



ARMENIA

A Very Brief History

Fourth Edition

By Christopher J. Walker

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Yerevan 2025

CONTENTS

Editor's note	4
List of images	5
Historical Geography	7
Early Times	8
Christian Armenia	8
Invasion and loss of independence.....	10
Cilician Armenia	11
Battleground of the Empires	12
British and Russian policies	14
The Massacres of Sasun	18
Rise of the Armenian Diaspora	19
The Genocide of 1915-1923	24
The First Republic	26
Soviet Armenia	32
The Third Republic	34
Armenian Arts	45
Armenian music	45
Theatre and Literature in Armenia	46
Armenian painting	49
Armenian carpets.....	58
Armenian architecture	58

Editor's Note

The book was first published on the occasion of an exhibition of photographs of Armenia, organized through the invitation of Justice and Peace Committee of the UK and the Dean of St. Albans Cathedral and the Armenian Church of Great Britain held from 27 January to 9 February of 2002 in St. Albans Cathedral.

The current, fourth edition has been revised to include the subsequent decades of Armenian history as well as augmented by an additional section of an introductory history of Arts in Armenia. For notes on Armenian paintings I am grateful to art historian Yvette Tajirian.

The clay tablet map of the world inside the front cover, dating from about 2600 years ago, could be considered as a birth certificate for Armenia as a country, which had found its place in the centre of the known world.

Rouben Galichian
Editor
Yerevan, 2025

List of Images

Mt Ararat from the Ararat Valley	Front cover
Babylonian clay tablet – World Map 600 BCE	Inside front cover
Armenia in the Middle Ages. Map by Vaugondy	9
Holy Mother of God church	13
“Khachkars”, Cross stones in Ashtarak	13
The city of Goris	16
Old Khndzoresk village	16
General view of Yerevan, 2011	20-21
Holy Cross church, Aghtamar, near Van	22
Friezes on the church perimeter	22
Alpine pastures in the spring	23
The Armenian city of Van before 1915	27
Van after its destruction by the Ottomans after 2016. 2009 photo	27
Orchards of Ararat valley	28
Petroglyph of prehistoric Ukhtasar rock carvings	28
Pomegranate grower from Meghri	29
Field of wild poppys, Sisian	30-31
Celebrating Independence Day in Yerevan	35
Fortified monastery of Akhtala, 13th century, northern Armenia.	35
A church wedding	37
Ottoman War map of 1877	39
An illuminated miniature from the 11th century	47
Illuminated miniature, Toros Roslin, 14th century	48
Hovnatanian, Ladys portrait	50
Archil Gorky. Waters of the Flowery Mill	51
Hovhanes Aivazovsky. Napoleon in St Helen	52
Minas Avedissian. Jajur	54
Martiros Sarian. Wild flowers	56
Hakob Hakobian. Artist’s studio	57
Armenian Dragon carpet	59
Starburst, Jeraberd Armenian carpet	60
Noravank monastery, 13th century	62
Map of the present-day Republic of Armenia	63
Plan of central Yerevan	64
Map of the region, indicating the age of adjacent countries.	Inside back cover
Tzitzernakaberd.Genocide memorial	Back cover

Armenia: a very brief history

By Christopher J. Walker

Historical Geography

The Armenian homeland, known to historians as Great Armenia, comprises a large area of mountainous territory. From the west near Kharput in Turkey today, to the east at Nagorno Karabakh and Iranian Khoi, is about 450 miles, and from the north between Ardahan and Lake Sevan, to the southern border with Kurdistan, just beyond Lake Van, is about 250 miles. Given that the country is not a perfect square, we arrive at a figure of some 100,000 square miles, or 250,000 square kilometres. Neither in ancient nor modern times has Great Armenia had access to the sea. Lesser Armenia existed in the early Middle Ages, west of the Euphrates around the modern city of Erzinjan; and from the eleventh to the fourteenth century the focus of Armenian life moved to Cilicia, north of the gulf of Alexandretta (Iskenderun). This kingdom was ruled first by the Armenian Rupenids and Hetumids, and then by the French Lusignans.

The republic of Armenia today - formerly Soviet Armenia - constitutes only ten per cent of the territory of Great Armenia, comprising 29,800 square kilometres (11600 square miles). Nagorno ('mountainous') Karabakh makes up another 4,800 square kilometres (1,870 sq miles). In Turkey today no map of that country makes any mention of the former "Turkish" Armenia. The region is shown as unquestionably Turkish. Armenian names have been replaced by Turkish ones.

As a whole, Great Armenia is a plateau, situated on average at 1,700 metres above sea level. As a result winters are extremely cold and long. (Summers are short and hot.) Parts of the country are beautiful and fertile, though large areas are mountainous and stony. The poet Gurgen Mahari has written powerfully about the stony landscape of his homeland. Mount Ararat, today situated in Turkey, is Armenia's highest - and most famous - mountain, at 5,137metres.

Early Times

The Armenians are a very ancient people, being descendants of people who have lived in the land since prehistoric times. Archeologists record a continuous human occupation since the Old Stone Age. Before 1000 BCE Armenia was dominated by the Urartu - the name is the same as 'Ararat' - who were overrun in around 600 BCE by various invaders (Scythians, Mede, and 'Hayasa'), some of whom came from the old Hittite state in Central Anatolia. The language adopted by the new arrivals was a distinctive member of the Indo-European group. It has some similarities with Iranian languages. Iranian and Greek sources started to speak of Armina and Armenians from about 500 BCE. Great Kings Darius and Xerxes knew of the people by these names, as did Herodotus. In 401 BCE Xenophon passed through Armenia, and he records the custom of the locals of drinking beer through a straw.

Thus the records show that the Armenians had a continuity of their homeland from at least two and a half millennia, until - with the exception of the small area of former Russian Armenia - their genocidal destruction and dispersion in 1915.

In the first century BCE Armenia had grown in strength briefly to feature as an empire, in the time of Pompey and Caesar. The empire reached its greatest extent under the king Tigranes II ('Tigran Medz'), who ruled from 95 to 55 BCE. His realm existed all the way from the Caspian Sea to the borders of Egypt. But Rome felt threatened, and various campaigns by Lucullus and Pompey, and in the next century by Corbulo, reduced the empire from a world to a regional power.

Christian Armenia

Christianity reached Armenia early on; tradition relates that the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew arrived in the first century. The country was the first to adopt the faith as a national creed. This occurred in 301 CE, some twelve years before Constantine's edict of toleration in the Roman Empire. The introduction of Christianity into Armenia is ascribed to Gregory the Illuminator, who, after enduring tortures in a pit for his faith, was released by the king of Armenia (Tiridates; Trdat) in order to cure the king of a terrible mental disease. When this was accomplished, the conversion of the Armenian royal court and country followed.

It is noteworthy that the conversion of Armenia to Christianity did not at this date signify any identification with a world power bloc. There was no such thing yet as the 'Christian West'. Europe was still pagan. Christianity at this date was a predominantly Asiatic and African religion.

A hundred years later a devout scribe invented a script for the Armenian language. Hitherto Greek, and Aramaic cuneiform, had been used; but now a fine alphabet was devised, which precisely reflected the sounds of the Armenian language. The Bible was first to be translated into Armenian and written in the new script; other texts and



Fig 1: Armenia during the Early Ages of the world, according to the French cartographer Robert de Vaugondy. Paris, 1762.

sacred works followed, leading to the fifth century being known as the 'Golden Age' of Armenian literacy. Faith and literacy empowered Armenians for culture and survival.

Until the year 431 CE the Christian church was one. Then there occurred the first doctrinal split: following the Council of Ephesus, a secession occurred, in which the Church of the East (sometimes known as Nestorian, or Assyrian, Church) proclaimed its separation, declaring that it rejected the council's findings, and that it would hold on to its belief in the distinction between Christ's divine and human natures. A further council, held at Chalcedon, seemed to the Armenians to reach conclusions which went too far in the direction of Nestorian theology, and they rejected its findings, declaring (along with the churches of Egypt and Ethiopia) that the divine and human natures of Christ were closely united, though divisible. The Armenians have been characterized as monophysites (mono - one, physis - nature), but their theology has always avoided any extreme monophysite position.

No Armenian delegation was present at the Council of Chalcedon, because the Persian Sasanids had embarked on a campaign to wipe out the Christian faith from Armenia, and were confronting the newly Christian Armenians on the battlefield. The Armenians were able to hold the Persian aggression led by king Yazdigerd II who gave up the idea of converting Armenians to Zoroastrianism. Armenia was eventually recognized by Persia as a Christian country in 485.

Armenia suffered through the immense duel of empires that was fought between Byzantium and Persia in the sixth and early seventh century. Their country became a battleground, as it had been between Rome and Parthia in antiquity. Although they felt a greater community with Christian Byzantium, many of their cultural links lay with Persia/Iran, and as long as they were not molested, they usually felt a greater affinity with the eastern power. From Byzantine Jerusalem, Persia carried away the sacred relic of the True Cross in 614; it was only restored by Byzantine emperor Heraclius in 629. News of the great victory found an echo in distant places, even as far as Arabia, and gained a reference in the Quran.

Invasion and loss of independence

Following the death of Muhammad in 632, the vigorous Islamic armies rapidly overcame the exhausted imperial dynasties of Byzantium and Sasanid Persia, and the Islamic message of the unity of God, with Jesus as chosen, but not Son, seemed to many eastern Christians to be a further Christian heterodoxy and not a new religion. But Islam created initial destruction in Armenia, with warfare, slayings and destruction. Once the situation had quietened into the coherence of empire, the situation of Armenia improved; the country was recognized (as 'Arminiyya' - see the entry in the Encyclopedia of Islam) as an administrative unit, and the long links of the Islamic empire gave scope for trade. In its civilian life there was little or no persecution. Churches were built and Armenian life developed and even flourished.

Cautiously Armenian social structure, with its desire for autonomy, re-emerged, as the caliphate weakened. In 861 a representative of the noble Bagratuni household was recognized as prince of princes, and a few years he was elevated to kingship. A new royal house had emerged in Armenia. But there were problems. A rival, from the Arzruni family, proclaimed himself king of Vaspurakan (south of Lake Van). Unity was however achieved in the early tenth century, and a brilliant century followed, when life and love, art and poetry, blossomed among the fertile Armenian uplands. The princes were, according to one commentator, 'clad in brilliant colours and looked like spring gardens. The sounds of flutes, of cymbals and of other instruments filled one's heart with the comfort of great joy.' The Bagratid Armenians built a new capital at Ani, a monument to medieval architecture, and a city far surpassing any built in Europe of that date. Today it lies in Turkey. Its massive walls, and magnificent cathedral (built between 989 and 1001) and surrounding churches, though today in 2013 in a ruinous state of preservation, are a testament to a great architectural genius. At a slightly earlier date the Arzrunis built another architectural marvel: the church of the Holy Cross, on the island of Aghtamar, in Lake Van, which was partially restored only recently. Here the exterior is decorated with sculpted friezes and biblical scenes in relief. The figures show great spiritual dignity yet abundant fruitful vigour: saints and patriarchs combine with vines and lively beasts, a uniquely Armenian combination. This church is a landmark in the religious art of the Near East.

