

# THE ARMENIAN IMAGE CREATED IN THE ARMENIAN MASS MEDIA

**Assist. Prof. Dr. Birsen Karaca**

Staff member of the University of Ankara,  
Faculty of Language, History and Geography

## Abstract

*The basic aim of the writers who try to keep the Armenian problem on the agenda is to convince others to think and behave the way they do about the Armenian culture and history. So, their work style is to present the same texts that are suitable for their aims to the receiver as often as possible via different methods. In order to present these texts they use any kind of mass communication: statues, monuments, radio, TV, newspapers, graphics, maps, movies, photographs, textbooks on various subjects, encyclopedias, even music and the Internet.*

*Since these activities form the base of the psychological operations conducted against Turkey, this is an important issue from the strategic point of view.*

*The Armenian image analyzed in this paper has many aspects, details that cannot be discerned easily at first sight. One of these details provide a clue to the way the Armenian writers -- who present the Armenian Problem to the world from the Armenian perspective-- see the Armenian nation. This attitude on the part of the writers shows that they regard the receiver not as a producer of ideas but as a tool that can easily be conditioned to convey the presented message to others without any change and accepts everything as it is without questioning.*

## Keywords

*Armenian, Images, Mass Media, Communication, Culture*

## INTRODUCTION

Imagery, by its simplest explanation, is the mental representation of a person or an object. An image becomes “visible” in mind thanks to memorization and association.

Memorization and association are activities that vary according to factors such

\* The text of a conference dated Feb. 20, 2004.

as the background experiences, psychological structure and cultural origins of individuals and societies, and the geographical and climactic conditions they live in. Consequently, for individuals and societies, the same word, the same symbol, the same image may have different connotations. When text writers<sup>1</sup> try to form new images suitable for their aims they take into consideration this particular quality of the individual and collective memory. Advertisement texts are a good example of that approach. A writer can sometimes destroy traditional thoughts with the help of the images he constructs, imbue new meanings to old symbols or try to change the meaning of the symbol completely. Consider the new image created through cartoons for a harmful rodent: mouse. Text writers were so successful in creating that cartoon character that we started to keep some types of mice as pets in our houses.

In this article, those Armenian writers that have been writing about “The Armenian Issue” will be evaluated in the category of writers that try to give new meanings to traditional (original) symbols in an effort to “change” the realities. Their texts have been chosen as an example because these writers support the Armenian view and their behavior causes the Armenian society to forget about the fact that they share, with Turks, a common history of 600 years. They are driving the Armenian society away from the Turkish culture.

Unavoidably, the mass media becomes the issue – considering the fact that it is by the help of memory and association that we clarify images in our minds.

The descriptions made by the experts about “communication” are of a complementary nature. Emre Becer, when trying to analyze the relationship between graphic arts and communication, gives a simple description of “communication”: *“Communication can be defined as a connection of the senses, thoughts, behaviors and information between two individuals or a group of individuals/mass that are called sender and receiver.”*<sup>2</sup> John Fiske, on the other hand, draws a more panoramic picture, defining “communication” as any of the following: face-to-face talk, television, publications, literary criticism, our facial expressions, hairstyle etc.<sup>3</sup> In that case, a sculpture, a painting, a map, a monument, a novel, the newspaper we read every day, a TV series we are addicted to or do not like, commercials, the perfume we wear, in fact every text that is directed towards our personal and social life,

<sup>1</sup> In this study, the term “text writers” refers to the creators of the written, oral, and visual texts.

<sup>2</sup> Emre Becer, *İletişim ve Grafik Tasarımı [Communication and Graphic Design]*, (Ankara: Dost, 2002), p.11.

<sup>3</sup> John Fiske, *İletişim Çalışmalarına Giriş*, [An Introduction to Communication Studies], translated by Süleyman İrvan, (Ankara: Ark, 1996), p. 15.

should be described as a means of communication.

