the hill (the place where mostly Armenian houses are preserved, known as Old Moush). Later the cemetery was turned into a prison and then a bazaar. They even presented us with a picture of an old town. Interestingly, all the concepts coincided. We decided to include it in our performance because it depicted the transformation of Armenian history into a present-day Kurdish reality.

Meanwhile our Turkish tutor was surrounded by strangers and asked questions. Later on we discovered that it was police interrogating her about the aim of our activities in Moush. That was the second day of our visit and during the evening reflection session we learned that other teams working in Moush had also been questioned by police.

Performers lie on the stage as if it's a cemetery, to the melody of duduk. Then they stand up and the lighting shows the bars of the prison. Next the bars go up and they depict the market with gestures and imitate the noise (using recorded market noise). The video projection shows a sky with ravens.

Body/Movement: Lying on the stage, creating shadows of bars

Video: Sky with ravens

Sound: Duduk, noise of market

Text: None

Alternative Map

(This part was discussed and written by participants during the preparations for the performance process. Due to the time restrictions, it could not be worked out and was not performed in the final performance.)

When visiting the villages in Moush and communicating with the inhabitants, we were always asked: "Where is your map?" We were perceived as treasure hunters by the locals but at first we didn't quite understand the meaning. It was in Chengelli village where the oldest woman we talked to asked the same question: "Have you brought the map with you?" Later on in the conversation she explained that the Armenians who had lived in Moush were wealthy. This old woman told us that when the massacre started, in order to escape from unavoidable violence, kidnapping, and death, Armenian women took their children and their golden jewelry and threw themselves into Murad River. Others hid their gold in their houses or buried it in the ground, hoping to come back later. When the local Kurds settled there,

some of them found the hidden gold. There were also groups from Istanbul who did some excavations and took the best stones back to Istanbul. We understood that the treasure hunt story was common in other villages too. After this conversation with the old lady, we found how to answer this question. Yes, we were looking for treasures, but the real treasures for us were churches, historical presence and cultural heritage.

Another conversation took place in Goms village. Before leaving we were kindly invited by the imam (prayer leader of mosques) to enter the mosque although it was already closed. The imam even allowed women to enter the same space with men. The beautiful mosque was quite different from other mosques in the region because of its size, luxury and magnificence. And the imam, who was proud to show us the whole beauty of it, also spoke to us about Muslim religion, emphasizing that the answer to all questions can be found in Islam. When he learnt that our group had spent a couple of hours walking around and asking questions about Armenian (Christian) cultural heritage, he said, "What are you looking for in those shabby places? Come here. Here is the biggest value and the real culture." In reply, one of the group members diplomatically said, "If you are able to understand and appreciate the value of culture, you should take care of the cultural heritage of others present in your village in the same way."

Before performance, participants drew the map of historical and cultural spots of Moush - a kind of alternative map for "treasure hunters," who came expecting to find gold but ended up discovering the real treasure of the destroyed Armenian churches and cultural values. And the drawing process in company with discussions about "real treasure" was shot. In performance while the video is screened on projection, performers distribute maps they drew to the audience.