Byzantium at this time became set on an expansionist phase, and annexed the Bagratid kingdom in 1045. In 1064 the Seljuk Turks overran it from the east, seven years before the battle of Manzikert (1071) which effectively saw the closure of Byzantine rule in central and eastern Anatolia. There was a revival in eastern Armenia with the renewal of the Georgian state under Queen Tamar and her successors. Many of the fine khachkars, or cross-stones, that one sees in Armenia and Karabakh date from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries; but the Mongol invasion of 1236 and the extremely destructive campaign of Tamerlane (1386-8) brought death and devastation on a massive scale. Thereafter in the Armenian highlands power lay with two rival Turkoman confederations, the 'White Rams' (Akkoyunlu) and the 'Black Rams' (Karakoyunlu), some of whose leaders showed a measure of support for Armenians; for instance, when the catholicosate - the seat of the supreme head of the church, the Catholicos - returned from Cilicia to Echmiadzin in 1441, a landmark event in the progress and consolidation of the Armenian Church, making way for the development of a locus of spiritual and indeed temporal power in the stormy centuries ahead.

Cilician Armenia

In the meantime, as Bagratid power had declined, Armenia began to relocate itself to Cilicia, south-central Turkey today, north of Cyprus, with the Armenian catholicosate located at Sis. Cilician Armenia elevated itself into a principedom in 1080 and a kingdom

in 1199, and its monarchs reigned for just under 300 years. Christian Armenia became associated with the Christian crusaders, although the time was not propitious: already by the time of the coronation of the Armenian king the crusaders had lost Jerusalem, and they were to lose all their east Mediterranean possessions within 100 years. Nevertheless, despite the inopportune moment, Cilician Armenia was marked by cultural advancement: the sacred texts of Catholicos Nerses IV ('the Gracious' - Shnorhali) date from this period, as do the medical advancements of Mkhitar Heratsi and the legal texts of Mkhitar Gosh. Trade flourished in the port of Ayas (also known as Layas - Lajazzo to the Italians). Cilicia also occupied an important position in the medieval imagination of western Europe, especially in England, where it often features in narrative poems. Chaucer's Knight, in the *Canterbury Tales*, had fought at Ayas. 'Abilent' = Dabilent, which was a version of Dvin, the old Armenian capital. (See the discussion in Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, 1977.) Armenia features too in *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (1356). Nevertheless the text demonstrates much of the significant lore of overseas travel which was available to a western European in the mid fourteenth century. Other European and Arab travelers passed through Armenia and many of them provide details about the country and its inhabitants. These include William de Rubruck (1220-1290), Marco Polo (1254-1324), Johann Schiltberger (1381-1449), Ruy Gonzales De Clavijo (d. 1412), Josafa Barbaro (1413-1494), Anthony Jenkinson (1529-1610), Alexandre de Rhodes (1591-1660), Adam Olearius (1602-1671), Jean Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689), Sir John Chardin (1643-1713) and others. The last Armenian king, Levon V, was deposed by the Mamluks in 1375. After imprisonment in Cairo, he travelled to Europe, in particular to England and France, to try to bring these now warring countries to peace with one another. He was received graciously by King Richard II in Eltham Palace, but no peace accord followed, and he died in Paris in 1393. His remains are interred in the St. Denis basilica near Paris.

Battleground of empires

For Armenians the early modern world begins perhaps with the capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks just over half a century later, or perhaps with the ascendancy of the Safavids in Persia in 1502. The Shi'ite Safavids were to be the implacable enemies of the Sunni Ottomans for almost 140 years; and for the Armenians, who were situated on the borderlands between the two, the situation was perilous. In the Ottoman Empire the situation for Armenians was regulated when the Armenian bishop of Bursa was asked by the Ottoman sultan in 1481 to become patriarch of the Armenian community of the Ottoman empire, becoming in effect a temporal as well as a spiritual leader. The situation for the Armenians of Persia/Iran was more paradoxical, and though char-



Fig. 2: Holy Mother of God church, built in 874 CE.



Fig. 3: "Khachkars", Cross stones in Ashtarak.

acterized by violence and dispossession, in the long run benefited the community more. When Shah Abbas became leader of Iran in 1588, the wars with the Ottomans and the Uzbeks were continuing. Only later was he able to create the flourishing cultured state which so impressed Europeans. And as part of his policy of war with Ottoman Turkey he depopulated the frontier region of its Armenians with a ferocious zeal. He commanded them all to come into Iran, and virtually ethnically cleansed Armenia of Armenians. It was a time of immense suffering for Armenians, and many thousands died. But once they were in Iran, he treated them well, and set them up in communities (some of which did not fare well). Most notably, Shah Abbas put the Armenians in charge of the commerce of his nation, and gave them a unique town in which to live in and from which to conduct their commercial operations. This was New Julfa (Nor Djughha), just outside Isfahan, across the Zayandeh Rud river. Shah Abbas even engaged in theological discourse with the Armenians. For 100 years their activities flourished; their commerce was governed by a stern internal code of conduct, which benefited the practice of trade, the trading nations and the operators of the trade. Several Armenian families became wealthy. From New Julfa they formed connections with India (reaching Calcutta even before the British), and with East Asia, and notably with the tsar of Muscovy. Armenian traders negotiated the rivers of Europe to reach the Hanseatic ports.

British and Russian policies

England cast a brief glance at Armenia in the seventeenth century, as a result of the interest shown in the Greek Orthodox Church, and in the east in general, by King Charles I and Archbishop Laud. The idea was to foster contacts between the Anglican Church and the eastern churches, and thereby to be able to by-pass the 'right wing' of the Roman Catholic Church, and the 'left wing' of the Calvinists. The project came to nothing, with the deaths of both the Greek Patriarch Cyril Lukaris and Archbishop Laud himself; but as a result of the project a volume emerged a few decades on entitled *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches* by Sir Paul Rycaut (1678). Later still, in 1736, an edition of the important 'History of the Armenians' by Movses Khorenatsi, one of the texts from Armenia's golden age, was printed in London, in Armenian with Latin translation, by George and William Whiston.

Armenia began to take on a political colouring again, when Peter the Great launched a bid to win the trade of Persia by invading in 1722. At the time Iran was under attack from the Afghans. The Armenians hoped that, rather than seize the trade of his southern neighbour, he would liberate their country and restore their kingdom, but history teaches that idealistic solutions are seldom envisaged by invading monarchs. After a brief invasion of east Transcaucasia, Peter withdrew, and Russia showed no further interest in Armenia for 50 years. An Armenian melik, or chieftain, David Bek, declared a brief independence in a mountainous region, in the disturbed time following the Afghan invasion of Iran; but after a few years Iranian rule re-asserted itself.

The nation's modernization through education started occurring at this time. An Armenian from Madras financed a printing press in Echmiadzin in 1771, and, actually in Madras, the first Armenian work of political philosophy was written in 1772.

A journal called *Azdarar* ('Monitor') was published there in 1794-6. In Venice, the Mkhitarist brotherhood (of Catholic Armenians) were granted space for a monastery on the island of San Lazzaro in 1715, and established an intellectual as well as a spiritual community. Here 100 years later Byron learnt Armenian. (He was not allowed to stay overnight on the island, being considered too wicked by the father superior.) Armenian self-awareness and national consciousness were not 'Western imports', as has been foolishly maintained by superficial academics, but natural developments among the Armenians themselves, sometimes with help from the east, not west.

Russia still pondered over the condition of the Christian Caucasians, and Catherine the Great and Potemkin envisaged a new project for the creation of an Armenian principality. Potemkin declared in 1784 that 'Armenia raises its hands to the sacred throne of your imperial majesty asking for deliverance'. Again, nothing resulted, although the southward push of the Russian empire (especially in the actual gains around the north of the Black Sea during the 1770s and 80s, resulting in the Anglo-Russian Ochakov crisis in 1791) brought to the fore certain international issues which were to dominate the diplomatic picture of the nineteenth century.

The central issue for Britain's foreign policy in the region was: would she support the Turkish Empire or the Russian empire? In the eighteenth-century France had been the natural partner of imperial Turkey. Britain had been a friend of Russia, right back to the time when Peter the Great worked in the London dockyards. Now William Pitt the younger was proposing that Britain should send the fleet into the Black Sea to support Turkey. This was a reversal. But it failed. And less than half a century later Britain (in alliance with France and Russia) had destroyed the Ottoman fleet in a naval engagement at Navarino, helping bring to birth the state of Modern Greece.

George Canning, the British prime minister instrumental in guiding this victory, did not live to see the continuation of the policy. Instead the premiership of Britain slipped into the hands of the Duke of Wellington, a man who considered that the battle of Navarino had been an 'untoward event', and that imperial Turkey was 'our ancient ally'. Wellington set the tone for Anglo-Ottoman relations for the rest of the nineteenth century, with grave implications for the Armenians. The 'hard-track' policy of support for Ottoman Turkey and opposition to Russia meant that any 'soft-track' considerations, such as an active concern for the condition of Armenians or interest in their community through shared Christian values, were of minimal consideration.

It is instructive too to look at the nature of foreign and specifically British concern for the Ottoman Empire and its peoples. Was the notion of the Christian commonwealth important, or of central significance? The historical record is not convincing. At the time of the Greek rebellion, the strongest supporters of the Greeks were not clergymen but Philhellenes and atheists like Byron and Shelley. During the Crimean War, the Anglican clergyman and author of *The Water Babies*, Charles Kingsley, sent a message to



Fig. 4: City of Goris.



Fig. 5: Khndzoresk village.

the British troops fighting alongside the Turks at Sevastopol bidding them 'be sure you are doing God's service.' It was only in the 1870s, with Gladstone and the High Church movement to the fore, and in an echo of the Laudianism of two and a half centuries earlier, that English Christians supported the cause of the eastern Christians suffering beneath the oppression of Ottoman government.

Even then peoples such as the Armenians received little or no real help from abroad, due to the British support for the Ottomans remained strong, first because of Anglo-Russian rivalry concerning the potential of Central Asia, and fear for the North-West Frontier, secondly because of the large amount of British investment in the Ottoman Empire (in the form of bonds), and thirdly because Queen Victoria was herself personally antipathetic to eastern Christians.

In the Caucasus itself Russia had annexed Georgia in 1801; and the southward pressure continued. Russia learnt about the history and current situation of the Armenians with the founding in Moscow of the Lazarian (or Lazarev) Institute, a cultural and educational establishment, in 1815. The founder came from New Julfa. In the homeland, Persia/Iran launched an inept attack on Russian positions in 1827, which made possible further tsarist gains. Yerevan and Nakhichevan were liberated, and were designated by the tsar an 'Armenian Province' (Armyanskaya oblast). The famed and historic religious capital of Echmiadzin too came under the control of Russia, and the stability which flowed therefrom enabled it to develop as a centre of authority and leadership for Armenians. Relations between the Russian state and the brotherhood of Echmiadzin were regulated by statutes of 1836. Armenians, two centuries earlier driven out of their motherland by Shah Abbas, were now able to re-populate the land, and many did so. Many came from the increasingly ill-governed provinces of the Ottoman Empire, where political sterility was sliding into malevolence.