Text writers convey their messages to pre-determined addresses, using different methods for different aims. The language they use is the subject of Stylistics which can be defined as the “knowledge of the style used in a text” or the “knowledge of the art of using language”. In any study involving the mass media, language is the element that would have to be given primary consideration. The style the writer uses in a text is a very important sign indicating his aim regarding the targeted individual or mass of people. The aim can be served in various forms – that is, by inspiring sympathy or antipathy towards the issue at hand by encouraging or frightening the receiver,

From this point of view, the texts of the Armenian writers –including those that claim to be artistic-- have the same stylistic characteristics. These text writers always try to keep the “Armenian problem” alive on the agenda. Their main common aim is to convince others to think and behave like them on issues related to the Armenian culture and history. So, they try to present to the receiver those texts that are suitable for their aims as often as possible and via different channels. They use a wide variety of mass communication channels: statues, monuments, radio, TV, newspapers, graphics, maps, movies, photographs, textbooks on a variety of subjects, encyclopedias, even music and the Internet. However, we must point out that the most effective method they use is face-to-face communication with individuals.

That would have been all very well except for one thing. The point is, these activities constitute the backbone of the psychological operations Armenians conduct against Turkey. That aspect of these activities is outside my area of expertise --which is literature-- and, should be discussed from a “strategy” perspective as well.

These writers’ subject matter is the “Armenian problem”. Their intention to reach their target audience with their texts to attain the aforementioned aim, naturally determines the nature of their style. As a result, in these texts Armenian characters always have the writers’ absolute approval regardless of whether they engage in positive or negative action. These writers make a special effort to portray as “defective” or “at fault” the Turkish characters and everything related to the Turks. If, as a result of their efforts, they manage to create such a “defect” they engage in “exaggeration” in the next phase.

For me the most distinctive common feature of these texts is that the writers

do not reflect the outcome of their one-to-one communication with Turkish people or Turkish culture. They reflect their own personal mental conceptions. What is even more interesting is that, after the product is released, both the writer and the target audience come to perceive and accept this kind of fiction as reality.

When these texts are analyzed from an historical perspective, it can be seen that the Armenian writers have been trying to break off the cultural ties between the Armenian people and the Turkish people -- as they had done with the Persians, Byzantines and Arabs in the past. In this process, the Ottoman Empire is portrayed as the symbol of "absolute evil" and the Armenian nation as the symbol of "absolute misery". In other words, Armenians are portrayed as a group of people that have been deprived of their personal rights to the level of slavery. In brief, we can describe in the following manner the common attitude of the text writers in situations like this where the Armenian public is chosen as the target audience: Their purpose is to create excuses to justify the way some of the Ottoman Armenians had collaborated in the past with foreign powers that had been fighting a war against the Ottoman Empire-- so that they can totally eradicate the feelings of guilt in the Armenian people. For this reason, they try to bring the Armenians closer to one another by creating an image of "common enemy" in their minds. That way the Armenian people would be protected from the cultural erosion that is intensely affecting all countries in the world.

The "canned" or "bottled" Armenian society that would result from that drive (we might see the Armenian society as "canned" even in its present form) is a subject that should be researched by other disciplines.

But why have they chosen the Turkish people as the antagonist during their efforts to create the "enemy" image? To find an answer one has to look, before everything else, at the identity of the various sources that have been providing material and moral support for this multi-purpose, multi-headed chain of efforts carried out all these years under the title, "The Armenian Issue".

Let us start by giving some concrete examples and analyze the information given to the Armenian children on page 59 of "The Armenian History", a textbook for the primary school 7<sup>th</sup> grade students edited by V. Barhudaryan:

"The Christian people, Armenians included, who were under the yoke of the Turks, were considered to be *Reaya* – that is, subjects that did not have any rights. They were deprived of all kinds of basic rights; had no security of life or property. Under the anarchic conditions that prevailed in the country, the Arme-

nian peasant could one day lose everything he had obtained by working under difficult conditions all those years.”<sup>4</sup>