Body/Movement: Distributing maps to audiences

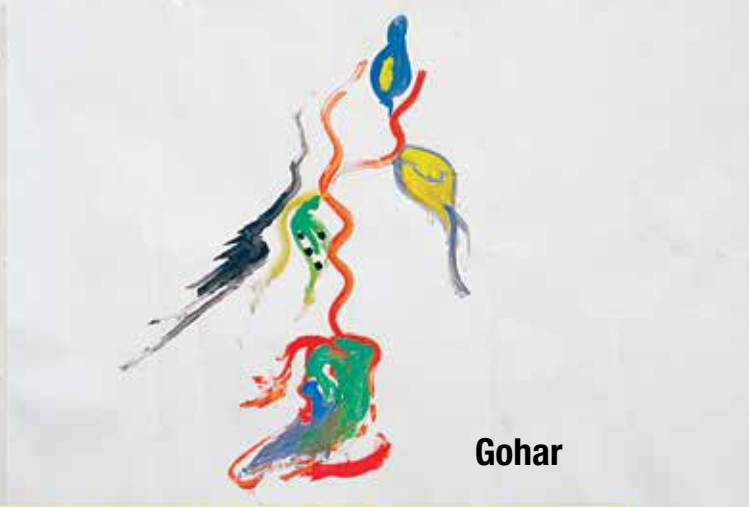
Video: Video of drawing the map

Sound: None

Text: None



Selin



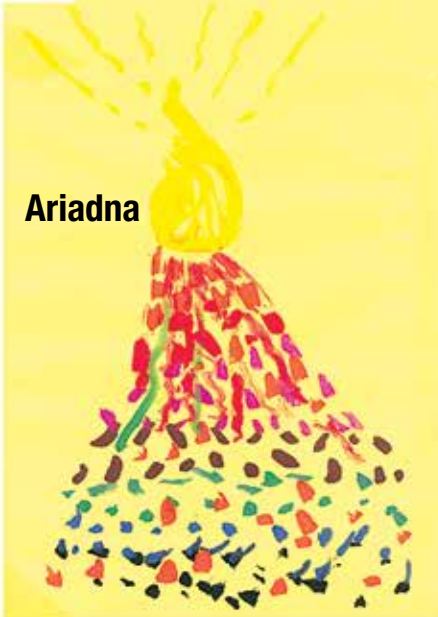
Gohar



Merve



Mariam



Ariadna



Nihal

—Expectations
From the project—



Sayat

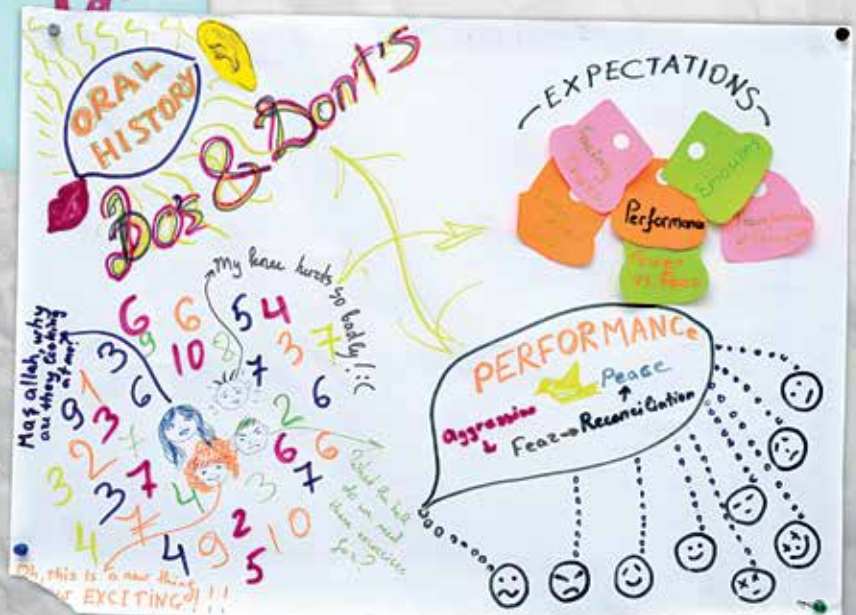
**Gyumri
Day 2**

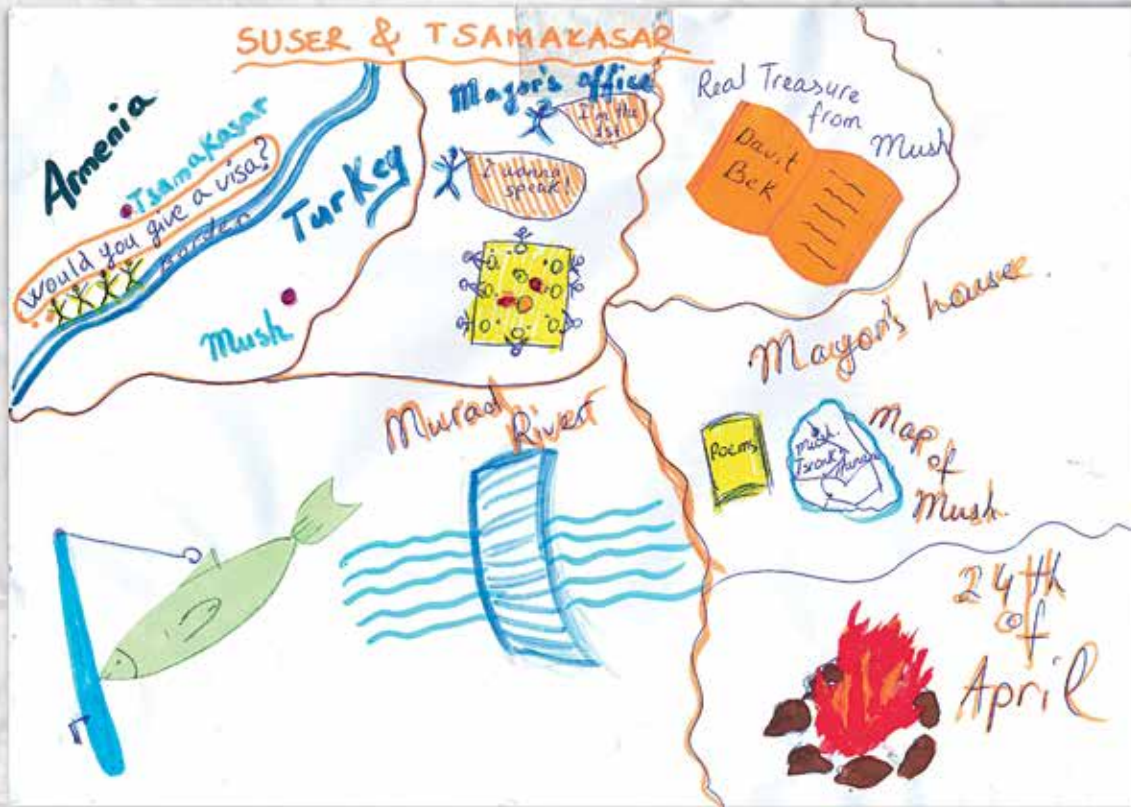


**Gyumri
Day 3**



**Gyumri
Day 4**





Gyumri
Day 6



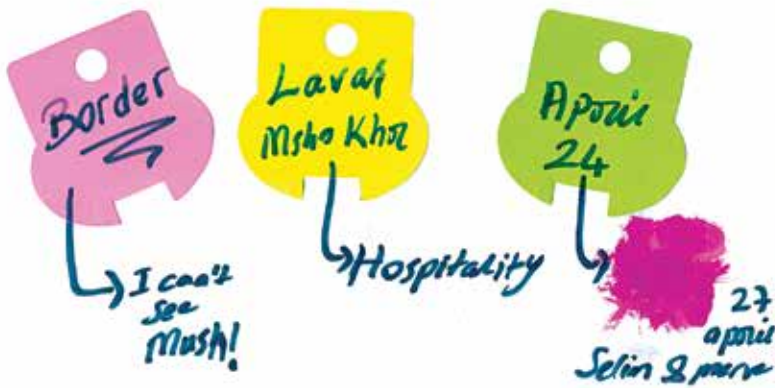
Gyumri
Day 8

Are you going to steal my pictures?!