Russia made some military gains in the region of the Caucasus during the Crimean War, but was forced to give them up by the subsequent treaty of Paris. The documents that Ottoman Turkey felt obliged to sign concerning the treatment and equality of members of non-Muslim nationalities in the empire had absolutely no impact on the lives of Ottoman citizens outside the imperial capital and a few big cities in the west. Nothing at all changed in Ottoman Armenia: injustice and humiliation continued as before. But this was not true of Russian Armenia. Here, by the time of the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, there was a distinct air of confidence, and a sense of potential, underscored by the fact that four of the imperial Russian generals on the Caucasian front were of Armenian origin. In overall command was General M.T. Loris Melikov, later to be Alexander II's last chancellor. (There is also a fictionalized picture of him in Tolstoy's short story Hadji Murad.) Armenian military competence was a bonus for the mass of Armenians, since for many centuries they had become accustomed to thinking of themselves as non-military, while the Turks were held to be the martial race. Now it was the Russians and Armenians who were the martial class, winning most of the victories, and showing a firm grasp of strategy and tactics. An Armenian commander liberated the fortress-city of Kars in November 1877. The future seemed full of promise. The

key lay with the most powerful nation, Britain, and here we find confusion and lack of purpose. Following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8, Britain modified the early treaty of San Stefano (signed really as a preliminary) into the text of the definitive treaty of Berlin (1878) as far as the Armenians were concerned, with new proposals which made the introduction of reforms in Turkish Armenia dependent not on the actual presence of an observing Russian army, but on the much vaguer goodwill of the 'concert of Europe' (the six major powers of the continent). Britain watered down the contents of the earlier treaty of San Stefano, and made the introduction of reforms conditional on a notional, and not a real, guarantee.

Disraeli was here following the old line of Wellington, and was in complete accord with the anti-Russian line of Queen Victoria and the other 'Jingoes'. But he did send out certain special consuls to Ottoman Armenia in 1878, who checked on the injustices of Ottoman officials. However, when Gladstone returned to power in 1880 he saw these consuls as a remnant of the discredited policy of his predecessor, and withdrew them. Gladstone sought to work only through the unity of the 'concert of Europe'. He hated the idea of one power assuming more responsibility than the others. But in reality the 'concert' was as much a mirage as the unity of Christendom at the time of the crusades. So the Armenians, actually there on the ground in Turkish Armenia, had no one to turn to for redress: neither the Russian army, as originally envisaged by the San Stefano treaty, nor the British special consuls. Oppression and injustice continued apace, and bred resistance. A collection of reports from British consuls in the region, drawn up in 1884, was so embarrassing that it was not published. Armenians started defying the Ottoman government. They received some assistance from the Russian Armenians, an ever more confident and politicized community, and the Ottoman government responded with ferocity. There were a few outbreaks in the early 1890s, and then a full-scale rebellion in the Sasun mountains (west of Lake Van) in 1894.

The Massacres in Sasun

In Sasun the Armenians lived as a mountaineer community, with a kind of feudal coexistence with the local Kurds. They enjoyed a wide measure of autonomy; but the Kurds were apt to bear down heavily on them as regards taxation, and the financial demands made on the Armenians when one of their number was married. Taxation had just reached the area from the central government, so they were being taxed twice (or even three times, if one includes the bride tax) over. They refused to pay, and this defiance became the touchstone to a more general assertion of defiance of their down-trodden condition. The central government sent in an armed force to slaughter them into submission. Village after village was sought out, and the inhabitants killed by agents of the government. Indeed, so thorough was the operation of death, that a British diplomat who examined the evidence considered that extermination, and not submission, was the plan of the government.

News of the Sasun massacre leaked out in November 1894, and a widespread campaign was set in motion in clerical and humane circles in Europe seeking to stop the Ottoman government, and maybe to depose the sultan. The Ottoman government responded with a furious policy of denial and obstruction: it declared that what had happened had not happened. Finally, an Ottoman commission was allowed to convene with international observers. The observers noted that the obstructive procedures meant that truth emerged only slowly. But enough facts did emerge to give a grim picture of official mass-murder.

In the capital in mid-1895 a demonstration by Armenians against government policy turned nasty, and a few months later, in October-December of that year, the sultan reinforced his message of violence towards Armenians by instigating a brutal series of massacres against the Armenians in the east. Over 200,000 Armenians died. Agents of the government were careful to attack the outlying villages in the plains around the Armenian towns, and carry on their work of killing there too, indicating that there was a genocidal element in their operations. In response, Armenians seized a bank in the capital, but the operation was ineffectual.

Rise of the Armenian Diaspora

Many Armenians left Ottoman Armenia, and the worldwide Armenian diaspora grew as a result of the persecutions. Armenians were used to travelling and settling abroad, but the ferocity of the attacks made on them in the homeland gave a new impetus to the process of seeking a home and livelihood elsewhere. France and the United States were favoured countries. The politics of succeeding decades led to a massive enlargement of the diaspora communities. Today the largest diaspora community is in the Russian Federation followed by western United States, with over a million Armenians reside.

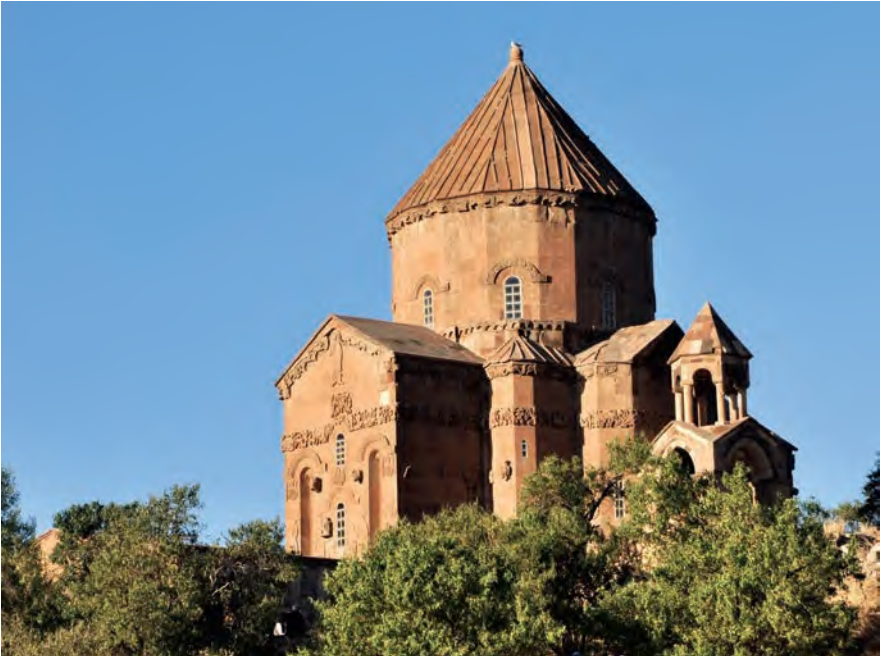
After 1896 a kind of *modus vivendi* was achieved for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. But it is important to point out that no one was charged with killing Armenians. There was no legal process and no conviction. It looked as though devious political deals could make any judicial consequences of killing Armenians disappear.

In Russian Armenia, as tsarist rule had grown more inflexible and autocratic, the Armenians were targeted for their democratic and cultured spirit. Schools were closed in the 1880s and 1890s, and by a decree of 1903 the governor-general (an aristocrat of a narrow and bigoted outlook) declared the Armenian Church and its property to be part of the Russian state. The clergy resisted. Soldiers occupied Echmiadzin, turning even the Armenian bourgeoisie into revolutionaries. The anti-Armenian policy was carried over into the 1905 revolution, when Armenians suffered government-inspired assaults in Karabagh, Nakhichevan and in the Baku oil-fields. But they put up a credible resistance. At least in Russia they could not be classed as 'suffering Armenians'. It was only in 1912 that the Russian authorities relented, and ceased persecuting Armenians, envisaging that they might require their assistance in a proposed tsarist military campaign into north-west Persia.



Fig. 6: Yerevan today.





Figs. 7 and 8: Aghtamar. Holy Cross church with its friezes (915-921 AD.)



Fig. 9: Alpine pastures.

The Genocide of 1915-1923

In Ottoman Turkey, the old sultan's rule limped on until 1908. Then the Young Turk revolution occurred: in a move spearheaded by army officers, the Ottoman constitution was reintroduced (from 1876). Among the plotting exiles the Armenians had played a significant role in bringing the differing groups together. For about six months after the revolution there was genuine peace and fraternity, and a sense of optimism. But then things started to go wrong. The Young Turks remained in the shadows, still plotting and planning, and refusing to become part of a transparent democratic government. In April 1909 there was a counter revolution, in which an attempt was made to put the sultan back on the throne. 'We want the sharia [Islamic law]', declared the counter revolutionary demonstrators. They were crushed by forces loyal to the Young Turks. At the same time an outbreak of massacre occurred in the Cilician town of Adana, in which as many as 30,000 Armenians were killed. Who did the killing is still not fully clear; there were two massacres, and it seems likely that the second one was perpetrated by the Young Turk soldiers, re-establishing control.

In the following years the Young Turk party (the Ittihad ve Terraki Djemieti - Committee of Union and Progress) moved strongly to the chauvinist right in its political ideology. It seems that the Turks, hitherto the dominant ethno-linguistic group of the empire, felt threatened by the upsurge of democracy that the revolution had brought about. Their imperial ascendancy was now questioned, for the first time since 1453. They looked for alternative politics, eventually focusing on the racial-linguistic non-religious notion of pan-Turkism. Their ideologues harked back to Attila, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. The focus was fixed on the Turks of Central Asia, as far as Yakutia. The implications of this theorizing for the Armenians were dire. They were directly in the way of any Turkish expansionism eastwards. Indeed, in the implementation of this plan, the first two stages entailed getting a strong grip on the populations of Anatolia and turkifying them, and then making a small expansion eastwards in the direction of Baku.

The aspiration eastwards was given a further boost by Ottoman losses in Europe in 1912. Almost all of European Turkey was lost to the Balkan states. As evidence of the continuing loyalty of some Armenians to the Ottoman revolution, they had enlisted in large numbers in the Ottoman Balkan army. In November 1912 the British ambassador in Constantinople remarked that 'the several thousand of Armenian troops have fought better than any of the other non-Turkish elements', a comment which negates the later smear that Ottoman Armenians were pervaded with treachery.

By 1914 Ottoman Turkey was in the hands of a hardline faction of the Union and Progress party. Its leader, Enver Pasha, was devoted to Turkish expansion eastwards and to the armed might and methods of Germany. Despite some eve-of-war politicking, few observers believed that Turkey would not join Germany in the war. In August 1914 a secret agreement between the two specified that Germany would facilitate ease of passage for the Turks eastwards into Russian Transcaucasia on the grounds of ethnicity.

In other words, they would help the Turks impose Turkism on the Russian province, and suppress or annihilate the Armenians.

On the eve of the First World War Armenians declared in a number of places that they would be loyal to their respective empires, although a number of Armenians did travel from the Turkish empire to Tiflis to join volunteer regiments. At the same time Turkish agents were calling on Turkic-speakers in eastern Transcaucasia to throw in their lot with the Ottomans. The Turks, confidently attacking on several fronts, lost heavily at Sarikamish (late 1914-early 1915) when almost an entire Turkish army froze to death in a pan-Turkist campaign aiming for unity with Central Asia. They also failed in north-west Iran and in crossing the Suez Canal, although they held off the allies at the Dardanelles. In March 1915 Armenian members of the Ottoman armies were disarmed, and reduced in status to labour battalions, being made to carry vast stores until they dropped. Many died. It seemed as though they were being made into scapegoats for Ottoman defeats. In Van, in the Turkish Armenian heartland, the Ottoman governor undertook a mass-killing of Armenians in local villages, before attempting to provoke the Armenians into revolt in the city of Van. They defended themselves, but did not revolt, even though the Ottoman government later charged the Armenian community with rebellion. On the 24th of April 1915 almost all the leaders of the Armenian community in Constantinople were arrested, taken into the Anatolian interior, and killed.