The textbooks of the Turkish Ministry of National Education and various encyclopedias provide general information gathered through research by Turkish historians on the rights and responsibilities of the Muslim or Non-Muslim *Reaya* during the Ottoman era. At this point, let us discuss a specific book: “Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayrimüslimler” [Non-Muslims under the Ottoman Rule]<sup>5</sup> written by Prof. Dr. Yavuz Ercan. That book analyzes the social, economic and juridical status of the Non-Muslims under the Ottoman Rule starting from the foundation of the Ottoman Empire up to the Tanzimat Period (when the administrative and social reforms were made). In the light of the information given by Prof. Dr. Ercan, we can easily see that, as an institution, the Ottoman State was of a nature that would refute the claims of Barhudaryan and his colleagues not only regarding the Armenians but the other Non-Muslim communities of the realm as well. Besides, initially not only the non-Muslim farmers but Muslim farmers too were *Reaya*.

That is not the only piece of deliberately false and incomplete information Barhudaryan and his team have supplied to the Armenian students. They refer to the terrorist attacks that took place in the Ottoman Empire at that time, portraying these as a threat to the security of life and property of the Armenians – concealing the fact that it was the Armenian terrorists who perpetrated these acts. Anyone interested in this subject can find detailed information and documents about the terrorist actions of the Armenians in Anatolia in **Hüseyin Nazım Paşa**’s two-volume *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi* [History of the Armenian Incidents].<sup>6</sup>

The third point we must underline involves the writing style of Barhudaryan and his team. Their style indicates that Armenian historians, academics and artists have still not attained an adequate level of “argumental” and ethical maturity to discuss these issues at their own platforms.

Another piece of information that Armenian sources are trying to erase from the memory of the Armenian society is the fact that the Ottoman state had given the Armenians a prestigious position in the realm, actually calling them “*millet-i*

<sup>4</sup> .Prof. V.Barhudaryan, *Hayots patmutyun*, Hanrakrtakan dprotsi 7-rd dasarani dasagirk, Hmbagrutyam. (Yerevan: Luys, 1999) ec. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Yavuz Ercan, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Gayri Müslimler*, [Non-Muslims under the Ottoman Rule] (Ankara: Türhan Kitapevi, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Hüseyin Nazım Paşa, *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi*, [History of Armenian Incidents] (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Osmanlı Arşivleri Daire Başkanlığı, 1994).

*sadika*" [the loyal community]. Even by compiling a list of the Ottoman subjects of Armenian origin that had worked at various positions at the Ottoman Palace one could see how prestigious their position had been.

On this issue a curious paradox exists in the Armenian literary works. These authors underline the successes of the Armenians who had worked at the Ottoman Palace while ignoring as much as possible the material and moral support of the Ottoman government. In some cases the authors consider that support nonexistent or seek some ulterior motives behind it. Here is a very good example of that. Referring to Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror's moving the Armenian Patriarchate to Istanbul and his contribution to the development of the Patriarchate, the "Armenian-Soviet Encyclopedia" gives an account along the following lines:

"In order to protect the faithful Armenians living in places that were under Ottoman sovereignty and to cut them away from the influence of the Echmiadzin that had political ideas of Persian origin, [the Patriarchate in Istanbul] was set up in 1461 at the instigation of the Ottomans in line with the decree issued by Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror."<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting that, although, centuries later, the Armenian Church is still under the authority of the Echmiadzin, the author speculates that the aim behind the establishment of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate was to break the Armenian people's ties with the Echmiadzin Church.

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In line with all these, there is yet another image, one that has always been present in the background in articles on the Armenians, an image that has always been ignored in the evaluations made so far: The Armenian image the authors have tried to create in the minds of the people all over the world. This image creates, most of the time, a grotesque picture full of contradictions in the receiver's mind.

I would like to start with a current example. This example concerns the "ancient Armenian history". Until recently, Armenian historians were trying to erase from history the names of the Haldis, the founders of the Urartu state, and put the name "Armenians" in that place. They were so insistent on imprinting this

7 Patriarkutyun hayots turkio. Kohstandnupolisi hayots patriarkutyun, haykakan sovetakan hanragitaran, hator 9, (Yerevan: Haykakan CCH gitutyunneri akademiya, 1983).

idea on the collective memory that the international public accepted without hesitation (!) that the Armenians were the founders of the Urartu State.

