

# HYE SHARZHOOM Armenian Action ՀԱՅ ՇԱՐԺԽՈՄ



42<sup>nd</sup> Year

March 2021

Vol. 42, No. 3 (153)

Ethnic Supplement to The Collegian

## Interim President Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval Has Valley Roots



**Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval**  
**DUSTIN VARTANIAN**  
STAFF WRITER

“It is not just a job. These are my people. These are my family. These are my neighbors. These are my friends. These are the valley residents that come to Fresno State and whom I appreciate deeply.” These are the words of San Joaquin Valley native Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, on becoming Fresno State’s new Interim President.

Dr. Saul Jimenez-Sandoval was officially named as Fresno State’s

Interim President on January 4, 2021. Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval accepted this role after serving as the University’s Provost for the past year and a half. The position of Interim President opened with the departure of former President Dr. Joseph Castro, who was appointed as the eighth Chancellor of the California State University.

For almost twenty-one years Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval has been a part of the faculty at Fresno State. He started his career as a Professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, then served as the Department Chair, and continued on to become the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities in 2016. Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval spent four years as Dean and then became Fresno State’s Provost in July 2019. He was named Interim President a year and a half later.

This rapid transition and promotions within a university is

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## Kooyumjian Foundation Donates \$50,000 for ASP Scholarships

STAFF REPORT

The Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation has made a donation of \$50,000 in January of 2021 to the Kooyumjian Endowed Scholarship Fund at Fresno State. Together with previous donations

from the Family Foundation, the Endowed Scholarship has reached close to \$400,000. The Fund will provide scholarships to students within the Armenian Studies Program, in the College of Arts

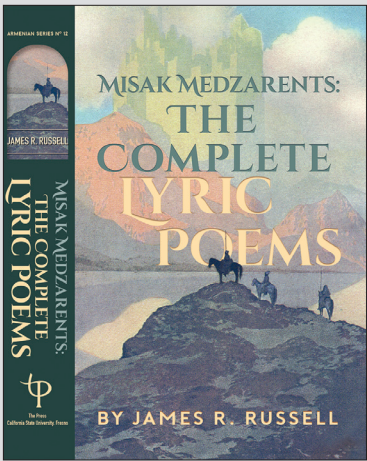
SEE [KOORYUMJIAN](#), PAGE 5

## Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems Published as Volume 12 in Armenian Series

STAFF REPORT

Armenian Studies Program Director Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian announced the publication of Dr. James R. Russell’s *Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems*, Volume 12 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno.

Misak Medzarents, 1886-1908, was the second great lyric poet of the Western Armenian language after Bedros Tourian. During his tragically short life he published several slim volumes of verse. The poems, written in a complex and allusive language that deploys ancient Armenian, local dialect, and the vocabulary of Symbolism combine vivid evocations of the traditional rural life of his home village, fabulous nocturnal reveries, cries of loneliness, and celebrations of nature and life. He was a poet native to the



realms of joy; though in his final verses, published posthumously, there are hints of a transition to a realistic, urban style and political, revolutionary themes. This is the first complete translation of his works, together with the Armenian text, into any language.

“*Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems* is a significant work in Armenian literature,” said Prof. Der

## Intermediate Armenian Course Opens Doors to New Worlds from the Comfort of Home

**CHRISTINE PAMBUKYAN**  
STAFF WRITER



Top row, left to right, Dustin Vartanian, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Christine Pambukyan. Second row, left to right: Ariana Garabedian, Kara Statler, Olivia Soghomonian. Third row, left to right: Caleb Arizmendez, Matthew Mugrdechian, Angela Soghomonian. Fourth row, left to right, Sosse Balorian, Andrew Hagopian, Milena Karapetyan.

“Learning Armenian can open up a whole new world for students. I enjoy the process of interacting with students in teaching and in sharing their success as they learn the language,” said Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State.

Every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30PM to 4:45PM, students in the Armenian 2A Intermediate Armenian course meet to develop their Armenian speaking, reading, and writing skills during the Spring 2021 semester.

Due to Professor Der Mugrdechian’s inclusive and practical approach, many find the

SEE [ARMENIAN CLASS](#) PAGE 6

## Armenian-American Sketches Awarded Aronian Book Prize for Excellence in Armenian Studies

SPECIAL TO HYE SHARZHOOM  
NAASR

The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) is pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 Dr. Sona Aronian Book Prizes for Excellence in Armenian Studies: Prof. Houri Berberian for the monograph *Roving*

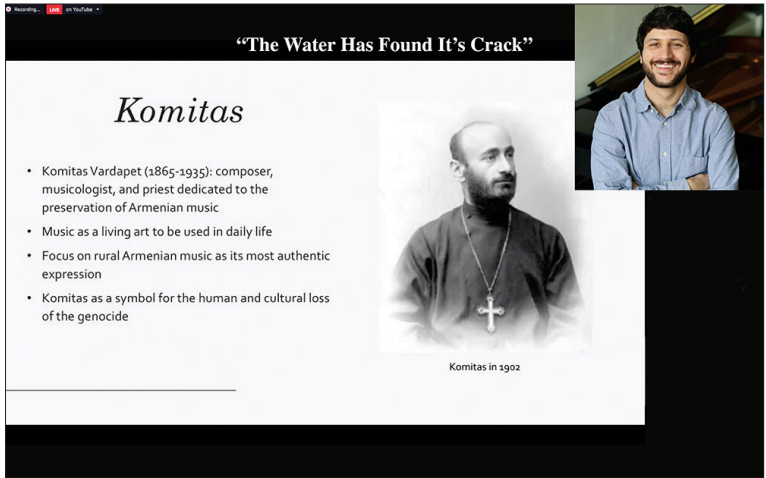
*Revolutionaries: Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (University of California Press) and Dr. Lou Ann Matossian, Dr. Vartan Matiossian, and the late Aris Sevag for the translation of Bedros Keljik’s *Armenian-American Sketches* (The Armenian Studies Series of the Press at California State University, Fresno). The 2020



The late Aris Sevag, the main translator of the book.

SEE [ARONIAN PRIZE](#) PAGE 5

## Fresno State Alum Dr. Bohigian Explores Identity Through Music



Dr. Joseph Bohigian discussed his recent doctoral composition, “The Water Has Found Its Crack.”