What followed, in the following four months or so, was the genocide of the Armenian people. From almost all concentrations of their people, right across Anatolia and in locations far from any war zone, Armenians - men, women and children - were identified, taken out of their localities, and ordered to walk without food or water along pre-selected routes until they dropped. Some were killed a short way out of their villages. Representatives of neutral European powers were turned away when they offered water or food to the starving deportees, which show that the authorities wanted to kill them rather than just deport them. The survivors of the death-marches were gathered together in vast open-air concentration camps in the desert, until they died from exposure and starvation. It was a giant act of premeditated governmental mass-murder. Some of the clearest evidence for the deed which made up this appalling picture of slaughter came from American consuls, especially Leslie Davis of Kharput (modern Elazig), who was actually well-disposed towards the Turks. His travels on horseback around his consulate in the summer months of 1915 gave him evidence of the most shocking mass murder: hundreds, even thousands, of bodies of Armenians dumped in ravines, and in a nearby lake. Individual Armenians who, having escaped the initial round-up, were later caught were stigmatized as firari ('deserters'), and treated accordingly. He saw it all happening, well into 1916. This pattern was repeated in hundreds of towns and villages. Evidence from German and Turkish sources adds to a conclusive picture of a planned genocide. Even Armenians who spoke only Turkish, such as the assimilated Catholic Armenians of central Anatolia, were in the following years taken from their home and driven into the desert to die.

Many local non-Armenians - especially Kurds - died too, and the Turks have tried to justify their actions by pointing to these deaths. But the Kurds and others died as a result of epidemics caused by the large number of unburied Armenian bodies left by the acts of the Ottoman government's genocide against that people. Many others died of famine and starvation, since the providers of the grains, the Armenian peasants, had been driven out of their villages and exterminated. The deliberation and the policy were apparent in the execution of the mass-murder of Armenians. The others died in 1915 by misfortune. The fate of Armenians was bound up with the appurtenances of the state: the prisons, the police, and the provincial governors. The Turkish authorities even set up a 'Special Organization', which in Anatolia was made up of common criminals, whose job it was to do the dirty work of actual killing and looting. The attempt by Turkish apologists to claim that 1915 constituted a 'civil war' between Turks and Armenians is absurd, since one side had a government which issued orders for its police, army and other agents - all the parts of a working state; whereas the Armenians had none of these - only a few old flintlocks. The Ottomans appear to have realized that their anti-Armenian policies went beyond what was acceptable in time of war, and that their actions constituted the gravest criminality (a point which had been made in an Allied declaration of May 1915, describing it as a crime against humanity, later joined also by the Ottoman courts, threatening to pursue and capture individually the perpetrators of mass murder), since the orders for deportation were often issued in a double format: the first orders would have been in the open, and have been mild and restrained, but the hidden, or secondary, orders were brutal and uncompromising in their proposals.

A vast number of Armenians died. Speaking in the House of Lords in October 1915, Lord Bryce put the figure at 800,000. Many went on to die in the following years, and there were further deaths in the Ottoman invasion of Transcaucasia in October 1918. The Kemalist attack on Cilicia brought further deaths. The figure of 1.5 million is usually accepted as a total, and is a reasonable estimate.

The First Republic

With the collapse of the Russian empire (and the Russian army) in 1917, first Transcaucasia and then Armenia gained independence, the latter event occurring in May 1918. The Ottoman Army was invading at the time, and was only kept from the Armenian heartland around Yerevan and Echmiadzin by a massive act of defensive bravery in which the whole Armenian population participated - the events are usually known as the battle of Sardarabad. The Turkish army went on to capture Baku and to kill almost all of the Armenians there; but the war was ending, and British officers were appearing in Transcaucasia. They were deployed to give it an appearance of stability, but in the total picture they leaned more to the east Transcaucasian Muslim population (Tatars, later to be renamed "Azeris"), and only reluctantly supported the Armenians, despite the closeness of the Azeris to the It-



Fig. 10a: The Armenian city of Van before 1915.



Fig 10b - The city after its destruction by the Ottomans in 1916. Photo was taken in 2009



Fig. 11: Mount Ararat seen from the Ararat valley orchards.



Fig. 12: Petroglyph of prehistoric Ukhtasar rock carvings.



Fig. 13: Meghri villager with his pomegranates.



Fig. 14: Wild flowers near Sisian.



tihadist Turks and the practical help offered by Armenians to the Allied war effort over a crucial few months in 1917 after the defection of Russia. The British refused to hand over Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia, even though 90% of its inhabitants were Armenian and requested many times that their land be designated part of Armenia. British officers preferred to keep a local big Azeri landlord in control: one of 'our traditional friends', similar to a landlord in Scotland or Ireland; therefore his links with the ousted murderers who had run the Ottoman Empire were overlooked.

Conditions in Armenia were ground down by extreme deprivation; the country had also to care for an army of refugees from across the frontier. Armenia was virtually kept alive by charitable donations. Most of the Allied leaders had made grand and posturing statements about its sufferings, but in the light of day these melted into the sand, proving to be entirely insubstantial. It has to be said that Lloyd George was probably the worst offender: grandiloquently posturing in favour of Armenians when the mood suited, but devious and negative in the privacy of a committee room. The non-political Americans were by contrast limitlessly generous in making donations to funds which guaranteed food for Armenians.

Gradually territory was added to Armenia throughout 1919, and the country started to operate as a state. But the victorious European powers (with Lloyd George at the helm) were incredibly slow in providing a Turkish treaty. When they did so, in the form of the treaty of Sevres of August 1920, the situation on the ground had made their considerations entirely out of date; the Turks had regrouped as Turkish Nationalists under Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) and the treaty proposed was not implemented. Bolshevism and Turkish Nationalism had come together to create an informal alliance aimed at squeezing out Allied influence. President Wilson was charged in the Sevres treaty with the task of delineating the Armeno-Turkish frontier, and he did so in an award which was in the main fair, although over-generous in awarding to Armenia much of Trebizond province. But it was right to see Van, Bitlis, Moush and Erzerum included in the proposed Armenia - especially after the massive war crime to which the Armenian people had been subjected. This was not to be.

Soviet Armenia

After the war, the Ottoman army had not been disarmed at the time of its defeat in 1918, and it regrouped and created the basis of the Nationalist army. By late 1920 it was able to impose its will on Armenia. Kars fell on 30 October 1920, and the rest of Armenia was on the brink of extinction. The Communists offered a very ambiguous hand to Armenia, and the introduction of Soviet rule into the country at least forestalled a complete Turkish takeover of Armenia. There was an anti-Communist revolt; but Soviet rule was fully imposed in April 1921.

Soviet Armenia is too close to our time to let us offer any clear assessments. But certain points and distinctions can be made. It was in the first place a one-party state,

backed by the secret police, in which any dissidents were apt to be killed or disappear into grim political jails. But for those who remained outside critical politics, it was possible to survive and even in later years to prosper. There were probably about six distinctive periods in its seventy-year existence: the early years of the New Economic Plan, characterized by a mixed communist capitalist economy; the forced collectivization from about 1930; the purges from 1936, which affected the whole of Transcaucasia severely; the wartime opening to the Armenian Diaspora (who sponsored a tank regiment called Sasuntsi Davit for operation against the Nazis), a time which included a re-dedication of the Catholicosate of Echmaidzin; and the immense loss of life suffered by the Armenians in the 'great patriotic war'; the Stalinist paranoia of the immediate post-1945 years (despite the fact that Armenians from the Diaspora were encouraged to immigrate into Armenia); the Khrushchev thaw, leading to a great opening to the Diaspora, especially in the years 1960-80, followed by a slowing down in the years of post-Brezhnevite sterility. The large market for goods and skills that the USSR offered meant that, with some flair and imagination, and when the politics had emerged from paranoia, a reasonable standard of living could be found in Soviet Armenia.

The movement for the return of Nagorno Karabakh (which was up to 75% Armenian in 1987), gained mass support throughout Armenia in late 1987 and throughout 1988. Leading Soviet Armenians made positive comments about the region's transfer from Azerbaijan to Armenia, and their remarks were followed by a vast popular campaign. The movement was not conjured out of the air. The fate of the majority-community Karabakh Armenians was common knowledge. The inhabitants of the 'autonomous oblast [region]' had petitioned the Soviet authorities for a change in status in 1963, 1965, 1966 and 1977. Now in 1987 they appeared to have received some recognition. In Armenia Gorbachev's determination to criticize the methods of the local Communist Party was also one of the elements, which led to that party's demise, as was the emphasis on 'green' issues, since the country bore many scars of industrial pollution. A demonstration in Yerevan on green issues in October 1987 turned into a demand for the return of the disputed territories to Armenian sovereignty.

The initiative was then seized by the people of Karabakh themselves. In February 1988 demonstrations took place, and the local soviet of Stepahankert (the capital of Karabakh) passed a resolution for Nagorno Karabakh to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia. Moscow rejected the resolution. Armenia itself became the scene of immense non-violent demonstrations. Violence intruded when the Armenians of Sumgait, Azerbaijan, were subjected to a murderous assault in the last days of February 1988. Several hundreds died. The official Soviet Azerbaijani figure of 32 was a cover-up underestimate. The message seemed to be: Armenians must stop making demands or be killed. Strikes and demonstrations in both Armenia and Karabakh continued for most of 1988. The situation was compounded by ethnic flight: ethnic Azerbaijanis fled from Armenia, and ethnic Armenians were expelled from Azerbaijan. In the following months the Supreme Soviet in Moscow reiterated that Nagorno Karabakh could not change its status. Despite Gorbachev's call for openness and restructuring, it was apparent that

any change in boundaries, even for sake of righting a Stalinist wrong, was off limits. Nagorno Karabakh re-named itself as Artsakh - a name from early medieval Armenia. Azeri violence against Armenians grew in intensity after a guilty verdict on one of the killers of Sumgait (18 November 1988).

On 7 December 1988 a very severe earthquake struck Armenia, with its epicentre in Leninakan (modern Gumri). Twenty-five thousand (25000) were killed, and over four hundred thousand (400,000) made homeless. Armenia became the focus of world sympathy and a huge relief operation got under way, despite inept handling by the Soviet authorities. These same authorities took advantage of the situation to jail the Armenian intellectuals of the Karabakh Committee who were calling for a change of status of the region.

From January to November 1989 Karabakh was governed directly from Moscow, and the region experienced a time of quiet. The return of it to Azerbaijan saw an upsurge in Azerbaijani militancy, and the imposition of Turkish/Azerbaijani blockades around Armenia and Karabakh (which is still ongoing). The mood became focused in an assault on the remaining Armenians of Baku (January 1990), some of whom were violently pursued all the way to Baku airport. The disturbances led to the entry of Soviet tanks heavy-handedly mismanaged.

The Third Republic

In mid 1990 the communists were defeated and ousted from Armenia. The country was then confronted by a Moscow-Baku axis, an alliance which focused on attacking the borders of Armenia and ethnically cleansing Armenians from Karabakh and Shahumianovsk (the Armenian-inhabited region to the north of Karabakh - Shahumian). Twenty thousand Armenians became refugees. Armenia became independent in 1991, and the USSR ceased to exist in December of that year, being replaced by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Economic conditions deteriorated severely and the following three winters were characterized by lack of fuel amid subzero temperatures. Trees were cut down in desperate effort to find fuel. Only with the re-commissioning of the Metsamor nuclear energy plant in 1994-5 Armenia begun again to have adequate power in wintertime. In January Armenia joined the OSCE and in March 1992 became a member of the United Nations, thus joining the world community as a sovereign nation.