24.04.2012

Gyumri
Day 9

Script Writing



Gyumri
Day 13



Gyumri
Day 14

Gyumri Camp: Final Performance Script

By Ariadna Grigoryan (Armenia), Gohar Hovsepyan (Armenia), Mariam Grigoryan (Armenia), Merve Kan (Turkey), Sayat Tekir (Turkey), and Selin Cakar (Turkey)



Borders

In our conversations in different villages of Armenia where people of Moush origin are currently living we always came across the border issue. In Dashtadem we met an old woman who used to speak Azerbaijani, which is very close to Turkish. She talked with participants from Turkey. She was an Armenian from Azerbaijan. She came to Armenia for her education and then married here. Her mother-in-law and father-in-law are originally from Moush. She told us she always was asking her in-laws why they settled here instead of settling in Germany or France. Their answer was they always wanted to stay near the border in the hope that by being close to it, they might have the opportunity to resume their life in their homeland. There was an interesting musician in the same village of Dashtadam, Varuzhan, who kept asking the Turkish participants: "If I ask you to give me a visa to visit my homeland, will you do it?" Actually Varuzhan has his grandfather's zurna (shrill pipe) which was brought from Moush and his dream is to play this instrument in Moush.

While interviewing people, and asking why exactly they settled in a particular village, most of them mentioned the closeness to the border and consequently a possibility to return to their lands, as the main factor. Varuzhan always got disturbed with his wife for hanging out the laundry and thus covering

the view of *ergir* (Moush), "I do not like it when she does this because I cannot see Moush anymore." Due to the fact that the topic of the border was always an issue, and that there is currently a closed state border between Armenia and Turkey, with no border crossings, participants discussed the possibility of open borders and what the benefits might be to both sides.

Performers create the image of "Sweet Moush"¹ with the picture of Moush on the wall and the song describing the relation and nostalgia of *ergir* (Moush). One by one they leave the song and partially cover the picture of Moush as creating a border between the audience and the picture of Moush. Eventually, the performers become a screen for video projection. Different images of border lines are projected onto t-shirts they hold in their hands: laundry, khachkars, train, fences. The scene ends with the sentence of Varuzhan to his wife.

Movement: Bodies form a border as a clothes line

Video: Photos of Moush, laundry, khachkar, train, fences

Sound: Live performance of "Moush, Moush, Qaghtsr Moush," meaning "sweet Moush"

Text: I do not like it when she does this because I cannot see Moush anymore.

Church Becoming School

This part is the same as in Moush Camp

Legendary Hamam

This part is the same as in Moush Camp

Why are you here?

In Armenian villages we always needed to build trust with people because we were interested in discussing very sensitive family narratives. In order to share their stories, especially with Turkish participants, they had to believe in the value of the project

¹ Based on the stories we heard, we have decided that people have a dream of a "sweet" Moush in their minds.

because in their stories, Turkish characters are usually villains. In Dashdatem village, residents have always been sensitive about the past and never abandoned hope to achieve historical justice and a return of the lands. Before letting us into their village and homes, the villagers gathered in the mayor's office to question us on our positions and aims of the project. They asked questions like: "What is your attitude towards Genocide;" (addressing Turkish participants), "What do you initiate in your country to achieve historical justice;" (addressing Turkish participants), "Which one is a Turk;," "We want to know if they are sorry or not;," "Do you recognize Genocide;," and "Why are you here?" Actually, in various ways similar questions were asked in different houses and meetings in all villages as a part of the trust-building process. Our participants used performance as an opportunity to reflect and answer these difficult questions.

Performers walk on the stage randomly. From time to time they all freeze and one of them introduces her/himself and tells why "I am here" in her/his native language and then someone else translates it. The process repeats until everybody has introduced themselves. Uneasiness develops and is reflected in the next scene, House of Hospitality.

Movement: Walking

Video: None

Audio: None

Text:

Hello I am Ada, I am here to recreate Moush in your minds.

Hello I am Selin, I am here for us to speak to one another and to share lamentations.

Hello I am Gohar, I am here to face Turkish-Armenian relations within the frame of peace.

Hello I am Mariam, I am here to bring the sounds of Moush to the world.

Hello I am Merve, I don't want to wait for governments to solve Turkish-Armenian relations; I am here to take a step myself.

Hello I am Sayat, I am an Armenian from Istanbul; I am here to open the borders.

House of Hospitality

Hospitality was an impressive part of our team experience. In many houses that hosted us the idea of similar culture and similar traditions was raised. At the same time in Armenia a lot of sensitive questions about genocide were asked so building the trust was a process which required intimate and uneasy conversations. One of the most interesting moments occurred in Dashtadem, in the house of Taron whose grandparents came from Moush. He was a very hospitable person. A neighbor of Taron came to the house. He shook the hands of Taron and his sons but not Sayat's, our participant from Turkey. Taron said that Sayat is an Armenian, too. Only then, he shook Sayat's hand. He asked 'Where are those Turks?' and he went to the garden where the group was resting. Taron asked him not to cause any unpleasant events. He said "These are all girls. Where are the boys?" and he left the garden. Thus the group decided to give each participant a chance to express those moments by formulating one question from many that they were exposed to during their visits.

This scene starts the same way which was in Moush script. The lavash-making and singing process is interrupted by performers' speaking out questions time to time. Suddenly everything stops and everyone freezes. One of the performers unexpectedly asks a question. Then the singing and movement continues until everyone asks a question she or he has chosen. At the end of the scene, while distributing lavash, the next scene starts smoothly by incorporating the audience into the performance.

Movement: Lavash-making dance

Video: None

Sound: Live performance of Mirkut*

* Mirkut is a labor song in Kurmanci language and is usually sung while cracking wheat in the field.