Today, that page of history too seems to have been “moved” into an obscure historical period, that is, until academics shed light on it as well. A short while ago, Nikolay Harutyunyan, a member of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, put forth the following thesis: *“Those who say that Armenians were the descendants of the Urartus are wrong ... They were here before the Urartus. Those who arrived later were the Urartus.”*<sup>8</sup>

Imagery can be studied in two categories: visual and mental. Visual images can be formed through photographs, pictures, statues and so on. Mental images can be created by way of lingual elements. Professor Gursel Aytac, known for his valuable studies in the field of literature, discusses the terms “direct and indirect imagery”, citing Bernhard Sowinski’s views on this issue. According to Sowinski, *“There is direct imagery when the author concretizes what is visible to the eye through language without expressing what is imagined.”*<sup>9</sup>

In this study the term “indirect imagery” has been used to indicate the kind of imagery that would be created through the use of unusual methods of expression such as personification, similes and metaphors. Those imageries that are directly related to our study totally or partially connote or symbolize the implied meanings.<sup>10</sup>

Taking all this information into consideration, we can go back to the Armenian image created by the Armenian mass media.

According to data provided by the Armenian sources, from which I have quoted on various occasions for various purposes, Armenians had adopted the “written language” for the first time in the V<sup>th</sup> Century when Mesrop Mashtot formulated the Armenian alphabet. Thus, Mesrop Mashtot becomes **the symbol of the first teacher**, marking the starting point of the introduction of Armenian writing. However, there are some unclear, debatable aspects of this piece of information.

First of all, the Agvan alphabet—which the Albans, one of the peoples of the Caucasus region, had used between the V<sup>th</sup> and the IX<sup>th</sup> Centuries—consists of

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<sup>8</sup> Agos, December 5, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Gursel Aytac, Genel edebiyat Bilimi, [The General Art of Literature] (İstanbul: Papirüs, 1999), p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 56.

the same symbols as the Armenian alphabet. Yet, we cannot see Mesrop Mashtot's name mentioned anywhere vis-à-vis the emergence of the symbols of the Agvan alphabet. Similarly, there has been no hint of any connection between the Agvan written language and the Armenian language. However, it has been on record that there are documents written in the Agvan language in the Armenian archives.<sup>11</sup> The question is whether Mesrop Mashtot knew the Agvan alphabet before he "created" the Armenian alphabet.

Second question: Mesrop Mashtot was an ordinary clergyman. At that time the Armenian people were divided into two as the eastern and western peoples, one part living under the rule of the Persians and the other under Byzantine rule. Assuming that the information the Armenian sources give about Mesrop Mashtot is correct, how, under the conditions prevailing at that time, did he manage to have the entire (divided) Armenian people adopt the alphabet he had "created"? What kind of material and moral authority would enable him to achieve that?

The third question concerns the literary and philosophical texts in classical Greek that were reportedly translated into the Armenian language immediately after the introduction of the written form of the Armenian language. Armenians did not have any alphabet in the past other than the one they currently use. Until then they had not created an original work of philosophy or literature in written form. (In fact, even today we can hardly say that such original works are being created in the Armenian language.) How could such a language become ripe for the translation of literary and philosophical texts as soon as the written form of the language was introduced? Here is a relevant case involving the German philosophical works translated into Russian: Commenting on these contemporary translations, some Russian philosophers say that due to the peculiarities of these two languages German philosophy could not be thoroughly expressed in the Russian language. This example becomes all the more striking when we take into consideration the philosophical depth of the Russian literature and the eminent place the Russian literature has in the world literature – as well as the fact that the Russian language consists of more than 300,000 words. In the light of these facts, to what extent classical Greek could be compared with the Armenian language – especially at the stage where the latter's written form had just been introduced?

I think it would be interesting to hear the opinion of Greek philologists on this issue at a platform where this question would be discussed.

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<sup>11</sup> Yazıkozhahie, *Boşlaya russkaya entsiklopediya*, (Moskva: Boşlaya rossiyskaya antsiklopedia, 1998).