War continued between Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan throughout 1992 and early 1993. The Karabakh Armenians seized Shushi, and the Lachin corridor region which connects Karabakh to Armenia. In April/May 1993 the Azerbaijani army collapsed owing to internal factors, and the regime in Baku changed to a two-man leadership of Surat Husseinov and Haidar Aliev. The Armenians took advantage of the situation, and secured Karabakh and substantial areas beyond the former autonomous region.

A second cease-fire, arranged in 1994, has in general held until the 2020 war. Negotiation have proved fruitless about the political future of the territory, despite the alive



Fig. 15: Republic Square during the celebration of Independence day.



Fig. 16: Fortified monastery of Akhtala, 13th century, northern Armenia.

intervention of the OSCE, politically, Armenia had been dominated by the Karabakh Committee, which developed into the Pan-Armenian National Movement (in Armenia, Hai Hamazkain Sharzhum, or HHS), with as its leader the scholar-politician Levon Ter-Petrossian a second term, but the allegation of electoral fraud were strong this time. The political atmosphere soured.

In March 1997, the President appointed Robert Kocharian, elected president of Nagorno Karabakh, as prime minister of Armenia. Kocharian was a firm believer in the separation of Karabakh from Azerbaijan. In February 1998 Ter-Petrossian was forced to resign as president, and the following month Kocharian was installed in his place.

In October 1999 there was an armed assault by five gunmen, led by Nayri Unanian, on the parliament building while a session was in progress. The prime minister, Vazgen Sarkissian, and the speaker, Karen Demirchian were killed, along with six other officials. The assault was a very severe shock to the political society of Armenia, and it has taken along time for the Armenian people to comprehend it and to come to terms with it.

The internal issue which troubles Armenia more than any is emigration. Perhaps as many as 30% of the entire population has left since 1991. (This problem severely afflicts all the Transcaucasian republics, and most of the post-Soviet world). Many Armenians have departed for Russia itself, and may eventually return; but a proportion had left for the USA or Canada, and it is doubtful if they will ever go back. The issue is very serious in the country locations, and it demonstrates the importance of re-vitalizing the economy by finding a way to end the blockades, and of re-focusing Armenia as a land of pride and as a magnetic force underpinned by a sustaining culture, so that the country's civil society may eventually excel that which Armenia accomplished in the last two or three decades of Soviet rule.

From 2001 onward the chronology of important events is as follows*:

- In September of 2001 Armenia celebrated the 1700th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as the state religion. In Yerevan the cathedral of St Gregory the Illuminator, the largest Armenian Church in the world was consecrated.
- In January of 2001 Armenia became a member of the Council of Europe and in 2003– member of the World Trade Organization.
- In the year 2001 the Lincy Foundation, under the leadership of the billionaire philanthropist Kirk Krikorian began a number of major development projects in Armenia. Within ten years the Foundation built and renovated cultural, historical, social and road building projects worth some 500 million US Dollars.
- During the second stage of the 2003 presidential elections Robert Kocharyan became president and in the same year for the first time no political party obtained absolute majority in the Parliament. A political coalition was formed and a joint government was formed. The same was repeated during the election of 2007.
- During the first decade of the 21-st century the financial situation of Armenia had a positive growth. Between 2001 and 2008 the exports grew by a factor of seven

* Chronology compiled by G. Hovhannisyanyan



Fig. 17: A church wedding in Yerevan.

but during the 2008, as a result of the recession in the west Armenia registered 18% shrinkage

- In June 2004 the European Union included Armenia in its program of “European-Neighbourhood Policy’s” eastern initiative, which was intended to have its logical conclusion by the year 2013, culminating with the signature of an association agreement with the EU.
- In March 2007 the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline was inaugurated, which was built as an alternative to the gas imported from the Russian Federation.
- The basics of the Madrid Initiative for the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, which included three major international norms – the right of self determination of the people, territorial integrity and exclusion of military force, was introduced in 2007. Since 2009 the revised versions of this initiative have been in circulation. As a result of the July meeting of the Group of Eight superpowers the three joint presidents of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE - est. 1992), USA, Russian Federation and France, announced their joint proposal regarding the Karabakh issue, which became a recurring event.
- The fifth presidential elections took place in the February of 2008, resulting the election of Serzh Sargsyan.
- In 2008 Armenia began its “football diplomacy” with Turkey, as a result of which the President of Turkey visited Armenia for the first time. In October of 2010 a protocol was signed in Zurich between Armenia and Turkey which was intended to normalize the relations between the two countries and open the joint border, which was not ratified because of Turkey’s proposed preconditions.
- During the parliamentary elections of 2012 once again a single party obtained absolute majority and formed the government. The February 2013 presidential elections saw the re-election of the incumbent Serzh Sargsyan.
- The first decade of the present century saw the Armenian cultural heritage established its place among the cultured nations of the world. UNESCO adopted resolutions according to which the Armenian musical instrument, the Duduk, as well as the Armenian Cross-Stones (Khachkars) and the national epic poem “David of Sasun” were considered as inseparable parts of the human cultural heritage and UNESCO announced Yerevan to be the 2012 Book Capital of the world.
- As a result of archaeological digs in the region of Areni cave complex a 5900 year-old skirt, a 5000 year old footwear and the world’s oldest winery were discovered.
- In 2018 an opposition MP, Nikol Pashinyan organized a protest walk of over 200 km across Armenia, demanding the resignation of the President Sargsyan, who, in spite of his promise to withdraw from political life, had altered the constitution in order to rule Armenia as Prime Minister, long after the expiry of his two presidential terms.
- In April President Sarkissian gave in and resigned, making Mr. Pashinyan the Prime-Minister and the supreme authority according to the newly revised consti-

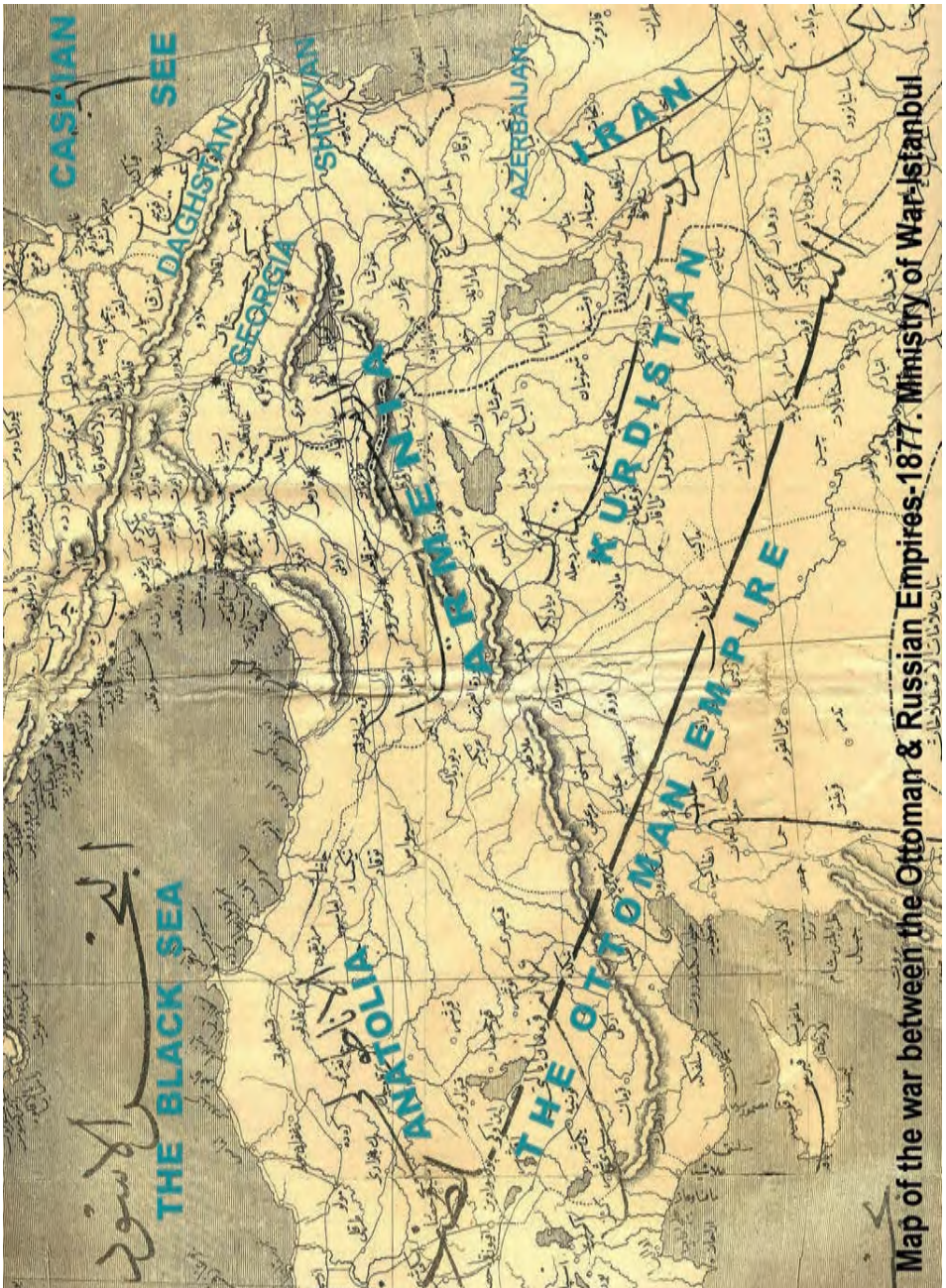


Fig. 18: The map shows territories recognized by the Ottoman Empire as Armenia, Kurdistan, (Iranian province of) Azerbaijan, Daghestan and Shirvan north of the river Arax, where today the Republic of Azerbaijan is located.

tution. In December, during the extra-ordinary elections Mr. Pashinyan's party was elected by a huge majority.

- Within the next two years Prime Minister Pashinyan tried to eliminate corruption and illegal actions of the previous authorities, succeeding in part, but facing the old judicial system, which was still in power. He began road-building and water-supply projects in villages, but were still hindered due to the incompetence of old staff and the legally created obstacles.
- On September 27, 2020 Azerbaijani forces, assisted and led by the Turkish military and NATO aircraft, augmented by a few thousand Arab mercenaries brought in by Turkey, began a massive attack on Armenia which neither Russia or the West could stop. After 44 days the Azeri-Turkish forces occupied some of their lost territories and finally Russia strongly urged Armenia to stop the war and surrender the remaining territories gained during 1994.
- The opposition blamed Prime Minister Pashinyan for the losses and demanded his immediate resignation. After a few months of demonstrations for and against him, snap elections took place on 20 June, 2021, with Mr. Pashinyan's party winning almost 54%, and his old adversary, Mr. Kocharyan gaining under 21% of the votes.
- International organizations monitoring the election confirmed them to be democratic and fair. The opposition declared that they would try to disrupt the workings of the democratically elected parliament in any possible way. Later (in 2024) many opposition rallies were organised and even the Armenian Church was dragged into the fracas, but the notion of democracy prevailed and the demands of the opposition, the resignation of the democratically elected government of independent Armenia and return to the previous corrupt leaders, was not supported by the people.
- The Ceasefire Agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan was signed on November 9-10, 2020. According to it Azerbaijan would release the Armenian POWs, open the Lachin corridor, under the protection of the Russians, and within three years would plan to prepare an alternative access road from Artsakh to Armenia controlled by the Russian peacekeepers, who would also be responsible for the safety and security of the population of Artsakh. Azerbaijani army would also return to their original borders, according to which both countries declared their independence in Alma-Ata in 1991, and Armenia would allow Azerbaijan to access Nakhichevan through Syunik, passing through Armenian roads.
- About six months after the signature of the above Agreement, in May 2021 Azerbaijani forces began invading Armenian strategic heights and resources encountering no defensive action from Armenian army, who had orders not to shoot and cause a new conflict, which Armenia could hardly afford. Thus, within the next years Azerbaijan occupied over 240 sq.km. of strategic heights and regions from the lands of the Republic of Armenia.
- Armenia is a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an inter-governmental military alliance including Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan, formed in 2002. However, when Azerbaijani forces attacked

the Armenian defence lines and occupied Armenian territory, CSTO forces did nothing to assist in any way, as they were obliged to do according to their charter. The reason cited was that the borders were not delineated, conveniently forgetting that Alm-Ata protocol had made them clear.