Photo: ASP Archive

**SOSSE BALOIAN**  
STAFF WRITER

In a 2005 article written by *Agos* newspaper editor Hrant Dink, a French-Armenian woman passed away while visiting her

childhood village in Turkey. When the question arose of where her burial ought to take place, a villager responded, “Let her be buried here... the water has found its crack.” This story embodies

SEE [BOHIGIAN](#) PAGE 7





**Interim President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval and family: from left, Leo, Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval, Dr. Mariana Anagnostopoulos, and Arion.**

*Photo: Campus News*

**INTERIM PRESIDENT,  
FROM PAGE 1**

unique for a University President. “Though it might seem like a fast transitional period, I have very deep roots with Fresno State and in the Valley as well. I intentionally stayed at Fresno State because I see this as a life mission more than a job. I see this as an opportunity to give back to the community that really empowered me with strength to become the person that I am today,” said Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval.

Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval grew up in Fowler, California and developed close ties with the local Armenian community. “I appreciated my Armenian friends growing up in Fowler. My parents and I lived in a home about five blocks away from Fowler High School. Every day I would walk to High School and I would pass by the Armenian Church [St. Gregory the Illuminator Apostolic Church] that is right next to the school. So once you get to know the history, once you get to know the background, once you get to know who your neighbors are, you begin to build bridges of understanding and bridges of collaboration,” stated Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval.

Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval, developed additional ties with the Armenian community while he was a professor and later Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval has a deep appreciation for the multitude of cultures in the Fresno area as it is the “Ninth-most diverse city in the United States.”

The Armenian Studies Program is another factor that enriches our community. “Armenian Studies represents a way to celebrate our various cultures in the Valley. Right now, the majority of students that are taking Armenian Studies are not Armenian, and what is the value of that? There is huge value in that. The value is that in exposing non-Armenians

to Armenian Studies you see this enrichment of the Valley life. You see appreciation of this important part of our community as well, and then at the same time you also forge strong connections with each other,” added Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval.

In addition, Interim President Sandoval-Jiménez has strengthened ties with the Armenian culture by visiting Armenia in 2019. “It was a trip of discovery really,” Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval stated. “I learned a lot. I remember being at the Armenian Genocide Memorial in Yerevan and just seeing and feeling the history and the pain and suffering, and at the same time the resilience and the hope of the people.”

The Interim President’s goals for Fresno State in the near future include re-populating the campus, increasing four-year graduation rates, building Fresno State-local industry partnerships, and to elevate Fresno State’s University brand and to showcase how proud we are of our premiere University. Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval’s advice for students at Fresno State this year is to “try to see the forest” because “the pandemic has forced us to look at the tree right in front of you” and it will eventually be over. “Students need to know how to bounce back and to seek out help from the many services available for students,” affirmed Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval. “No one should feel that they are alone.”

Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval is looking forward to eventually having students back on campus. “This pandemic has really prevented us from getting together and from celebrating who we are as a community,” said Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval. “A university is more than knowledge, more than a diploma, it is an experience.”

Despite the difficult situations a President may face, especially during these times, when the opportunity for Interim President opened, Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval was “all-in.”

**California State University, Fresno  
Armenian Studies Program  
Fall 2021 Schedule of Courses**

<u>Course</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
<b>General Education-Breadth, Humanities, Area C2</b>				
• Arm 1A-Elementary Armenian (Class #72435)	4	10:00A-11:50A	MW	B. Der Mugrdechian
<b>General Education-Breadth, Arts, Area C1</b>				
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia (Class #72968)	3	9:30A-10:45A	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
<b>General Education-Breadth, Area D3</b>				
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies (Class #73272)	3	9:00A-09:50A	MWF	H. Ohanessian
<b>General Education-Integration, Area IC</b>				
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Cult (Class #73978)	3	10:00A-10:50A	MWF	H. Ohanessian
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Cult (Class #73350)	3	2:00P-3:15P	MW	H. Ohanessian
<b>Upper Division Armenian Studies Course</b>				
• ArmS 108A-Arm History I (Class #73761)	3	11:00A-12:15P	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
<b>Upper Division Armenian Studies Course</b>				
• ArmS 120T-Intro Gen Studies (Class #76637)	3	2:00P-3:15P	TuTh	Kazan Visiting Prof.

**Get a Minor in Armenian Studies**

**For more information call the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669.**

**Check on requirements for the Minor in Armenian Studies in the current catalog.**

**HYE SHARZHOOM**  
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*Hye Sharzhoom* is an ethnic supplement of *The Collegian* and is the newspaper of the Fresno State Armenian Students Organization and the Armenian Studies Program and is funded by the Associated Students. Articles may be reprinted provided *Hye Sharzhoom* is acknowledged. *Hye Sharzhoom* welcomes prose, poetry, articles and other material from its student readers. For further information concerning the newspaper or the Armenian Studies Program contact us at:

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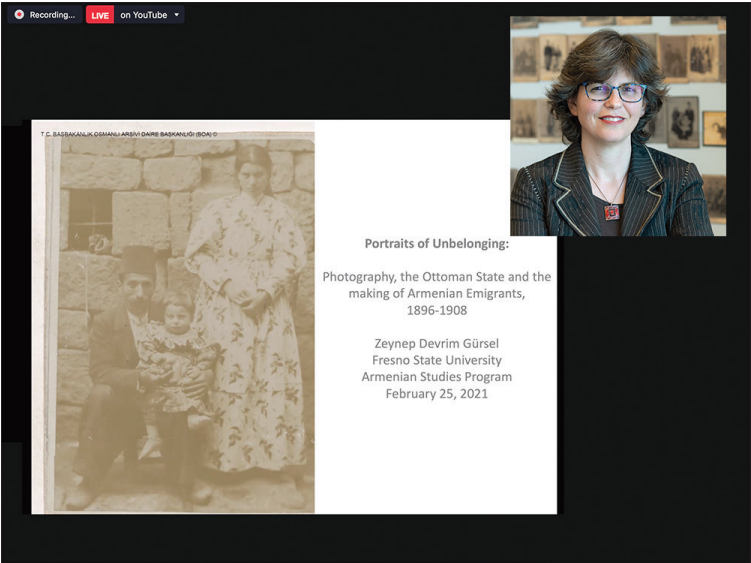
**Visit the Armenian Studies Program**

**Online Library and Photo Archive**

The site can be accessed at  
**<http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/armenianstudies/library/index.html>**



Dr. Gürsel Discusses Research on Ottoman Armenian Emigrants Through “Portraits of Unbelonging”



Dr. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel presented her research on Armenian emigrants in the late Ottoman Empire. Photo: ASP Archive

CARINA TOKATIAN  
STAFF WRITER

The French philosopher Roland Barthes once wrote, “When we define the photograph as motionless images, this does not mean only that the figures it represents do not move; it means that they do not emerge, do not leave: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies.” Ironically, as Dr. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel highlights, the Ottoman Empire’s use of photographs as an instrument of enforcing the permanent emigration of many Armenians presents a paradox to Barthes’ statement; migration is rendered in the stills.