Now let us deal with another aspect of the issue at hand: the images certain circles are trying to create, targeting the Armenian population (and the rest of the world), disregarding the Turkish readers, the Turkish people.

Our example concerns the **state and country imagery**. Let us recall the particular role assigned to some of the Armenian subjects of the Ottoman state during World War I. It is enough just to read the history books published with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Science of the Republic of Armenia to find out the number of Ottoman Armenians who fought against the Ottomans while the latter was preoccupied at the Russian, French and British fronts. In such a textbook prepared for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade Armenian students (edited by G. A. Avetisian) it is said that more than 50,000 Armenians had served in the American, British and French Armies at that time. More importantly, the publishers of the book make the kind of assessment that could place all Ottoman Armenians under suspicion: *"The very thought of saving the country from Turkish rule was enough to excite all the Armenian people. To this aim, there were many Armenians eager to join the Volunteer Units not only in Russia but abroad as well (in Egypt, France, Cyprus and the USA)."*<sup>12</sup>

In this extract, there are two highly important points to be underlined: 1) The country in question is the Ottoman Country. And it is crystal clear who were the founders of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, that period constitutes one of the clearest pages of Turkish and world history. 2) A great many of the founders of the aforementioned Volunteer Units were the subjects of the Ottoman Empire.

In history books we come across the following information relevant to this subject: The Armenian Volunteer Units were formed by the Armenian gangs that had taken up arms against the Ottoman Empire. Russia provided the Armenian volunteers with material and moral support at the beginning to attain its aim of gaining access to the Mediterranean. Later, seeing that they had become detrimental to Russia, it disbanded these gangs in 1915 to prevent their activities inside Russia. According to documents written in the Armenian language, the activities of the Armenian Volunteers within the Ottoman borders, on the other hand, continued until 1918.

While creating this imagery a certain piece of information is being deliberately concealed from the Armenian youths: Armenians were only one of the numerous ethnic groups that made up the Ottoman Empire; and, though they were Otto-

<sup>12</sup> Ts.P.Agayan i drugie, *Istoriya armyanskogo naroda (1900-1983)*, (Yerevan: Luys , 1985), p. 32.

man subjects, they collaborated with those countries that were fighting against the Ottoman Empire.

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Here is another dimension of the issue at hand: Efforts are being made to force those people that are not a party to the “Armenian Problem” too to come up with ideas and to take action. The group that organizes these efforts pins its hopes of success on the assistance to be obtained from third-party countries. To obtain that assistance, they portray the Armenians as **a community that has sacrificed itself** for the sake of the Christian world. This group presents texts that repeat that idea to the Armenian people and to the international public via various channels over and over in quick succession. In fact, we can discern that imagery even in some texts that have nothing to do with the issue in question. Here is an example: In the foreword section of the book “Armenian On Your Own,” we all of a sudden come across this imagery in the article titled “The Importance of the Armenian Language and the Goal of Learning Armenian”<sup>13</sup> where the history of the Armenian Language is given. Besides, there are also novels such as Franz Werfel’s “40 Days on Mount Moses” that directly aim to create the notion that Armenians were a people sacrificed for the sake of Christianity.

In documents prepared towards that goal, it is possible to discern the effort to keep the western public opinion under continuous psychological pressure. In those documents, Armenians are presented as **the cheated community**. The western states are blamed in this way. Here is the basic thought that supports that accusation: Just like the Roman Empire had once done, the western countries have failed to hand out to the Armenian people the reward they had promised – though the Armenian people did help them greatly to accelerate the disintegration process of the Ottoman Empire during World War I. To illustrate this point Fridtjof Nansen’s book in German, “The Cheated Folk”, must be mentioned.<sup>14</sup>

At this point, I would like to mention certain data that require further research and discussions on the issue at hand in yet another aspect. As part of the events marking the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Turkish Republic a symposium was held on the “Studies on Eastern and Western Languages and Literature” theme at the Faculty of Language, History and Geography of Ankara University on Octo-

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<sup>13</sup> N.A. Parnasyan i Manukyan, J.K, *Samouçitel Armyanskogo yazıka*, (Yerevan: Luys, 1990), p.11..