- In spite of the three years foreseen for the planning of the alternative road to Lachin, after only about 18 months Azerbaijan hurriedly and unilaterally built a new road as alternative to Lachin corridor in 2022, and forced Artsakh and Armenia to accept it. In December 2022 the new border with Armenia located on this road was closed by Azerbaijan, disrupting the lifeline of Artsakh from Armenia. Azerbaijan also cut gas and electricity supply lines to Artsakh and for the next nine months gradually starved the 120,000 Armenians living in Artsakh, disregarding the directives of the International Court of Justice, to stop this siege and open the road: issued in February 2022.
- Disregarding the presence of the Russian peacekeeping forces, in September of 2023 Azerbaijani army attacked the Armenian towns and villages and within three days the 120,000 Artsakh Armenians were forced to flee to Armenia. Their “protectors”, the Russian peacekeepers, only stood observing the events, not even issuing any protests, thus showing their duplicity and betrayal of the Armenians and their own undertakings.
- Negotiations for a Peace Treaty was discussed with Azerbaijan on various international platforms and meetings, but after each step forward Azerbaijan raised a new problem, accusing Armenia of disrupting the negotiations. Initially President Aliyev had announced the borders mentioned in 1991 Alma-Ata protocol not being acceptable to him, but in early January 2024 Azerbaijan agreed to these terms and a partial delimitation and demarcation began in the northern Armenian region of Tavush.
- By August, this process was partially completed and the remaining sectors were to be delimited and demarcated later. If successful, this would have been the first borders delineation-demarcation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, provided it would not be hindered by unforeseen demands, outside interventions and causes.
- During the summer of 2024 the border discussions were halted, affected by the upcoming elections in the USA and the international conference to be held in Baku. After the results of the USA elections were announced, Azerbaijan further delayed all actions until the new president would be sworn into office, hoping to benefit from the decisions to be made by the new administration, under President Trump.
- Meanwhile the bilateral meetings regarding the borders were further delayed while Azerbaijan kept introducing various additional demands before the text of the Peace Agreement could be finalised.
- On March 13, 2025 Azerbaijan announced that the agreement for the Peace Treaty was agreed and completed. This was followed by Armenia, announcing the same.
- During the next days scores of countries, including the USA, EU member countries and many others congratulated the two parties for reaching the final stage.

- Armenian also announced that they are waiting for Azerbaijan to agree the time and place of the meeting for the signing of the Treaty.
- The next day President of Azerbaijan added two more conditions to the already agreed text, in spite of the fact that they had already announced that the agreement on the final text of the Peace Treaty had been reached. Thus leading Armenia to believe that Azerbaijan has no intention of signing the Peace Treaty and thus terminate the hostilities.
- Thus the stalemate is continuing in May 2025, while awaiting Azerbaijan's decision.

Route Problems Facing Armenia Today

Externally, apart from the Karabakh issue the major Armenian topic has been the campaign to gain worldwide acknowledgement that the organized mass killings of Ottoman Armenians of 1915 constituted a Genocide. Impartial contemporary evidence from German ambassadors and consuls, and other officials, such as US Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and US Consul Leslie A Davis, confirms the totality of the death-scheme of the Ottoman authorities against Armenians in Turkey. A considerable body of internal evidence from Ottoman sources also demonstrates that view. Armenians suffered as a result of the premeditated, planned and intentional genocide, not just regrettable massacres. Yet world opinion has been reluctant to accept that fact, apparently driven by the vested interest of not offending Turkey (even though the present Turkish state was not itself responsible for the events). The re-writing of history by government is one of the more ludicrous aspects of this exercise. Over the last two decades there have been Armenian successes, from individual states and from the European Parliament. And one may cautiously hope that an understanding of the true nature of the events of 1915 in the lands which now make up Turkiye, will gain more acceptance, although the capacity of human beings to accept folly as truth, and dissemblance as veracity, is surprisingly high.

Going back in history, the loss of Armenian territories began in Soviet times, from 1921-1923 onwards. In 1920 and 1921 the Azerbaijani Communist government announced its agreement for handing over Artsakh (Karabakh, plus Eastern Syunik and surrounding regions) and Nakhijevan to Armenia, which was publicized in the newspapers of Baku (22 June, 1921) and Yerevan (21 June, 1921). When Stalin visited the region on 4th of July 1921, he confirmed this decision, but after an overnight meeting with the ruler of Azerbaijan, he changed his mind. Thus, the Caucasian Bureau of the Communist party, in presence of Stalin, reversed the previous decision and handed over the regions of Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh and the surrounding regions) to the Republic of Azerbaijan. Soon enough the borders between Armenia and Artsakh were manipulated such that Armenia could have no direct link with Artsakh.

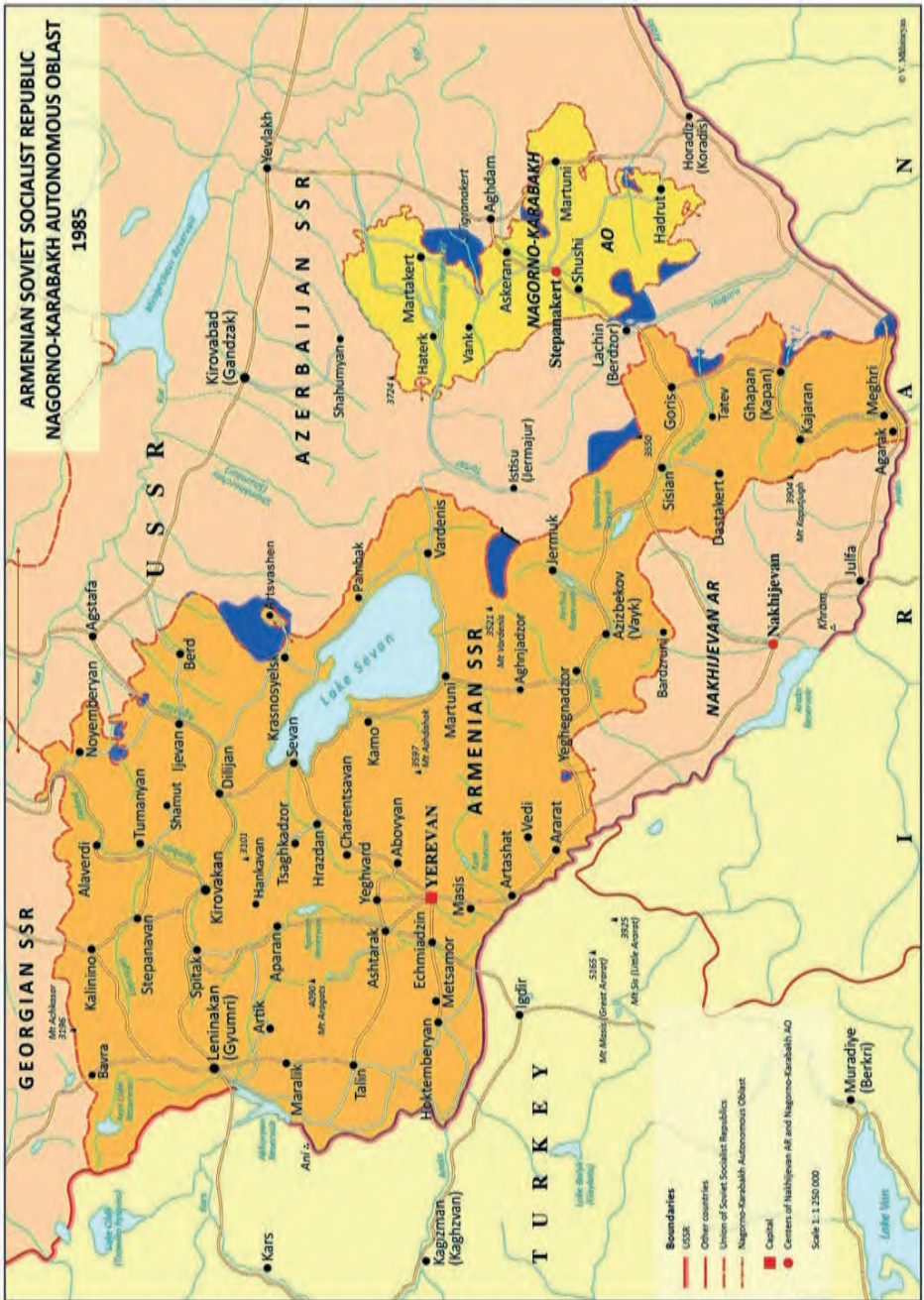


Fig.20 – Even after sovietisation of the two neighbours, Azerbaijan kept appropriating Armenian, as well as Karabakh pastures, forests and fields with the tacit approval of the Trans-Caucasian Federation. These territories are marked blue on the above map.

Addendum

ARTS IN ARMENIA

In this section some of the important aspects of the arts and their development in Armenia are presented in a very brief manner, augmented by some photos which represent various stages of their development. These are by no means the only fields of Armenian arts, but only a few, which could provide some basic information for the uninitiated

Armenian music

Early and medieval Armenian music has reached us through the oral tradition, as well as the old Armenian music notations, neumes, which are still not fully deciphered. Today the ancient Armenian music could be heard in the Armenian Liturgy as well as other sacred hymns, chants and melismatic “sharakans”. Most of this music has its source in medieval and even pre-Christian Armenia.

During the Middle Ages Armenian bards and minstrels (gusans) played an important role in keeping the musical tradition and later, during the nineteenth century their songs were recorded on paper. During this period, Armenians were active in the musical life of Istanbul, where most musical productions were undertaken by Armenian troupes, choruses and orchestras, while in Tbilisi the same activities could be seen among the East Armenians.

The father of Armenian music is Komitas Vartabed, who over a period of the last decades of the late 19th century and early 20th century collected and annotated thousands of Armenian as well as Caucasian Turkish, Kurdish and Georgian folk and traditional songs. During his studies in Europe he introduced Armenian music in Germany and France to great acclaim and amazement of audiences.

During the Soviet rule Armenian music began its renaissance, albeit some of it under the influence of the Russian style, but soon there were Armenian composers, such as Armen Tigranian, Alexander Spendiarian and later Aram Khachaturian, Eduard Mirzoyan, Arno Babadjanian and Tigran Manusrian and many others, who put Armenian music on proper footing on the world stage. This year Yerevan Conservatory is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Today music plays an important part in the life of all Armenians, and the country has one of the highest musicians per capita, many of whom could be seen on the world musical stages. Many young Armenian classical musicians such as the Chilingirian Quartet (UK), Khachaturian Trio (Armenia), cellists Nareg Haghazarian, Michael Haghazarian and Alexander Chaushian, viola player Kim Kashkashian, violinists Sergey Khachatryan and Hrachya Avanesyan, and pianists Svetlana Navasardyan, Vahan Martirosian, Nareh Arghamanyan, Hayk Melikyan, singers Isabel Bayrakdarian, Hrachuhi Basenz, Hasmik Grigorian, as well as many others perform on the stages all over the world.