Text:

“Are you Turkish? If you are Turkish, I will not shake your hand!”

“What is your position on genocide?”

“I am wondering about whether you feel sorry.”

“Do you accept that the genocide happened?”

“What do you initiate in your country to solve this issue?”



Wedding and Learning to Dance Msho Khr

When we were in Dashtadem, Taron's son Tigran taught us “Msho Khr” which is a group dance and is also performed at weddings. At the same time, we heard many anecdotes and learned about wedding traditions in the villages of Dashtadem, Tsamakasar, Taronik and Suser from the people we met. They also informed us about similarities and differences between Moush-Sassoun weddings and weddings in other Armenian villages.

In almost all villages we talked about cultural similarities of Armenia and Turkey, like dancing the same dance, singing the same songs in different languages, preparing the same meals with different names. So we wanted to perform common dances and songs all together. We decided to perform this part in order to give importance to our common cultural heritage but at the same time the stories are ‘more than singing together’. Because of that we chose to interrupt this part with the part of witnesses of genocide.

In addition to this we have also one important reason to perform this scene. In the village of Taronik in Armenia we visited a family of musicians. The grandfather of the family, Meruzh is the oldest drum player in the village. His grandson is a very talented clarinet and zurna player. When we visited their house, they performed the brides’ dance of Kars with clarinet, and Msho Gyovende and Kochari with zurna, which is inherited from their father’s grandfather and was brought from Moush. The

zurna is traditionally passed from father to son and it is seen as a transmitter of cultural heritage. After an entertaining learning process we invited them to our final performance in Oshakan in order to perform together. In this part of the performance they played their instruments and we danced together.

After serving out lavash, a woman and a man are chosen from the audience to represent the bride and the groom. They are given their lavash and Msho Khr is performed. Photos and video of apricot tree flowers taken in Dashtadem are projected on the screen as a symbol of the bride. Accompanied by drums, the zurna halay begins and continues until the sound of a church bell is heard indicating the beginning of the other part: witnesses of genocide. The screen turns red.

Movement: Msho Khr dance

Video: Apricot tree and red sheet photographs

Sound: Msho Ghr played with zurna and drums

Text: None

April 24 – Witnesses of Genocide

Each spring, on the 24th of April, hundreds of thousands of people make their annual pilgrimage to the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan in commemoration of 1.5 million innocent victims of the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire. They organize a united march to the hilltop Tsitsernakaberd - Genocide Memorial in the Armenian capital. Mshetsies (people of Moush origin) living in Aragatsotn villages do not usually go to Yerevan. Instead they commemorate the date by burning tires on the top of the mountains near the border, thus reminding Turkey, that they remember the past.

During all of our visits to the villages of Armenia, the performance group was told stories about the terrifying experiences of escape from the Ottoman Empire. All the brutalities, violence, massacre and atrocities carried out by Turks linger in each family’s memory. There were so many

stories told that it was difficult to choose which to include in the final performance. Therefore, we decided to create a context so the stories would speak themselves: all family narratives were scattered on the stage: the actors were taking any of them and reading it loudly in the first person to identify with the victims' and share their pain and suffering.

One of the stories depicts the atrocities made in an Armenian church. Gayane – a teacher from Dashtadem village told us a story heard from her father how Turks were piling Armenians in churches and burning them alive. This slaughter was not enough: they didn't hesitate to compound the horror by passing their burnt bodies through sharp sieves. We were told how before the burning, Turks would choose three women to "sieve."

Another story is told by Pilos from Katnaghbyur. Pilos's father had another family in Aros village of Moush, but he was forced to leave his family - mother, wife and three children during the massacre. He gave some gold to his mother and wife to give to the Turks for their escape, but after that he never saw his family again. The father of Pilos was able to survive with his brother and brother-in-law because a Turk named Osman helped them to hide in a haystack for several days.

One story tells about Saro's father who had six brothers. His grandfather's name was Grigor, and they had an uncle Avetis who was a priest in Saint Arakelots. When the massacres started people moved from the village to the forest. But Grigor ordered his wife to go back home and bake bread for the road. His wife with her three brothers and three sons stayed home that night, but Turks came and killed them. After that someone came to the forest and told Grigor that his family had been killed. Saro heard all these stories from his uncle Kerob. He used to tell about relationships between Kurds and Armenians, also that the government ordered Kurds to kill Armenians and take their property: that's why they started to kill their neighbours.

One of the stories read during the performance was

learned from the mayor of Suser village. This was the story of his grandfather whose diaries the mayor kept. His great-grandfather Petros, who served in Andranik's troops in the 1880s, kept a diary of his life in Moush. The diary contains written accounts of atrocities committed by the Turks in the form of heart-breaking poems both in Armenian and Kurdish. One of the poems, 'Nursing Mother,' is about Armenian freedom and independence, "which two million Armenians will not see."

Oh, that unforgettable pain still lingers
You all experienced massacre and more
And fate didn't let you – two million people
See Armenia in independence and freedom.
15/12/80 Tsamaqasar, Extract from 'Nursing Mother' verse

This part of the performance, entitled "April 24," begins with the song Chinar Es, which is sung off-stage. As the performers enter, the singing stops. Actors come in, one by one, carrying candles. Faces of villagers are projected on to the actors and onto the wall. The family narratives described above have been printed on sheets of paper and are scattered about the stage. Actors then take the candles and read the stories in three languages – English, Armenian and Turkish. The performance ends with darkness as a symbol of excruciating pain.