<sup>14</sup> Fridtjof Nansen, *Volk Betrogenes*, (Leipzig: F.A.Brockhaus, 1928).For his help about this reference I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Osman Toklu, a *staff member* of the University of Ankara, the Faculty of Language, History and Geography.

ber 22-23, 2003. Two of the papers presented during the symposium contained significant data that supported my own studies. One these papers referred to Russian poet Pushkin's journey to Erzurum during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828-29.<sup>15</sup> The piece of information that was important for my study was that Pushkin's escort was an Armenian. The other paper was about the book a Japanese writer, Ienaga Toyokichi, had written on his ten-month visit to Anatolia during the last year of the XIX<sup>th</sup> Century and the first year of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>16</sup> The striking point here was that he too had an Armenian guide. These two books had an aspect in common. They both created a negative Turkish image. We derive the third fact that supports the first two from the interview titled "The Armenian Dream and Talks at the Front," which I have translated from Russian to use in my study, "Mass Media and the Paradoxes Created in Texts on the Armenian Problem".<sup>17</sup> The Russian journalist who conducted the interview, F. Sibirski, had an Armenian guide during his travels in Anatolia in 1916. In short, we can say that the Turkish image created in the works of those foreign travelers/writers with Armenian guides is worth studying – qualitatively and quantitatively.

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There is also the issue of using religion as a tool to put pressure on third persons. For this purpose, the Christian Armenian is being presented to the international public **as the first community that embraced Christianity** (officially as a state religion). However, it must not be forgotten that at that time Armenians were not independent and, obviously, there was no way they could do that unless the Roman Emperor Constantine I accepted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire -- as I pointed out in my paper, "One of the three taboos of Armenian Culture: Armenian Language"<sup>18</sup> two years ago.

15 Prof.Dr. Altan Aykut, 'Puşkin'in "Erzurum'a yolculuk" Adlı Yapıtı, *Doğu-Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Araştırmaları Sempozyumu*, Bildiri Metni, Ankara Üniversitesi DTCE, 22-23 Ekim 2003, Ankara.[Prof.Dr. Altan Aykut, Pushkin's work named "A trip to Erzurum", Paper, *Symposium on Studies on Eastern and Western Languages and Literatures*, University of Ankara, Faculty of Language, History and Geography, October 22-23, 2003, Ankara].

16 Dr. Hüseyin Can Erkin, "Çağdaşlaşma Dönemi Japon Edebiyatında Türk İmgesi", *Doğu-Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Araştırmaları Sempozyumu*, Bildiri Metni, Ankara Üniversitesi DTCE, 22-23 Ekim 2003, Ankara.[the Turkish Image in the Era of Modernization of the Japanese Literature, Paper, *Symposium on Eastern and Western Languages and Literatures*, University of Ankara, Faculty of Language, History and Geography, October 22-23, 2003, Ankara].

17 Birsen Karaca, "Kitle iletişim Araçları ve Ermeni Sorunu'nu Konu Alan Metinlerde Yaratılan Paradokslar", Bkz. Idris Bal ve Mustafa Çufalı, *Dünden Bugüne Türk-Ermeni İlişkileri*, (Ankara: Nobel, 2003), pp.425-432.(Birsen Karaca, Mass Media and Paradoxes Created in the Texts Concerning the Armenian Problem, see: Idris Bal ve Mustafa Çufalı, *Turkish-Armenian Relations: the Past and the Present*, (Ankara: Nobel, 2003), pp. 425-432.

18 Birsen Karaca, "Ermeni Kültüründe Üç tabudan Birisi: Ermeni Dili", *Ermeni Araştırmaları I. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri*, III. Cilt, ASAM- Ermeni Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Yayını, Ankara, 2003, pp. 137-142.