On the evening of Thursday, February 25, the Armenian Studies Program sponsored a virtual lecture presented on Zoom and YouTube by media anthropologist Dr. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel. The topic of her lecture was “Portraits of Unbelonging: Photography, the Ottoman State and Armenians Leaving for America 1896-1908.” Dr. Gürsel is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Rutgers University. She has previously authored *Image Brokers: Visualizing World News in the Age of Digital Circulation* and directed the 2009 documentary *Coffee Futures*.

It was after a frustrating research day that Dr. Gürsel initially took interest in photographs of Armenian families who emigrated from the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. After seeing a couple of these portraits, she recalled, “I just was mesmerized by the photographs, and I couldn’t stop thinking about them.” She wondered who the photos belonged to or who might appreciate them. “I felt compelled to bring them into the present day and take them out of the state archives in Istanbul and into Armenian communities” she stated. Knowing little about Armenian history at the time, she credited Alice Kaloustian, the mother of a dear friend, for helping her initiate the project. “Alice was extremely supportive and within hours she had made key introductions to several people,” she recalled. She added

that “her living room has become my home base in California, and she remains a very important touchstone every step of the way in this project.”

At the time when the photographs were taken under the Sultan’s leadership, there was much political turmoil in the Ottoman Empire. Greece and Bulgaria had become independent nations and the influx of Muslim refugees from the Caucasus and the Balkans affected the political landscape of the region. “It was a time when individuals were shifting from being considered and considering themselves as subjects to becoming citizens,” Dr. Gürsel noted. She added that this especially served as an intriguing moment to examine photography “since even when they depict types or groups, photographs always index individuals.”

Overall, Dr. Gürsel managed to collect 109 photos from Ottoman State archives in Istanbul. These came from various files such as the Ministry of Interior or Foreign Affairs folders. Other photos were stand-alone archives. Each one depicts a variety of individuals – men, women, family elders, children, infants, urban elites, peasants, and the like. The flip side of each photograph contains individual’s names, ages, always the fathers’ names, and the home villages of the pictured. Some even noted ties the photographed individuals had to those who had migrated before them.

Dr. Gürsel emphasized the fact that these are “certainly not family portraits taken to commemorate a moment of togetherness.” Rather they served as “a form of exclusion.” The Armenians who posed for these pictures had renounced their Ottoman nationality and promised to never return to the Ottoman Empire. As she noted, “the operative temporality in these photographs is not so much what has been but what must never be again.” Displaying a photograph taken in Bitlis, Dr. Gürsel explained how her use of the phrase, “portrait of unbelonging” is meant to convey that the photo “captures the process of making this family into emigrants and unmaking them as Ottoman nationals.”

From 1896 to 1908, these

The Artsakh War of 2020 and Armenia Subject of a Conversation with Political Analyst Eric Hacopian

ARSHAK ABELYAN  
STAFF WRITER

The second Artsakh war, initiated by the Republic of Azerbaijan, against the Republic of Artsakh served to relay another reminder to the Armenian people of their past struggles that have now extended into the present.

On Saturday, January 30th, 2021, Eric Hacopian, a political correspondent from CivilNet in Armenia joined the Fresno State community through the Zoom platform to discuss this specific event and the unresolved issues that remain. His talk “The Artsakh War and Armenia: A Conversation with Eric Hacopian,” was moderated by Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, and was conducted in a question-and-answer format.

The 44-day war in Artsakh began on September 27, 2020 and resulted in the deaths of many soldiers and civilians. Young Armenian conscripts, born in the years of 2000-2002, constituted a majority of those who died. Hacopian emphasized this point by saying, “Every day at 10 o’clock at night, you would see the names of everyone who lost their lives on every news station, and you know that half of those kids were born in 2001 and 2002. There is nobody here that is not glad that the war is over.” It was not just lives that were lost, but based on the November 9, 2020 cease-fire statement, seven districts of Artsakh were transferred to Azerbaijani control, forcing many Armenian civilians to seek refuge in the Republic of Armenia.

The end of the war brought forth many questions, many unresolved issues, and many more concerns that were a direct result of this war. “The one institution that had a lot of credibility in this country was the military. There was this myth that you had a competitive military that was capable, unlike other state institutions, and who could do the job well. We found out that is not true, so that is the most devastating thing,” stated Hacopian.

According to Hacopian, the collective issue was the lack of preparation and unprofessionalism on the part of the military which paved the path towards a loss of trust from the public. He explained that Armenian leadership should have placed an emphasis on creating closer ties with other states and organizations diplomatically, which he says was neglected and

photos were required of Armenians wishing to leave the Ottoman Empire, usually through one of four main ports: Samsun, Trabizon, Mersin, and Iskenderun. Prior to this period, Armenians needed to obtain permission individually from the Sultan in order to emigrate. However, his 1896 decree permitted Armenians to leave as long as they obtained a document from the Patriarch and two copies of a photo to be sent



Photo: ASP Archive

Eric Hacopian

a failed agenda for the past twenty to thirty years. “We were entirely isolated and had no friends, and as I had said before, Azerbaijan had friends and we [Armenians] had acquaintances,” asserted Hacopian.

When Hacopian was asked why previous Armenian governments were unable to resolve this conflict, he stated that the issue had always been that “Azerbaijan is not interested in compromise, Azerbaijan wants Artsakh back without any Armenians.” He gave examples of political figures such as Armenia’s former President Robert Kocharyan. “In 2001 Kocharyan offered all of the occupied territories except for Lachin in exchange for the independence of Artsakh. From what the stories are, [Azerbaijan’s President] Heydar Aliyev accepted it but then when he returned to Baku, he was talked out of the deal,” said Hacopian.