Movement: Images projected onto actors' bodies
Video: Photos of people whose stories are read
Sound: Live performance of Komitas's Chinar Es, meaning "tall as the Poplar tree"
Text: Stories told by the villagers

Opera Singer Armenak Shahmuradyan's House

This part is the same as in Moush Camp



Treasure Hunt: What is Moush for You?

In the first phase of the project in Moush, we were asked if we were in Moush in order to find the treasures of Armenians. Residents told stories about how some of their neighbors found treasure left by Armenians and got rich after the genocide. But some of the treasure stories were hidden or just based on guesses or presumptions of people.

In Armenia, we were observing what kind of images of Moush people of Moush origin living here have in their minds. Most of the families barely escaped from Moush to Armenia. But even though the people we met were already born and raised in Armenia, they all had an ideal image of Moush in their minds. They were all wondering about Moush and wanted to go there, even just to see where their ancestors had lived. They were all picturing Moush as a heaven or a blessed and plentiful land. On one occasion we gave chocolate to one of the villagers in gratitude for hosting us in their home. The villager asked if we had some soil from Moush instead of the chocolate. Another villager said that the last wish of his grandfather was to put Moush soil on his grave. Taking these two experiences in Moush and Armenia, and based on these stories, the topic evolved in a way that we asked, “What was the real treasure for us, and what is Moush for us?” Throughout the performance, we aimed to combine Moush and Armenia on a conceptual level. In this part we had a chance to talk about it and we aimed to make an interactive moment while thinking about Moush. Therefore, we used the format of journalist asking questions.

Performers step forward one at a time and say what Moush means to them and what the real treasure is to them. For some of them, it was a reason to gather both sides in such a project, for some others it was the motherland that would always be remembered in this way. One of the performers, acting as a BBC journalist with a microphone and a camera, draws the audience in by asking what Moush means to them.

Movement: Walking

Video: Live video of audience

Sound: None

Text: Moush was the first phase of this project for me. Moush was past, present and future for me. Moush is Kochari for me. This sentence links to next part and a musical prelude begins.

Connecting Children of Moush and Armenia, Dancing Together

This part of our script gains its inspiration from a conversation in Taron’s brother’s house in Dashtadem. He welcomed us with open arms and said “If we put on music, we would become friends right away.” He played for us his instruments, as he explained to us, “Turkish zurna” and “Armenian zurna,” which is according to him better for playing Armenian music. His “Turkish zurna” was brought from Moush by his grandfather. With his live music, we started dancing together. Dancing together was not hard because our dancing styles were very similar. After dancing Taron’s brother asked our German organizer, Ulrike “Did you see any difference in two zurnas?” Then Ulrike said that there was no difference at all. After we encountered with the power of music, we decided to use it to make a connection between people from Moush and the villages of Moush origin in Armenia.

During the part of the play entitled Treasure Hunt, the interviewer asks questions such as “what does Moush mean to you?” An older musician Meruzh from Taronik answers “Moush is kochari for me.” He plays his drum and is joined by other musicians. Next, a group of children from Oshakan village² enter the scene and perform traditional Armenian dances. Behind these children, images of children from Moush dancing on the street are shown. Through this music

² Our final performance took place in the House of Culture of Oshakan village in Armenia. So we connected with people who are interested in cultural activities there and we invited a children’s dance group to perform with us and thankfully they did not refuse.

and dance, people are brought together. Through the video projection, children of Turkey and Armenia are presented together on the stage. As the music continues, the audience is soon dancing and the performers join them. Hand to hand with the entire audience, the performance becomes engaging and exciting for all. Finally, the actors get back up on stage and take a bow to conclude their performance.

Movement: Dancing to traditional music

Video: Slideshow of children dancing in the streets of Moush

Sound: Live performances with traditional instruments dhol and duduk

Text: None

Conversation with Children

Participants had interesting conversations with children on their way to the church near Dashtadem village. Children were helping us to find the solitary church. The journey was an encounter with children and a discussion about Armenian-Turkish relations and the perception of ethnicity. These conversations are important for us in order to discuss identities, stereotypes which are attributed to each ethnicity and mostly prejudices about the 'others.'

Because of the time limit this part could not be conceptualized and performed.

Text 1:

Child: Are you Armenian?

X: Yes, don't you see that I speak Armenian fluently?

Child: You look French. Where is she from? Is she Turkish?

Y: I am Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish, French and British at the same time.

Child: Wow!

Y: You look Armenian or Turkish.

Text 2:

Boy 1: Approximately 12 years old

Boy 2: Approximately 7 years old

Sayat: Participant

B1: Hello.

B2: Hello.

S: Hello. How are you?

B1: Fine, thank you.

B2: Do you know Armenian?

S: Of course I do. I am an Armenian from Turkey.

B1: Are the others in the group also Armenian?

S: No.

B1: The red-haired girl does not look Turkish.

B2: One of the girls told me that she isn't Turkish. She has mixed ethnicity.

S: All of them are Turkish.

B2: They cannot be guilty, can they?

S: Of course.

B1: Where do you live?

S: Istanbul.

B1: Is it close?

S: About 2 hours by plane and 36 hours by bus.

B2: 36 hours?! (B1 and B2 express surprise and laugh)

B2: Turkey is very big, isn't it?

S: Yes, it is.

B1: Of course it is big. He said 36 hours!

B1: Armenia is very small compared to Turkey, isn't it? But Russia is with us...

S: [laughter]

B1: Is Turkey's army strong?

S: Yes, it is strong.

B1: The world's biggest army is in China.

S: Yes, I guess. Do you know a short way to reach the church?

B2: Yes, we know. My father's grave is also there.

GLOSSARY

Aleksey Nikolayevich Kosygin

Aleksey Kosygin (1904-1980) was a Soviet statesman. In 1966, he became the first premier of the Soviet Union to visit Turkey. His second visit took place in 1975 and aimed to normalize the hostile relations between the two countries after decades of the Cold War.