Pop and Jazz music is also well liked and performed in Armenia. The most famous Armenian singer in the west is Charles Aznavour and bands such as Armenian Navy Band (Arto Tunkboyajian) and System of a Down (Serge Tankian), Tigran Hamasyan (jazz piano) and others are well known in the west.

Theater and Literature in Armenia

Theater, in the form of the Greek tragedies, was performed in the Armenian court from before the Christian era.

The early Christian period gave rise to the Armenian alphabet (406 CE), following which the Bible and much of the Greco-Roman classical literature were translated to Armenian. Golden Age of the Armenian literature was to follow, when most of the available literature, including Arabic texts was translated. Notwithstanding the fact that the Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols and Tamerlane invading Armenia burned all the Armenian manuscripts that they came across, over 30,000 Armenian manuscripts, some of them beautifully illuminated, have survived in Armenia (Matenadaran and Echmiadzin depositories), as well as in libraries of Isfahan, Jerusalem, St Lazzaro (Venice), Berlin, Paris, London the USA and elsewhere.

The first printed book in Armenian appeared in 1512, 500th anniversary of which was celebrated in 2012. Armenian epic poems and mythological literature were orally transmitted and gradually written down, leading to the establishment of literature in the vernacular Armenian, which, until then used the classical language for almost all written text. Today many Armenian writers are well known in the western literary circles, as well as in their own communities.

During the 19th century the Armenian theatrical groups were active on Istanbul which became the foundation of the theatre in Turkey. Most classical European literature was translated and many of the western plays were staged in various Armenian communities. The reputation of the Armenian theatre rose during the Soviet period leading to the invitation of an Armenian troop to be one of the 37 countries to present one of Shakespeare's 37 plays (King John) in the Globe theatre, London, in 2012.



Fig. 21: Illuminated manuscript, 11th century



Fig. 22: Illuminated manuscript, Toros Roslin, 14th century

Armenian painting

Prehistoric Armenian art has roots dating back some 10,000 years. These are mainly cave paintings and petroglyphs, which are abundant in the present-day Armenia, covering barely ten percent of its historic territory.

Establishment of the feudal system and the acceptance of Christianity as the state religion gave Armenian art a new direction and style. The main client became the church and the artists had to accommodate the demands and needs of the spiritual fathers.

Religious miniature paintings constitute the largest portion of the medieval Armenian art, whose earliest examples date from the ninth and tenth centuries. The pinnacle of the miniature paintings was reached by the creations of masters Toros Roslin and Sarkis Pitzak, who worked during the 13th-14th centuries.

In parallel with the miniature paintings new forms of the art were introduced, including primitive paintings with social themes, landscapes and portraits.

During the 17th to 18th centuries a new genre of paintings and specially portraiture was introduced by the artistic family of the Hovnatanians. The foundations of Hakob Hovnatanian's (1801-1886) art could be found in the medieval religious and popular paintings. He was instrumental in the classical development of the national art, becoming the last of the old school and the leader of the new school of the Armenian art.

The most important figure in the latter stage of the Armenian paintings is the seascape painter Hovhannes Aivazovsky (1817-1900), born in the Armenian community of Theodosia, Crimea, whose seascapes are unsurpassed by any standard.

During the period of 1870-1920 the most prominent Armenian artists working in various Armenian diasporas of Constantinople, Paris, Tbilisi and elsewhere were Gevork Bashinjaghian, Yeghishe Tadevosian, Panos Terlemezian, Vartan Makhokhian, Charles Adamian and Vartges Sureniants. During the early Soviet period the most influential local artist was Martiros Sarian, whose art with its colours is uniquely Armenian. Other important Soviet era artists were Bajbeuk-Melikian, Giotto, I. Kalarian, who acted as the link between the old and the new styles. Yervand Kochar was influential in the painting and creation of special sculptural heritage. Minas Avetissian (1928-1975) was one of the most important painters of the twentieth century Armenia, whose vivid colours are a trademark. His murals are of utmost importance, one of which adorns the entrance hall of Yerevan's Zvartonts airport.

During the 1960s a new breed of immigrant Armenian artists such as H. Hakobian, A. Galents and B. Vartanian brought a special revival and injected a sheen into the local art. Masters of painting such as Archile Gorky, Levon Tutunjain, Marcos Grigorian, Edgar Chahin, Jeansem and others living in various western countries and having passed through various stages of development of the 20th century art are also part and parcel of the Armenian art.