On the other hand, the current situation also sparked another topic of discussion during this conversation with Professor Der Mugrdechian. When news broke that Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signed the trilateral agreement on November 9, many protestors forcibly entered Armenia’s National Assembly building and took to the streets calling for Pashinyan’s resignation. Many images were broadcast showing protestors vandalizing the building and beating the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan. Hacopian argued that these actions by the protestors, whom he suspects are supporters of the opposition, brought a negative perception towards themselves from the public. For this reason, argued Hacopian, Pashinyan is still in power.

“As long as the alternative to the current Prime Minister is the

old regime, Nikol Pashinyan will stay, because as much as people might be disappointed with him thinking he made mistakes or even hate him, the overwhelming majority of people fear the old regime coming back far more so than him,” asserted Hacopian.

As for what lays ahead for the Armenian people, Hacopian believes that there should be a push to build a functional economy that works for the people. His second point is that the current state structure is problematic, and he suggested that it should be restructured or rebuilt from scratch. He also addressed the military and how its development would inevitably create a “military-industrial complex,” which would also bring in efforts to bring back and reintroduce science education and programming work back to the country.

While the future remains uncertain for Artsakh, Hacopian highlighted that the immediate main goal is to solidify the current situation and to maintain the security of the people living in Artsakh. When asked about the long-term solution to the conflict, he responded with the following, “First of all, you are dealing with a neo-fascist regime [Azerbaijan]. Let us just be clear about it, you know you are dealing with a regime that has made its entire state identity based on hatred of Armenians.”

Hacopian concluded by saying that he is optimistic about the future and the possible end of the conflict. “People have to reach an understanding that ends this conflict in a way that is fair or perceived to be fair by every party. We won the war in 1994 but we lost the peace, they won the war in 2020 and they could lose the peace, so at some point we are going to have to reach an understanding.”

to Constantinople. In total, about 5,000 individuals emigrated to America under this process, submitting more than 1,500 portraits to Constantinople.

The regulations made no distinction between the various Armenians who were to go through this process whether they were Apostolic, Catholic, or Protestant. Even Assyrians who were leaving in order to marry Armenians already in America

had to undergo this process of renouncing their nationality if they desired to leave. However, the regulations applied only to Armenians as Dr. Gürsel stated that Lebanese Christians were required to do the exact opposite. They were to pledge to keep their Ottoman nationality in order to travel.

Equating the photographs



## Prof. James Russell Discusses His New Book on the Western Armenian Poet Misak Medzarents



Prof. James Russell  
CARINA TOKATIAN  
STAFF WRITER

“Small peoples have a right to survive, with our languages, our heritage, and our poetry, too: we contribute our verse to the great play of human life on God’s earth,” stated Prof. James Russell, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies, Emeritus, at Harvard University, as he reflected on his latest work *Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems*.

Translated and edited by Prof. Russell, *Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems* is an English translation and commentary of Western Armenian poet Misak Medzarents’ works. It has been printed as Volume 12 of the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno. Profs. Der Mugrdechian and La Porta expertly shepherded the publication of the book.

Prof. Russell’s scholarship primarily focuses on Ancient Near Eastern, Iranian, and Armenian studies. When asked what piqued his interest in this field, Prof. Russell traced his curiosity to the year 1969 when he visited Yerevan in the course of a summer high school study trip in the Soviet Union. It was at that time that he became fascinated by the architecture, alphabet, manuscripts, and food of the Armenian people.

“It was a romantic obsession that led to a lifetime of research and teaching that involved the other cultures of the region with which Armenians interacted over millennia, principally Iran,” recalled Prof. Russell.

Since then, Prof. Russell has dedicated much attention to the Armenian literature of the Classical, medieval, and modern periods, from pre-Christian mythology and folk epics such as *David of Sasun* to the Soviet Armenian poet Yeghishe Charents. However, when he learned that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had classified the Western Armenian language as endangered, Prof. Russell felt a moral obligation to devote greater attention to Western Armenian literature. He produced the first translation and commentary, in any language, of Bedros Tourian’s complete lyric poems and other works in his book *Bosphorus Nights*.

It was because of a wedding that Prof. Russell was first introduced to the Western Armenian bard, Misak Medzarents.

An acquaintance in Boston had asked him to translate one

of his poems for the ceremony. “It is not, in my opinion, one of Medzarents’ best poems, but it is well crafted and got me hooked, and soon after one found the really good stuff,” he acknowledged. Consequently, this began Prof. Russell’s years-long labor towards the translation of all of Medzarents’ poetry.

Misak Medzarents was born on January 18, 1886 in the village of Pingian near Akn in the Armenian highlands. Prof. Russell explained that Medzarents, like many other Armenians, “moved because of the circumstances of security and the necessity of a livelihood to the great cosmopolitan capital, Constantinople.”

In Constantinople, Medzarents attended the Central High School (*Kentronakan*) and became acquainted with Armenian historical and religious writing, including texts in *Grabar* (Classical Armenian). He also became actively engaged with the literature, society, and political life of Armenians there during his teenage years. Although his birth name was Misak Medzadourian, the young poet soon adopted “Medzarents” and “Dziadzan” (which means “Rainbow”) as pen names.

“The core of his work is a happy childhood full of mystical, supernatural feelings: unlike much Armenian poetry, Medzarents is cheerful, even luminous,” remarked Prof. Russell. In contrast to other Armenian poets, Prof. Russell highlighted Medzarents’ warm and friendly voice. “There is always the image of the sun breaking through the clouds and the raindrops turning to crystal,” he said admiringly.

Another aspect that distinguishes Medzarents’ writing is the rich and broad vocabulary he employs throughout his works. “There are overtones of the pagan song of Vahagn, of the revels of King Arshak II in the fourth century, of the medieval spiritual hymns called *sharakans*, of his mother’s lullabies and the songs of plowmen, and of the folklore of his native village Pingian,” said Prof. Russell. Embedding themes from all those sources, he equated Medzarents’ writing to a “polyphonic symphony heard as one travels in a time machine.”

Just like his language, the content of Medzarents’ poems is extensive. Prof. Russell noted that Medzarents “writes about sunrise, village fields, hearing a song, home, his mother’s prayers, spirits who live in the water, reveries when he’s sitting alone at night dreaming of feasts and dances and beautiful girls, but also hunger, poverty, cruelty, the Armenians’ struggle for freedom, and revolution.”

Towards the end of his life, however, Medzarents adopted a “new, sharper, bleaker style” that reminded Prof. Russell of poets such as the Russian bard Vladimir Mayakovsky or the young Charents.