Andranik

Andranik Toros Ozanyan (1865-1927) was a Major General of the Russian Caucasian Army. During World War I, he was appointed as Commander of the First Armenian Volunteer Unit of the Russian Caucasian Army and participated in the battles of Van, Bitlis and Moush in the Ottoman Empire.

April 24

April 24, 1915 is known as the day that several hundred Armenian intellectuals and community leaders were arrested in Constantinople (Istanbul). It is widely considered to be the start of the Armenian Genocide and the date is commemorated annually by Armenians worldwide.

Aragats

Aragats is one of the highest peaks on the Armenian Plateau and is the highest peak in the Republic of Armenia.

Araks River

(also Araz, Aras, Yeraskh and Erez)

The headwaters of the Araks River (Aras in Turkish) are near Erzurum in the Republic of Turkey. The Araks River flows along the modern-day Armenian-Turkish border, and also flows through Iran and Azerbaijan, ending in the Caspian Sea.

Arinj (now Choghurlu)

Arinj is one of the most frequently met Armenian toponyms. There were several Arinjes on the Armenian Plateau, including one in the Moush region. At the end of the 19th century, up to 120 Armenian families populated the Arinj village of Moush.

Armenak Shahmuradyan

Armenak Shahmuradyan (1878-1939) was an Armenian operatic tenor from Moush City and a student of Komitas.

Ashtarak

Ashtarak is a town in the Republic of Armenia, 20 kilometers northwest of the capital Yerevan.

Ashtishat

Ashtishat is one of the oldest Armenian settlements on the east bank of the Aratsani/Murat river in the Moush Valley. It was a pagan center and the main temple of pagan Armenian gods, as well as the residence of the religious head

of pagan Armenians. After the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion in 301 AD, pagan temples in Ashtishat were destroyed and first Christian Church was constructed. It is known that it had been destroyed by the 15th century.

Bingyol (also Byurakn in Armenian and Bingol in Turkish)

Bingyol is a province in eastern Turkey. The mountains east of former province of Dersim (currently Tunceli in Turkey) are also called Bingyol and contain the headwaters of the Araks and Euphrates (Aras and Firat in Turkish) rivers. The Armenian name for Bingyol is Byurakn. Both Armenian and Turkish words mean “thousands of springs.” Pagan Armenians believed that the milk-colored springs of Mundzur (Munzur in Turkish) mountains of Bingyol were the breast milk of Pagan Armenian goddess Anahit and the festivities of Vardavar (related to water worship) celebrated here were extremely popular up until 1915.

Bodil Biorn

Bodil Katharine Biorn (1871-1960) was a Norwegian missionary nurse who was sent to the Ottoman Empire by the Women’s Missionary Organization in 1905. In 1915, she witnessed the massacres in Moush. She is known for saving the lives of hundreds of homeless Armenian women and children and documenting the events through testimonials in her diary and through her photography.

Circassian

Circassians are people of Caucasian origin. Their language belongs to the group of northwestern Caucasian languages. Circassians were forced to leave their homelands by the Russian Empire and hundreds of thousands were deported starting in 1864, mainly to the Ottoman Empire. Although Circassians are a distinct group, most people of Caucasian origin are called “Circassian” in Turkey now.

Cross-stone (also khachkar in Armenian)

Armenian cross-stones or khachkars (from the Armenian word khach meaning cross and qar meaning stone) are carved memorial stones containing a cross and often with additional motifs. These cross-stones are unique to Armenia and continue to be used as grave-stones or memorials.

Der-EI-Zor (also Der Zor)

Der-EI-Zor is a desert in modern-day Syria. It was one of the main destination points of the deportations of Armenians during World War I carried out by the Young Turk government. Many people died during the deportations. Those who managed to reach their destination were summarily executed.

Dhol

The dhol is an Armenian musical instrument which is like a double-headed drum with leather on both sides. One of the sides is usually made from a thinner leather. The instrument is played with either wooden sticks or hands.

Dram

Dram is Armenian currency.

Ergir (also yerkir)

Ergir is a Moush and Sassoun (Sason in Turkish) variation of the Armenian word yerkir meaning “the whole world,” “a part of a country or province,” and “ground or soil.” In this dialect, which was used by refugees from the Moush and Sassoun regions, the word is pronounced ergir and means “homeland.” The word is generally understood by Armenians to mean “homeland” in addition to the standard definitions of yerkir.

Erishter (now Esmepinar)

Erishter was an Armenian village in Moush located 30 kilometers from Moush City. The name was changed to Esmepinar following the establishment of the Commission for Changing of Alien Names in 1957.

Fedayee

Fedayee is an Arabic word, meaning one who sacrifices himself for cause, usually a holy or righteous cause. Within the 19th and 20th century Ottoman context, the term usually refers to armed paramilitary groups which formed to provide local protection from the oppression of Hamidian Regime.

Gaspe

Armenians of Moush, Sassoun (Sason in Turkish) and Bittlis origin describe a dust in the summer air that would gradually come down from the sky and settle like dew in the trees and grass. They would wash and then cook tree leaves that collected this dust. This process produced a honey-like substance. This dust and the sweetness they produced from it are known as gaspe, and is thought by some to be comparable to the manna described in the Bible.

Gevorg Chavush

Gevorg Chavush (1865-1907), also known as Gevorg Ghazaryan, was a legendary Armenian fedayee and one of the leaders of Armenian resistance groups in Moush and Sassoun (Sason in Turkish). He was killed in a battle at Sulukh Bridge (see below).

Goms

Goms was an Armenian village in the Moush region and home to 115 families at the beginning of the 20th century.