Fig. 23: Hovnatanian, Lady's portrait - 1840



Fig. 24: Archil Gorky. Waters of the Flowery Mill - 1944



Fig. 25: Hovhanes Aivazovsky. Napoleon in St Helena - 1897



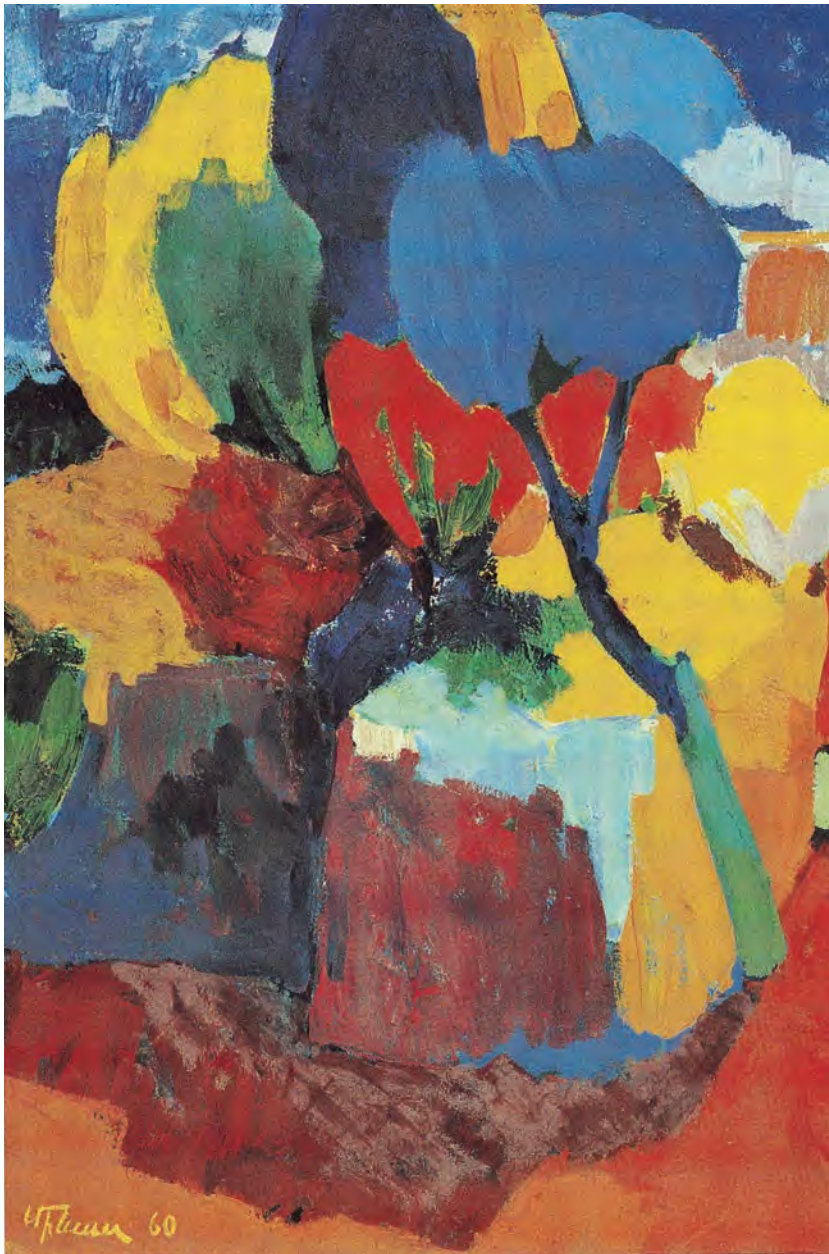


Fig. 26: Minas Avedissian. Jajur - 1960

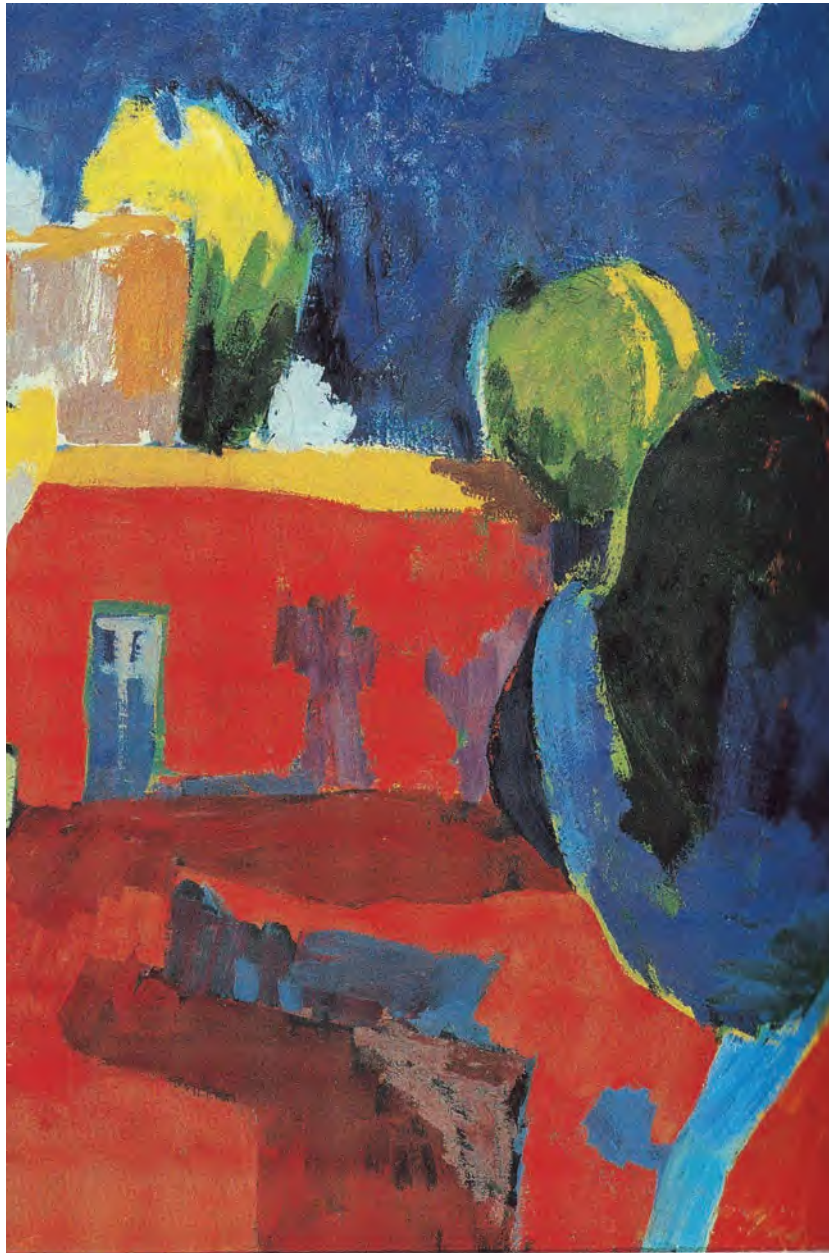




Fig. 27: Martiros Sarian. Wild flowers - 1951

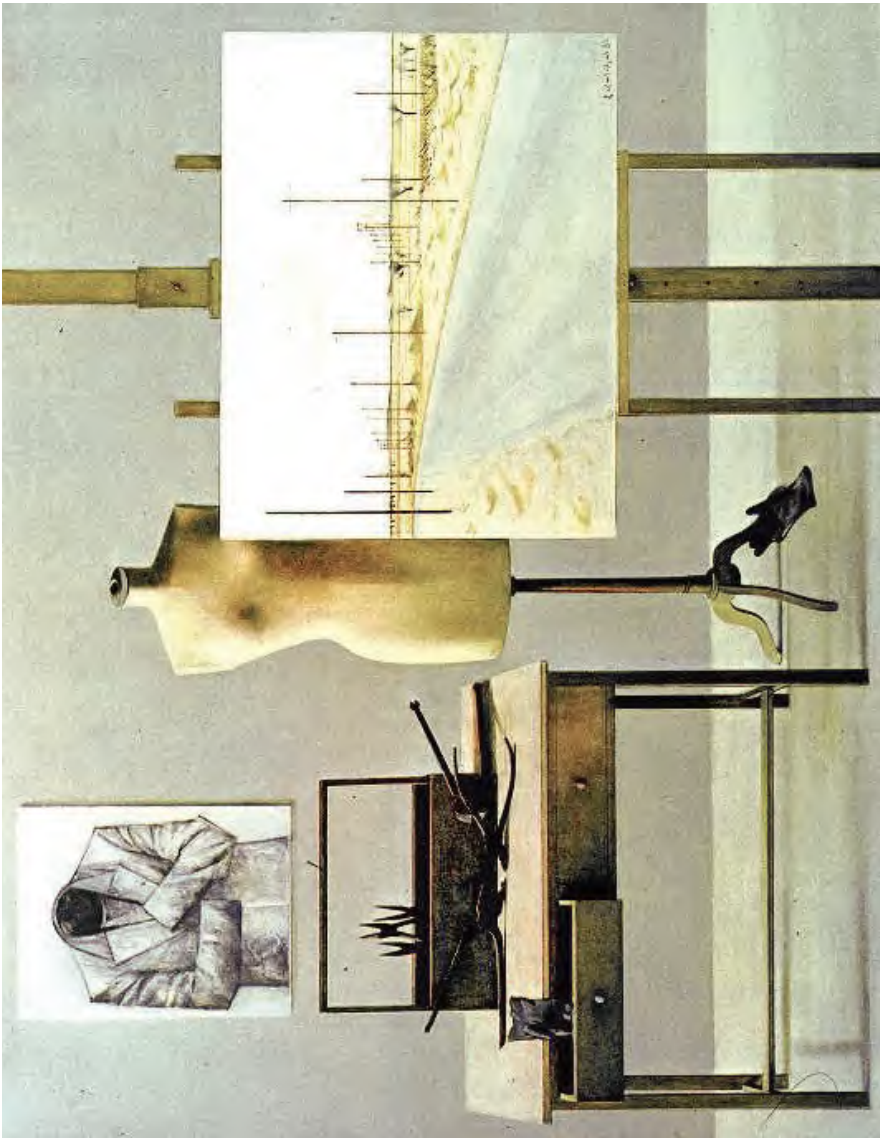


Fig. 28: Hakob Hakobian. Artist's studio - 1980

Armenian Carpets

Armenian carpets are mentioned in the medieval Arab sources. According to the 13th century Arab historian Yakut al-Hamawi carpets from Qalikla (Karin, today's Erzroum) were the best, and the name of the town was derived from the Persian word "khali" – carpet and kale - fortress.

Some intricately designed Armenian carpets of the 17-18th century have survived, but western sources prefer to call them with the general term of "Caucasian". Most famous types of the Armenian carpets are the Dragon carpets, followed by carpets designed and woven in Van, Lori, Pambak, Borjalu, Lambalu, Khndzoresk, Shushi, Karabakh (Artsakh) and other Armenian populated towns and villages. Many of the carpets woven in these localities have Armenian inscriptions or dedications. Carpets appeared in Europe and later the USA due to the activities of the Armenian merchants, who dominated all the above markets until well into the middle of the 20th century.

During the Soviet period carpet weaving suffered neglect and gradually more and more carpets were machine made. After independence, thanks mainly to the efforts of the Diaspora Armenians, who invested in the country, the weaving craft has slowly been revived and today excellent examples of hand-made carpets of the traditional designs could be found.

Armenian Architecture

For over four millennia the people of the Armenian Highlands developed their architectural style. During the Urartian period of Armenian history (9th through 6th centuries BCE), the Urartians were noted for their high standards in city building (Ainili, Tushpa, Argishti, Erebuni), including palatial complexes with thick stone walls and rich decorations. Urban architectural traditions, as well as other forms of art in prechristian Armenia, were developed further under the influence of ancient Hellenistic and Roman art. The only surviving Greco-Roman temple in Armenia is the temple of Garni not far from Yerevan, with its Roman baths and peripheral buildings.

After the adoption of Christianity as the official State religion in 301 CE Armenian architecture entered a new phase of development. City building and other forms of architecture entered long-lasting developmental phase, while persevering older traditions. During the period many new churches were built on the sites where previously pagan temples stood.



Fig. 29: Armenian Dragon carpet, 17th century



*Fig. 30: Starburst,
Jeraberd Armenian carpet, 19th century*

In the early Christian period of Armenia (5th through 7th centuries), church architecture proceeded with the creation of basilica styled churches, which were later adorned with a dome. During the 9th through 14th centuries Armenian architecture proceeded on its developmental path and created new masterpieces such as the monasteries of Amberd, Tatev, Aghtamar, Marmashen, Sanahin, Haghpats, Haghartsin, Goshavank, Magaravank, Ohanavank, Harichavank and Noravank. Most of these had cross-shaped plans and ornate stone structures. Many of these churches were also adorned with murals and colourful decorations, which have not withstood the passage of time and plunderers by the enemies.

One of the Armenian architectural masterpieces is the Church of the Holy Cross on the island of Aghtamar, Lake Van (today in Turkey), whose image and details of the carvings of the biblical scenes appear on the earlier part of this volume (see Figures 7 and 8).

The tenth century city of Ani located just south of the Arax river and was known as the city of 1001 churches, because of its numerous churches, a few of which stand derelict today.

The cathedral of Holy Echmiadzin was built on the site of a temple and dates back to the fourth century, with many later additions and repairs. Today it acts as the See of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Following the conversion to Christianity, the wooden cross-symbol of the new faith was erected in the various shrines in Armenia. The earliest attempts to replace the wooden cross with a stone cross date back to the period between 4th and 7th centuries. These were later developed into the stone crosses, “khachkars” in Armenian, which were erected for a variety of purposes. The tradition still continues with new khachkars being sculpted and installed in cemeteries and memorials.

The Polish-Austrian art historian Josef Strzygowsky in his two-volume *Die Baukunst der Armenier und Europa* (1918) (The architecture of the Armenians and Europe) claims to have traced the origins of Gothic architecture to Armenian architecture.





Fig. 31: Noravank monastery, 13th century



Fig. 32: Map of the present-day Republic of Armenia

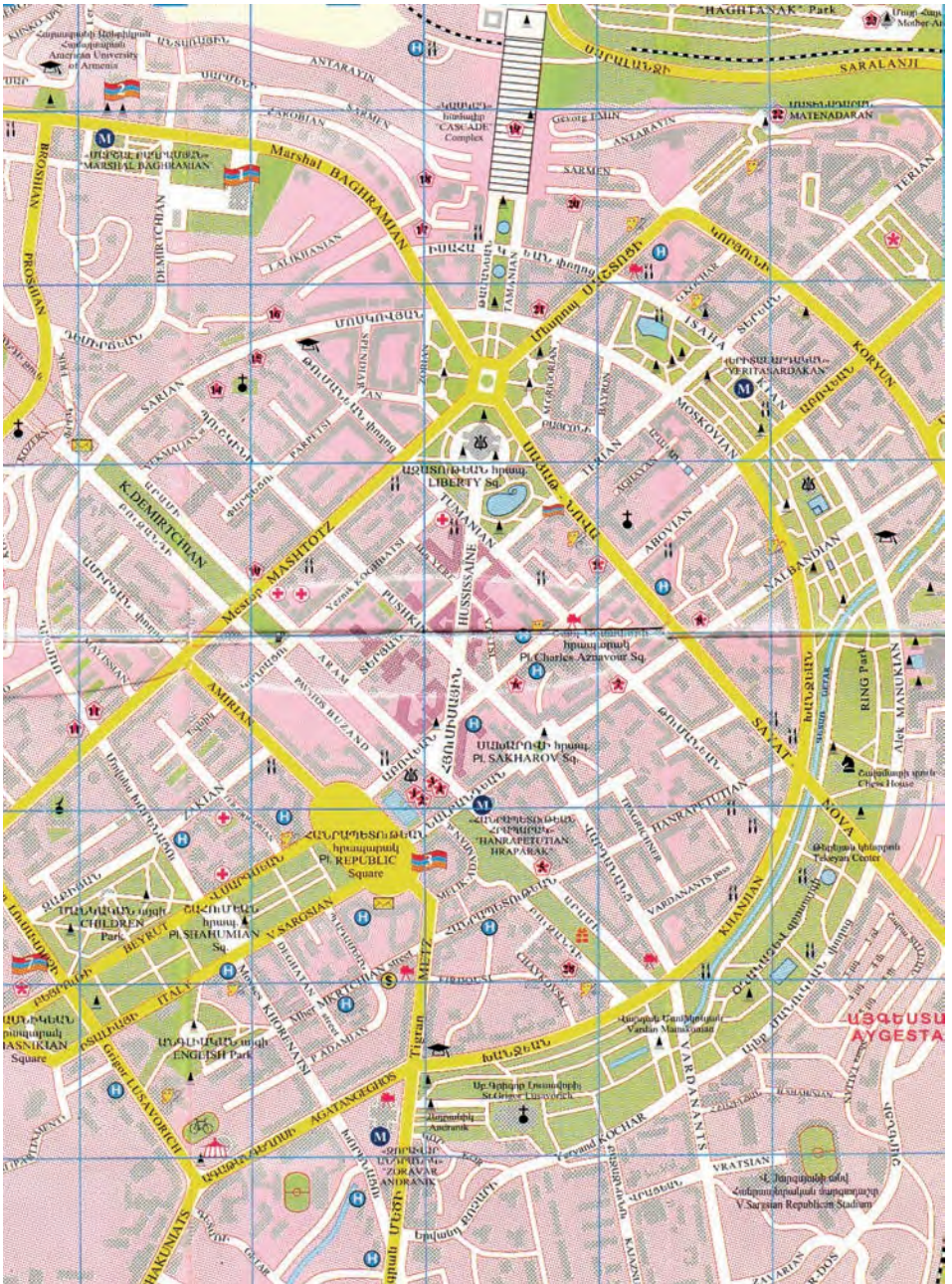


Fig. 33: Plan of central Yerevan



*Tsitsernakaberd, Genocide Memorial in Yerevan
Commemorating the victims of the 1915-1923 Armenian Genocide in Turkey.*