“*Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems* is a

significant work because it is the first English translation of the entire works of Medzarents,” said Prof. Der Mugrdechian, general editor of the Fresno State Armenian Series. He asserted how “this work will be an important addition to the study of the early twentieth century Western Armenian poets and writers.”

The book begins with a few of Medzarents’ poems that were published in his lifetime and then follows with a chronological arrangement of his additional works. Arranging the poems in the same order as the Critical Edition published in Yerevan in the former Soviet Armenia, Prof. Russell explained how native Armenian speakers can easily refer to the original texts. Alongside his translations, are commentaries in which Prof. Russell delves into some of the linguistic and thematic features of each poem.

“Prof. Russell’s annotations of the poetry put Medzarents’ work into the context of world poetry,” Prof. Der Mugrdechian noted. “Armenian poetry is part of world poetry and Medzarents is a noteworthy poet, whose work is now accessible to a larger audience.”

To finish the book on Medzarents, Prof. Russell headed to Jerusalem on a sabbatical in 2015 where he lived an apartment that overlooked the village of Ein Kerem, where his relatives live, to complete the book.

“The English Medzarents really could come to be, only in a part of the world near and like his own, the Middle East,” stated Prof. Russell. But it was not solely the climate and atmosphere of Jerusalem that Prof. Russell found compelling. He felt he was helping to resurrect a poet who needed to be known to the world. He had edited, translated and published a series of poems from a cache of manuscripts that Charents buried before his arrest and murder in 1937 by the Soviet secret police.

Years later, Prof. Russell discovered that one of his own Jewish ancestors, a Hasidic Rabbi in the Warsaw Ghetto, buried his own manuscript. Rabbi Shapira was murdered in the Nazi Holocaust, but his book survived, and is studied in both Hebrew and English.

The architects of the Armenian Genocide wanted not just to kill the Armenians but to erase their literary heritage as well. Now Tourian and Medzarents can be read, not only in the original, but in English translations whose accompanying commentary introduces the reader into the world from which they came.

Prof. Russell recalls the words of the late Prof. Eric Hamp, a linguist from the University of Chicago, at a conference in Soviet Armenia many years ago.

Hamp “got up at a banquet to raise a toast to small peoples, who have a right to survive.” The “small peoples” still need friends and defenders. Their literatures have a right to survive. Prof.

## Fall 2020 Graduates Minor in Armenian Studies



DIKRAN DZHEZYAN  
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE  
IN BIOLOGY  
ARMENIAN STUDIES MINOR  
SPANISH MINOR

### What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

My brother, who is also a Fresno State graduate, was the one who originally introduced me to the Armenian Studies courses. His praise of the classes persuaded me to enroll in an Arts of Armenia course taught by Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian. I enjoyed the course so much that I decided to keep taking classes offered by the Program and before I knew it, I had completed a Minor in Armenian Studies.

### What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite activity was the 2017 Summer Study excursion to Armenia, organized by the Armenian Studies Program. It was an unforgettable experience that allowed me to connect with my Armenian roots as well as my fellow classmates. After reading all about Armenian architecture, culture, and history, it was nice to see many of the things I had studied in person. The trip was the perfect capstone experience for my Armenian Studies Minor.

### What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

I feel the community was the most valuable part of the Program. The Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State does an exceptional job at bringing together people of all backgrounds to celebrate Armenian history and culture. I met so many influential professors, researchers, and writers in the field of Armenian studies, all while making wonderful friendships with fellow classmates and Armenians of the Central Valley.

### What are your plans after graduation?

I am eager to pursue a graduate education. Currently, I am

Russell would like to translate next the collection of poems entitled *Nojastan* (“The Cypress Grove”) by the Western Armenian poet and mystic Diran Cherakian, also known by his anagrammatic pen name “Indra.”

Ultimately, Dr. Russell believes that he has achieved a translation of the works of Misak Medzarents that “is both accurate and songful, and commentaries that guide the reader through the intricacies of the poet’s workshop.”

When asked what he would like readers to know after reading the poems, he explained that he

preparing to take the Medical College Admission Test and I hope to apply to medical schools not long after. I am also working as a scribe in the emergency department of a hospital in order to increase my exposure to the practice of medicine. I enjoyed volunteering during my time in college. I hope to get more involved with the community in the coming months and donate my time to people or organizations in need of volunteers.



KRYSTAL KING  
BACHELOR OF ARTS  
IN LIBERAL STUDIES  
ARMENIAN STUDIES MINOR

### What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

One of my friends had actually encouraged me to take an Armenian Studies class as an elective. As the semester went along, I started to become more passionate about the language and history. As a result, I decided to pursue the Minor!

### What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

I absolutely love learning different languages, so for me, the elementary Armenian courses, 1A and 1B, were by far my favorite courses. Not to mention that Professor Der Mugrdechian made the classes fun, interesting, and memorable.

### What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

What I valued most were the guest speakers and lectures! It was always a delight to learn more about Armenia and Armenians’ history from different points of view. Not only were these events interesting, but they enriched my experience with the Minor.

### What are your plans after graduation?

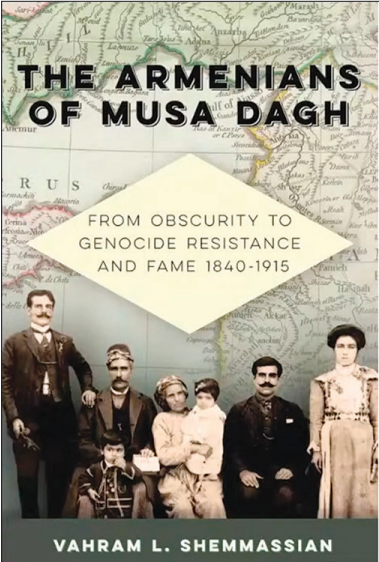
I have enrolled in Fresno State’s teaching credential program. Once done, I will seek employment as either a middle school or high school math teacher.

has no specific agenda. Instead, he feels that “each reader has a particular soul, a path and purpose in life that God has made for them alone.” Therefore, he hopes that “this volume of all of Medzarents’ work, like any good book, can be a companion for them.”

With a concluding reference to Walt Whitman’s well-known poem, “Oh Me! Oh Life!”, Dr. Russell added that he hopes the book may inspire readers to “contribute your verse, the one that is uniquely yours, the one you were made, here and now, to say.”