What we should say to question the validity of that image is: Why and under which conditions exactly did the Armenians embrace Christianity? Let us answer that question by quoting from an Armenian literary expert, V.S Nalbandyan:

“Armenian feudal lords made Christianity the state religion in 301, as we have mentioned before, with great expectations from Christianity. Great Tiridat, the king, was trying to use Christianity to bolster his political power. Also, he calculated that sharing the same religion with the Roman Empire would enable him to gain a strong ally in the war against Persian tyranny. However, the events of the IV<sup>th</sup> and V<sup>th</sup> Centuries showed that his hopes were in vain.”<sup>19</sup>

The information in this paper, which indicates that the Armenians accepted Christianity as an instrument to win approval as a state, contradicts with the image of a nation that sacrificed itself for the sake of Christianity.

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Before reaching a conclusion, I want to go back to the symbols that target the Armenian nation. It is interesting that the Armenian people have not objected to some parts of that data:

The rebel nation image presented with motifs of rebellion: The most common information about Armenians in history books concerns the rebellions staged by the Armenians since the V<sup>th</sup> Century. One could even produce a book named “The history of *Armenian uprisings*” merely by compiling the titles on these. On the basis of the data available on this issue one could conclude that the Armenians played a primary role in the collapse of all of the states under whose rule they had once lived in Anatolia. Furthermore, it is one of the characteristics of these texts that the act of rebellion itself is presented as an achievement regardless of the outcome. Let us remember the way the Romans had “rewarded” the Armenian groups that had rebelled against the Persian Empire of whose subjects they were, and supported the Roman Army against the Persian Army. When the Persian-Roman War ended and these two countries signed a treaty in 387, Rome “destroyed” the “political entity” of the Armenians living within the boundaries of the Roman Empire since it saw them as a threat. Those writers that emphasize the rebellious Armenian image still cannot fathom (!) why Rome, who owed its

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(Birsen Karaca, “One of the Three taboos of Armenian Culture: Armenian Language”, *Ermenian Studies 1st Turkish Congress Papers*, Volume III, ASAM- Institute for Armenian Research Publications, Ankara, 2003, pp. 137-142).

19 V.S. Nalbandyan i drugiye, *Armyanskaya literatura*, (Moskva, 1976), p.9. “In Russian”

success partly to those Armenian rebels, ended the political existence of the Armenians within its boundaries.

The **vindictive enemy image**: This image is used by the Armenian terrorists; and efforts are made to spread that image to the entire Armenian people. As the most extreme example of that stance one can cite the way ASALA, a terrorist organization, uses the Internet. From Armenians.com lots of links operating in that manner can be reached. These sites offer not only written texts but visual ones as well.<sup>20</sup> However, our paper does not focus on the texts presented by the terrorist organizations. These groups declare themselves to be terrorist organizations as it is, without feeling the need for any confirmation of that from the West. They try to gain “sympathy” on the basis of this very characteristic. What is important in reality and needs to be researched is the way Armenian intellectuals and western humanists, known for their care for human rights, have chosen not to see these activities.

I would like to give another example -- from the world of literature: The **craziness image** emphasized by William Saroyan in his works. Let us have a lengthy quotation from the writer’s published diary:

“When I observe the others, I mean the others’ children, I think of my own children and myself as being the fourth child of Armenak SAROYAN and Takuhi SAROYAN. The others’ children are wise, well behaved, skillful, efficient, and know what to do, but my nation’s children’s ability to bewilder surprises me. The other children know who they are, what are they doing in this world and are fairly comfortable in what they are doing. However, this is a great struggle for us Armenians from the very beginning.