Gyumri earthquake

A devastating earthquake struck Armenia’s northern region affecting the cities of Gyumri, Spitak and Vanadzor on December 7, 1988. The earthquake devastated the region and killed more than 25,000 people. Hundreds of thousands were left injured and homeless.

Harisa

Harisa is a dish prepared with meat and grains.

Hoja

The term hoja has Persian origin and is an expression of respect with reference to one’s wisdom or experience. In Ottoman as well as modern

Turkish, the term refers to leaders of mosques, and sometimes, less formally, to school teachers and university lecturers.

Hrant Dink

Hrant Dink (1954-2007) was a Turkish-Armenian editor, journalist and columnist. As Editor-in-Chief of the bilingual Turkish-Armenian newspaper “Agos,” Dink was a prominent member of the Armenian minority in Turkey. He is best known for advocating Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and human rights in Turkey. He was often critical of both Turkey’s denial of the Armenian Genocide and of the Armenian diaspora’s approach to campaigning for international recognition of the event. Hrant Dink was assassinated in Istanbul in January 2007 by a 17-year-old Turkish nationalist.

Igdir

A town in Turkey, near the border with modern-day Armenia and 40 kilometres from the Armenian capital Yerevan. During the Middle Ages, Igdir (then known as Tsolakert in Old Armenian) formed part of Ayrarat Province in Greater Armenia. The city was under Persian rule from the 16th century to the end of the Russian-Persian War in 1828, at which point it fell under Russian control. Following the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Ottoman forces captured Igdir. After Turkey’s defeat in World War I, the city became part of the newly-established Republic of Armenia, where it remained until 1920. In 1921, Turkey’s annexation of Igdir was re-confirmed by the Russian-Turkish Moscow Treaty and the Treaty of Kars. It is now based in modern-day Turkey.

Katnaghbyur

Katnaghbyur is a village in Aragatsotn Province in the Republic of Armenia, 5 kilometers east of Talin. At the beginning of the 20th century, the village was largely populated by Turkish or Kurdish people who called the place Mehriban. The village was renamed Katnaghbyur in 1950.

Komitas

Soghomon Gevorgi Soghomonyan (1869-1935), popularly known as Komitas, was an Armenian priest, as well as accomplished composer, ethnomusicologist and music pedagogue, and is considered to be the founder of modern Armenian classical music. Komitas was arrested in Istanbul and deported along with many other Armenian intellectuals on April 24, 1915. In a twist of events, he was dispatched from deportation back to Istanbul by a special order from Talat Pasha following an intervention by the Turkish poet Mehmet Emin Yurdakul (Komitas’s good friend), and the US Ambassador to Turkey Henry Morgenthau. The memories of this experience during the deportation did not fade, however, and stayed with him until his death in a psychiatric clinic in Paris.

Lavash

Lavash is a wafer-thin bread traditionally baked in tonir (see below). Each piece is up to one meter in length and can be used to wrap other food or even as a plate for dry food and is eaten soft or hard.

Leninakan

Leninakan is the Soviet name of Gyumri, the second largest city in Armenia after the capital Yerevan.

Manana (also manna)

According to the Old Testament, manna was the food sent by God during a 40 year period to help Jewish people walk through the desert to the Land of Promise. (See gaspe above).

Marz

Marz is the Armenian word for “province.”

Masis

Masis is one of several Armenian names for Mount Ararat (Agri Dagi in Turkish). In this book it also refers to Masis town and former Masis region of Armenia’s Ararat Province, south of the capital Yerevan.

Mesrop Mashtots

Mesrop Mashtots (362-440) is the inventor of the Armenian alphabet. The alphabet he created in 405 has remained in use for over 1600 years with very little change. He is considered to be one of the most influential figures in the development of Armenian identity.

Msho Khr (also Mshu kh’r)

Msho Khr is an Armenian traditional dance. It is danced in a line with each dancer leaning on the next’s shoulder and with hand crossed and locked facing downward.

Murat River (also Aratsani)

Murat is another name for the Eastern Euphrates River, a major contributor to the Euphrates River. It was considered to be sacred in antiquity both by Pagan and Christian Armenians. This is the river in which the Armenian King Tiridates III was baptized in the 4th century, accepting Christianity and proclaiming it as state religion.

“One gold coin per a child”

Between 1918 and 1919, and then sporadically up until 1925, Armenians well acquainted with the local communities would go to those settlements in search of Armenian orphans who had either been kidnapped by Kurds, or had been rescued and hidden for protection among the Kurds. They are known to have paid one gold coin per a child.

Qirva (also kirve or kirva)

Qirva refers to a person who will support the child during its circumcision ceremony. Throughout East, South and Southeast Anatolia, this practice was common among Muslim and non-Muslim families, and was not always associated with circumcision. In these situations it can be seen as a kind of kinship. Families who engaged in the practice enjoyed lasting friendships.

Qochari (also kochari)

The most widespread and best preserved traditional Armenian dance. It is a group line dance which characterized by hands placed on the shoulder of the next dancer. The dance step count is eight with a specific scheme always in one direction.

**Saint Arakelots Monastery
(Holy Apostles Monastery)**

Saint Arakelots Monastery is an Armenian monastic complex located approximately 10 kilometers southeast of Moush City, established in the 4th century by Gregory the Illuminator, the founder of the Armenian church. It was given its name because relics of several Apostles were known to be buried on its grounds. Along with several other important figures, the leading Armenian historiographer Movses Khorenatsy (5th century) was also buried in the cemetery of the monastery. It was one of the most important religious-educational centers for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. It was destroyed by the Ottoman army in 1915 and is in ruins to the present day.