Dr. Shemmassian Presents His New Book  
*The Armenians of Musa Dag* for Fresno State



“The Armenians of Musa Dag:  
From Obscurity to Genocide  
Resistance and Fame 1840-1915”

Volume 11 in the  
Armenian Series of The Press  
at California State University, Fresno

Powered by Zoom

*The Armenians of Musa Dag* is Volume 11 in The Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno.

CHRISTINE PAMBUKYAN  
STAFF WRITER

“I did not have an agenda... I did not want to prove anything. I just wanted to bring all the sources from all angles, from all perspectives, from all kinds of organizations and institutions in order for me to draw a picture of Musa Dag,” said Dr. Vahram Shemmassian, director of the Armenians Studies Program at the California State University of Northridge, while discussing his newest publication, *The Armenians of Musa Dag: From Obscurity to Genocide Resistance and Fame 1840 – 1915*.

Within his new book, Dr. Shemmassian, a descendant of the people of Musa Dag, presents a comprehensive history of Armenians of Musa Dag and how the Armenians rose to prominence with their resistance during the Genocide of 1915. Through seven chapters and an epilogue containing maps, tables, and many rare photographs of the people who called Musa Dag their home, Dr. Shemmassian analyzes the social, economic, political, and educational history of the region made up of six Armenian villages.

On Saturday, February 6, 2021, Dr. Shemmassian discussed his new book, *The Armenians of Musa Dag*, through a virtual presentation on Zoom. In his discussion, Dr. Shemmassian described his experiences writing the book, what he learned, and the contents within the five hundred and fifty-five pages. *The Armenians of Musa Dag* was published as volume 11 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno.

Dr. Shemmassian began with an overview of his connections to Musa Dag and his research. Because he was born and raised in Lebanon, he only knew about Musa Dag through memorials

and celebrations of Armenian holidays. He was also exposed to the dialects of Musa Dag through conversations between the adults in his family. When he began writing his master’s thesis about the connection between the homeland and the Armenians in Lebanon and Syria, he also began to collect information about Musa Dag. He wrote information he learned on paper, wrappers, and anything he could get his hands on as he asked the surprised survivors about Musa Dag. One unfortunate day during the Lebanese war, his home was bombed resulting in the death of his mother. After this, he was even more interested in writing about Musa Dag and continued his research.

After describing his journey of extensive research about Musa Dag, Dr. Shemmassian gave an overview of each chapter in his book. The first chapter of the publication gives a general background of Musa Dag. It includes the origins of the name “Musa Dag,” the names and origins of the villages, statistics about the population and weather of the regions, geographical descriptions, and information about the neighbors of the region.

The second chapter discusses the socioeconomic conditions of Musa Dag; particularly the progression and change that came after British diplomat John Baker introduced new fruits, vegetables, and sericulture (silkworm culture) to the Armenians of Musa Dag upon retiring in the region. It also discusses animal husbandry and comb making in Yoronolok, the region Dr. Shemmassian’s father is from; immigration to the United States; and heavy taxation the Armenians had to endure with the region.

The third chapter discusses the Armenian Apostolic Church. It also mentions the Protestant missionary inroads to Musa Dag in June of 1840 and the

Catholics in 1891; and how they gave rise to disputes between the three denominations, confessional disagreements, and education in the region. Then, the fourth chapter discusses the strides made in education by the Apostolic, Catholic, and Protestant Armenians of Musa Dag. Since all of the schools in the region were elementary schools, graduates left for higher education to Europe, central Turkey, and Lebanon.

The fifth chapter describes the revolutionary movement in Musa Dag through the records of the French, Austria-Hungarians, Antioch representatives the A.R.F. Federation, and the Hn-chak Party. The sixth chapter describes the massacres of Musa Dag that occurred around the time of the Adana Massacres in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were able to resist, but those working for the Ottoman Turkish landlords were massacred. The chapter also mentions the relief movement by Europe, missionaries, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Armenian prelate of Aleppo, and the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul; as well as the employment project of widows and orphans of massacre victims to avoid prostitution by the Turkish and Kurdish members of the Ottoman Empire.

The concluding chapter of the book discusses the resistance of the Armenians against the Ottoman Turks from a historical perspective, including the widespread press coverage the event received.

Finally, the epilogue notes and describes the forgotten history of the two thousand Musa Dag Armenians that elected to be deported to Hama, Syria because they did not believe that resistance would be successful. One thousand of them perished due to famine, disease, and exposure.

Dr. Shemmassian concluded his discussion by emphasizing the importance of being impartial and honest while writing history. He asserted that we must step away from the romanticization of history because it can be detrimental to the purpose of history: to tell and documents the events of the past for future generations.

At the end of the discussion, viewers were able to ask Dr. Shemmassian and Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian questions about the book through the chat function on Zoom. A recording of the discussion, along with other lectures of this semester can be found on the Armenian Studies YouTube Channel at <http://bit.ly/armenianstudies>.

Also, *The Armenians of Musa Dag* is available for purchase through Abril Bookstore at <https://www.abrilbooks.com>. The National Association for Armenian Studies and Research Bookstore at <https://naasr.org/pages/bookstore>, and the Armenian Missionary Association of America Bookstore at <https://amaa.org/bookstore/>.

financial need.

Thomas A. Kooyumjian passed away in 1985 and his Foundation was established in 1987. The goals of the Foundation are to encourage education, with an emphasis on the appreciation of fine arts.

The Armenian Studies Program expresses its appreciation for the generous donation.

KOORYUMJIAN, FROM PAGE 1

and Humanities at Fresno State. Per the endowment’s conditions, scholarship recipients shall have a) a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater; shall be b) enrolled in any course within the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State, and c) recipients shall have submitted a personal statement speaking to the applicant’s

Aronian Prize,  
FROM PAGE 1

awards are for books with a 2019 publication date.

NAASR’s Aronian Book Prizes were established in 2014 by the late Dr. Aronian and Dr. Geoffrey Gibbs, to be awarded annually to outstanding scholarly works in the English language in the field of Armenian Studies and translations from Armenian into English.