Finally I decide that all of them are lunatics, but not as crazy as those who should be put in a lunatic asylum. We know how to suppress our anger before society or the medical authorities come on to us. Only a few of us are not crazy. I am saying this in the meaning that it is more or less always like that; I mean do

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20 For ASALA’s terrorist attacks on Turkish diplomats see [retired ambassador] Bilal Şimşir, *Şehit Diplomatlarımız* [Our Martyred Diplomats] (1973-1994), Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, 2000.  
<http://janfedayi.com> “In English”  
[www.ASALAonline.com](http://www.ASALAonline.com) “In English”  
<http://www.armenians.com/asala/index1.html> “In English”  
<http://forum.hayastan.com/index.php?showtopic=11133> “In Russian”  
<http://terrorism.wallst.ru/asala.htm> “In Russian”  
<http://www.vestnik.com/issues/2001/0605/win/mirzoev.htm> “In Russian”

not think that past is better than today. We can find flaws in everything. We know that we live in a corrupt world, but even after we accept this reality we do not stop complaining; moreover we sometimes get furious about it. When I think about any branch of a family I cannot find any who is mild, ordinary, serious, amenable, ardent, respectful, keen, knows what to do, in short I can't find any family which has the qualifications of a normal family.”<sup>21</sup>

In this quotation, Saroyan's pen draws skillfully the **discordant man image** that has been dealt with in the Armenian literature quite often. It is strange that this discordant man image, just as the craziness image, is presented as one of the distinguishing qualities of the Armenian people as if that makes them superior to other peoples.

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Finally, there are two important points that should be highlighted regarding the image created in the Armenian mass media. First of all, generally speaking, the biggest success of these texts is that none of them has triggered adverse reactions especially from the Armenian readers. This non-reactive behavior seems to support the argument John Berger put forth in his book “Ways of Seeing”: “What we believe and what we think affect what we see.”<sup>22</sup> The famous art critic explained his ideas by saying, “In the medieval times when people believed that hell really existed, fire definitely had a quite different meaning than it has today.”<sup>23</sup> Now let us think about the events from the opposite direction. Armenia has been a political entity since 1991. The members of the aforementioned Armenian groups (which are, in fact, similar to the Armenian Volunteer Groups of the World War I) have been living in the Diaspora and, since 1991, as citizens of the Armenian Republic. Let us try to imagine what would happen if these groups had repeated what they had done on the Ottoman soil in the 1800s and 1900s— this time targeting their attacks on these other countries. What kind of reaction would they get from these countries?

As for the second point that should be highlighted, Michel Foucault, in his book “Words and Things”<sup>24</sup> underlines important details -- that seem to be lost in

21 W. Saroyan, *Paris –Frenso Güncesi 1967-68*, çev: Beril Eyüboğlu, (Istanbul: Aras, 2001), p.57. (W. Saroyan, *PARIS-FRENSE DIARY 1967—68*, (Istanbul: Aras, 2001), p.57).

22 John Berger, *Görme Biçimleri* [Ways of Seeing], translated into Turkish by Yurdanur Salman, (Istanbul, Metis, 1999), p. 8.

23 *İbid*, p.8.

24 Michel, Foucault, *Kelimeler ve Şeyler* [Words and Things], translated by Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, (Ankara: Imge, 2001)..

the texts. Foucault, whom we know as a French historian of culture and science as well as a philosopher, explains in his book some important details of Velasquez's painting "Lady-in-waiting" that escape the attention of the ordinary viewers. As a result we understand that this painting does not consist merely of the images that have been painted distinctly in the foreground.

The Armenian image we have analyzed in the "painting" that is called the "Armenian Problem" is one of the obscure details that, as in the case of the Velasquez painting, do not attract attention at first glance. This detail also shows how the Armenian writers, who present the Armenian Problem to the world from the Armenian standpoint, see the Armenian nation. This attitude on the part of the writers indicates that they would like to see the receiver not as a "producer of ideas" but as a tool that stores unquestioningly everything that is presented, and can be easily conditioned to convey the presented message to others without any change.

This list can be expanded, that is, the list consisting of the images created and presented by the Armenian mass media to keep the Armenian problem on the agenda. Yet, at the same time, these images provide the researchers with data about the individual and collective characteristics of the Armenian people.

In recent years, extensive research has been done on collective memory and cultural analysis at the universities of western countries. This should be seen as a sign attesting to the need to hand over advanced technology to capable hands in social sciences. To conclude: The experience we have gained vis-à-vis the "Armenian Problem" should cause the Turkish academic world to make an intellectual contribution that would set the direction of the arguments taking place before the international public opinion on such issues.