**Saint Karapet Monastery (also Glakavank,
the Monastery of Glak, and the Monastery
of Saint John the Baptist)**

The Saint Karapet Monastery was an Armenian monastic complex located approximately 35 kilometers northwest of Moush City established in the 4th century, by Saint Gregory the Illuminator. It was one of the oldest Armenian monasteries and one of the three most important sites for Armenian Christian pilgrimage. The Saint Karapet Monastery was also among the richest, most ancient and active religious and educational institutions in Ottoman Armenia until it was destroyed by the Ottoman army in 1915. The Zaza village of Chengilli has been constructed in its place.

Saint Marine (also Anna Mariam)

Saint Marine is considered to be the most beautiful of the seven Armenian churches in Moush City. The other churches are Saint Evangelists, Saint Harutyun, Saint Kirakos, Saint Sargis, Saint Savior and Saint Stepanos.

Sevan

The lake and town of Sevan are located in north-eastern Armenia.

Soghomon Tehlirian (also Tehlerian)

Soghomon Tehlirian (1897-1960) is known for assassinating the former Grand Vizier of Ottoman Empire Talat Pasha in Berlin in the presence of many witnesses on March 15, 1921 as an act of vengeance for Talat’s role in orchestrating the Deportation Law of 1915, which resulted in the ruthless massacre and ultimate annihilation of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. Tehlirian was tried and acquitted of all charges by the German court. The Tehlirian Trial influenced Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, who later reflected, “Why is a man punished when he kills another man? Why is the killing of a million a lesser crime than the killing of a single individual?” Lemkin coined the term “genocide” and drafted the document that became the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

Soviet territorial claims to Turkey (Stalin's Plan)

Under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union presented Turkey with territorial claims. From 1945 to 1953, several plans were considered by USSR to resolve its territorial disputes with Turkey. The plan with the largest territorial demands included Erzurum, Van, Moush, Bitlis, Kars, Surmalu (Surmeli in Turkish) and Alashkert (Eleshkirt in Turkish) regions. The Soviet government planned to settle the areas with Armenian repatriates from diaspora. Between 1946 to 1948, approximately 100,000 ethnic Armenians from Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Palestine, Iraq, Egypt, and France had repatriated to Soviet Armenia. When Turkey joined NATO and accepted the Marshall Plan, it received protection from the United States. The plan was never implemented. After the Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet government declared that it no longer had any territorial claims from Turkey.

Sulukh Bridge (also Murat Bridge in Turkish)

The Sulukh Bridge is located over the Aratsani/Murat River, on road from Moush to Khnus (Hinis in Turkish), near the village of Sulukh. The bridge was built in the 13th century.

Suser

Suser is a village in Aragatsotn Province in the Republic of Armenia. The village has had several names previously, including Kachyatagh and Ghlijyatagh (Kilichyataghi in Turkish). The village was renamed Suser in 1946.

Talin

Talin is a town in the Aragatsotn Province of Armenia, and was a regional center during the Soviet Union.

Tonir

Tonir is a clay stove usually built into the ground. The tonir was traditionally used for making bread, cooking and heating purposes.

Tsronk (now Kirkyoy)

Tsronk was an Armenian village in Moush. The village is first mentioned in the 5th century by the Armenian historian Movses Khorenatsy. The current name is Kirkyoy, although the local Kurdish population refers to it as Tsronk. At the beginning of the 20th century, the village was home to 244 Armenian families.

Voghakan

Voghakan was a fortress in the Taron region of Turuberan Province of Historical Armenia. It was located on a high hill on the left bank of the Aratsani River where the river enters the Moush Plain. In the early Middle Ages, the fortress served as the main residence of the noble Mamikonyan family, the monarchy of the region and many the heads of the Armenian military at that time.

Voskehask

Voskehask is a village in Shirak Province in Armenia, 10 kilometers from the city of Gyumri. Until 1918, the village was populated by Turkish speakers and was called Molla Musa. The village was renamed to Voskehask in 1946. In 1981, a group of refugee Armenians from Turkey settled there while the Turkish-speaking population of Molla Musa moved to the Amasia region in the Republic of Armenia.

Western Armenia

The term "Western Armenia" refers to the western parts of Historical Armenia. The term has been in use since the first division of the Kingdom of Armenia (387 AD) between Sassanid's Iran and the Roman Empire. At this point the western section fell under Roman control. After the conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Ottomans, Western Armenia became part of the Ottoman Empire. Initially, Ottoman maps referred to the area as "Ermenistan." In 1880, official documents of the Ottoman Empire were forbidden from mentioning Armenia and the term Ermenistan was replaced with Kurdistan and Anatolia. According to the Administrative Division of the Ottoman Empire, at the end of 19th century, the area was divided between Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Erzurum, Kharberd (Harput), Sebastia (Sivas), Trabzon and Van Vilayets. Moush City and Moush Plain were part of the Bitlis Vilayet. In 1923, the territory was officially renamed "Eastern Anatolia." Armenians continue to refer to Eastern Anatolia as Western Armenia.

Yezidi (also Yazidi)

The Yezidi are an ethno-religious group with Iranian roots.

Zangezur (also Syunik)

Zangezur refers to the southernmost region of the Republic of Armenia, which is currently known as Syunik Province.

Zartonk

Zartonk is a village in Armavir Province in the Republic of Armenia. The village was established as Ghamishlu in 1950 and was renamed to Zartonk in 1978. Currently, the village has a mixed Armenian-Yezidi population.

Zaza (Also Dimli, Dimili or Daylami)

The Zaza people speak Zazaki, a language belonging to Iranic language family. They live throughout eastern and southeastern Turkey.

Zurna

The Zurna is a brass musical instrument, usually is made from an apricot, mulberry or walnut tree.