The prize awarded for the translation of Keljik’s *Armenian-American Sketches* (originally



Translator and co-editor  
Dr. Lou Ann Matossian

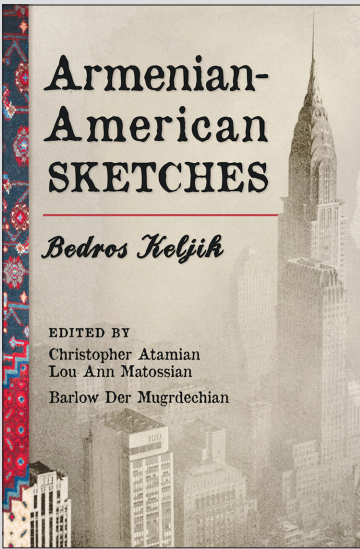
published in 1944 in Armenian as *Amerigahay Badgerner*), recognizes a team effort which includes the efforts of the three translators, Aris Sevag, Dr. Lou Ann Matossian, and Dr. Vartan Matiossian, as well as the publication’s co-editors Christopher Atamian and Barlow Der Mugrdechian. (Matossian



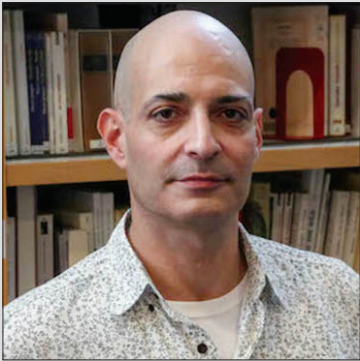
Translator  
Dr. Vartan Matiossian

also served as a co-editor.) Lou Ann Matossian first translated one of Keljik’s “sketches” and published it in *Ararat Quarterly* in 1997 and subsequently lectured on Keljik at NAASR in 2010; the late Aris Sevag translated the remainder of the book prior to his death in 2006; and Dr. Matiossian translated additional Keljik pieces published in the Baikar Annual in the 1940s.

As Dr. Matossian commented, “If Leo Hamalian and Aris Sevag had not published the early translations, or Marc Mamigonian had not invited a lecture on Keljik, or Christopher Atamian had not taken an interest, or Barlow Der Mugrdechian had not accepted our proposal, or Vartan Matiossian and the Keljik brothers had not come on board, or Asdghig Sevag [widow of the late Aris] and the donors been less generous, this chain could have



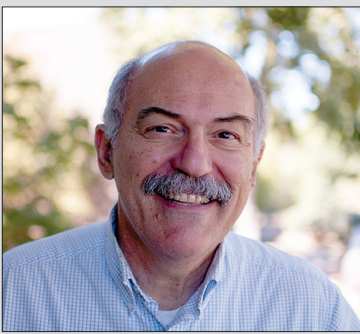
been broken at any moment. The reappearance of the Keljik stories really was due to the passion of every individual along the way.” Echoing these sentiments, Marc Mamigonian noted that “in awarding the prize for *Armenian-American Sketches*, we recognize the important contribution the book makes to expanding



Co-editor  
Christopher Atamian

our knowledge of Armenian-American literature and culture. I wish that our late friend and colleague Aris Sevag were alive to receive this award along with Lou Ann and Vartan, and I am grateful that Asdghig can accept on his behalf. Furthermore, while the prize itself is given to translators, we also want to acknowledge with gratitude the vital efforts of Christopher Atamian and Barlow Der Mugrdechian in making this publication a reality.”

Authors or publishers wishing to submit books for consideration for future Aronian Prizes may contact NAASR Director of



Co-editor Prof. Barlow  
Der Mugrdechian

Academic Affairs Marc A. Mamigonian [marc@naasr.org](mailto:marc@naasr.org).

The full version of this article can be accessed at: <https://naasr.org/blogs/news/naasr-announces-winners-of-2020-sona-aronian-armenian-studies-book-prizes>.

“All Things Armenian” Radio Hour  
Multicultural 1600AM

Sundays • 2:00-3:00PM

and on

SoCalArmenian.com and KLOS-FM 95.5HD3

Wednesdays • 9:00-10:00PM



## Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) Holds Its 46th Annual Membership Meeting January 16



**Society for Armenian Studies President Dr. Bedross Der Matossian conducted the SAS Annual Meeting.**

### STAFF REPORT

On January 16, 2021, the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) held its 46th Annual Membership Meeting on Zoom. More than forty members, including the Executive Council, were present at the meeting, which was open to all members of SAS.

The SAS President Dr. Bedross Der Matossian began by reviewing recent SAS accomplishments. He noted that the SAS Podcast interviewed over 45 authors so far, and is available on platforms like Apple Podcast, Spotify, and Google Play. He highlighted the SAS Research and Travel Grants program, which has so far supported 15 graduate students, including the first two recipients of the new SAS Grant on Race. As part of the newly launched Society for Armenian Studies Publication Series, Der Matossian presented the second volume on *The First Republic of Armenia (1918-1920) on Its Centenary: Politics, Gender, and Diplomacy*, (2020) published by the Press at California State University, Fresno.

One of the notable achievements of SAS was that the prestigious publishing house Brill is now publishing the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* (JSAS). Dr. Tamar M. Boyadjian was appointed Editor-in-Chief of the new JSAS, and has been working to expand the scope of the *Journal* to show the depth and breadth of Armenian Studies as an interdisciplinary field. *Entries* for the Society for Armenian Studies (e-SAS), the online platform for shorter scholarly pieces on topics related to Armenian Studies, continues to publish pieces by both established and junior scholars. In light of the pandemic, the SAS also hosted and co-hosted numerous Zoom lectures, conferences, and symposia by concentrating on different aspects of Armenian Studies.

After reviewing the accomplishments to this point, Dr. Der Matossian mapped out the “Three-Year Strategic Plan of the SAS” which will concentrate on three areas: 1) strengthening SAS ties with educational institutions in Armenia and Artsakh; 2)

mentoring SAS graduate students; and 3) disseminating knowledge about Armenian Studies throughout the world.

In order to strengthen ties with Armenia and Artsakh, SAS decided to cooperate with educational institutions in Armenia and Artsakh; concentrate on documenting and promoting the cultural heritage of Artsakh; and to encourage students from Armenia to become members of SAS and to benefit from its scholarship as well as expertise. This will be accomplished by creating a program to sponsor students for \$10 per year. In its second area of mentorship for graduate students, SAS will organize workshops for graduate students; discuss alternative paths to careers; and provide a platform for graduate students and junior scholars (mostly from Armenia) to present their work and receive critical feedback. For the last area regarding dissemination of knowledge about the field, SAS decided to continue with its Podcast Series, Zoom Lecture Series, E-SAS, and JSAS.

After Der Matossian’s presentation, SAS Treasurer Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian; the JSAS Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Tamar M. Boyadjian; and the Editor of e-SAS, Dr. Dzovinar Derderian provided their reports, following which the floor was opened to questions from the larger membership community. A productive conversation followed about topics including the sponsorship of panels at major conferences, membership of scholars in Armenia, and work related to the preservation of cultural heritage in Artsakh.

The SAS, founded in 1974, is the international professional association representing scholars and teachers in the field of Armenian Studies.

The aim of the SAS is to promote the study of Armenian culture and society, including history, language, literature, and social, political, and economic questions.

If you are interested in contributing to three-year strategic planning of SAS please contact Prof. Bedross Der Matossian at bdermatossian2@unl.edu.

## “All Things Armenian” Interviews a Variety of Guests Each Sunday on Multicultural 1600AM

SARA BEBERIAN  
STAFF WRITER

Want to feel more connected to your local Armenian community? The podcast “All Things Armenian” is the place for you! Airing from 2:00-3:00PM every Sunday on Multicultural 1600AM and hosted by Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian from the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State, listeners enjoy hearing interviews covering a variety of topics including; music, art, Fresno State news, and cultural topics pertaining to the Armenian community.

With over 65 interviews already completed, the show has a little something for everyone. At the end of January, Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian interviewed Dr. Khatchig Mouradian. Dr. Mouradian is a professor at Columbia University and was recently appointed as the Armenian and Georgian Specialist in the African and Middle Eastern Division. His recently published book, *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria 1915-1918*, was the focal point for this episode. Dr. Mouradian grew up in Lebanon, where he learned five languages, including Armenian, English, and Turkish. This was very beneficial for his research, writing, and studies. Dr. Mouradian’s book is broken up into two parts; the first part about Aleppo, Syria, and the second about the concentration camps, where countless Armenians died during the Genocide. However, the book tells the larger story of the “underground network of humanitarians, missionaries and diplomats in Ottoman Syria,



**Some of the recent guests on “All Things Armenian.” Top row, left to right, Dr. Ann Karagozian, Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Dr. Khatchig Mouradian. Bottom row, left to right, Dr. Mary Papazian, Dr. Joseph Bohigian, Robert Avetisyan.**

who helped to save the lives of thousands of Armenians during the Genocide.”

Another recent interview featured Fresno State’s Interim President, Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, who explained how he was born in Mexico and moved to the United States at an early age, learning English in the fourth grade. Considering that the move was a major life-change for such a young boy, Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval said that he utilized books as a way to integrate within the new society. He also discussed his love for education. Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval majored in Spanish and Portuguese Literature when he was at the University of California, Irvine, and explained that “literature allows the beginning of self-discovery.” He earned a doctorate, became a Professor, later Chair of the Department of Modern and Classical Languages & Literatures, before becoming Provost and then Interim President. As Provost he

met with faculty from different departments on campus to better understand their needs. “I like to dream big... it is the poetic, leader side of me,” explained the Interim President. He is honored to work at Fresno State, and is excited to continue to empower students and to work to benefit the whole community at large.

Don’t miss out on this opportunity to learn more about everything Armenian on the “All Things Armenian” show! Listen to beautiful music and hear the many interesting interviews pertaining to Armenian topics.

“All Things Armenian” airs on Multicultural 1600AM on Sunday afternoons from 2:00-3:00pm. “All Things Armenian” also airs every Wednesday night at 9:00PM on SoCal Armenian Radio 95.3FM. Past episodes can be accessed on Multicultural Radio’s website or can be heard on SoundCloud, by typing “All Things Armenian” in the search bar.

### ARMENIAN CLASS, FROM PAGE 1

course enjoyable in general. “I enjoy this class because it is very practical and has a nice balance of general conversation, reading, and writing in Armenian” says Caleb Arizmendez, a junior majoring in chemistry and Minor in Armenian Studies.

Some enjoy the conversations they experience in class. “I appreciate the time we spend conversing with each other. It gives me a wonderful challenge to try to listen to a conversation, even if I am not speaking, and to attempt to understand it in my head,” explained Angela Soghomonian, a sophomore majoring in biochemistry and Minor in Armenian Studies.

Others enjoy reading stories. For instance, when asked what her favorite part about the course is, Olivia Soghomonian, a math major, replied “The readings. Although they aren’t complex stories, the act of translation itself is what I really like because it makes me feel like I can apply what I’ve learned.”

The eleven students come to class with many different backgrounds in Armenian. During his thirty-six years of teaching, “there has always been

a good mix of students in the language course,” said Professor Der Mugrdechian. “We have many non-Armenians who are interested in learning the language for a variety of reasons.”

For example, some take the course to increase their speaking skills. “I took Armenian courses to be able to learn how to speak Armenian, as well as read and write; and I decided to take 2A to improve my speaking,” said Kara Statler, a history major and Minor in Armenian Studies.

Others wish to improve their reading and writing abilities. “I have always wanted to be able to speak the Armenian language better and to sharpen my reading and writing skills. There is something special about being able to converse with a fellow Armenian in the diaspora” stated Sosse Baloian, a sophomore majoring in History and Minor in Armenian Studies.

When students and faculty were asked their thoughts about taking the Armenian course online this semester, most agree that it comes with challenges and advantages. “It has been challenging to teach the language course online. It slows the process of conversation down and students do not get to interact as much as in a face-to-

face class. The advantage is you can record a class or parts of classes so students can go back and review,” explained Prof. Der Mugrdechian.

Some students find comfort in taking an online class. “Through taking this class online, I feel more comfortable with speaking and comprehending Armenian; however, I do miss the environment of an in-person Armenian language class,” said Arizmendez.

Others hope for in-person courses to begin soon. “I wish the class was in-person. I feel like we would learn more. It is a challenging course but it’s not hard for me because I enjoy every minute of it,” concluded Dustin Vartanian, a Senior majoring in business management and Minor in Armenian Studies.

Most of the students in the course had taken Professor Der Mugrdechian’s Armenian 1A and 1B courses in the past and enjoy getting to learn more Armenian with their friends.

“My favorite part about this class is that I am taking it with people that I have met through the Armenian Studies Program and that have become my close

SEE ARMENIAN CLASS PAGE 7

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**Armenian Studies Program Photo Archive**  
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ARMENIAN CLASS,  
FROM PAGE 6

friends over the last couple of years,” said Ariana Garabedian, a second-year speech, language, and pathology major, minoring in Armenian Studies.  
Some even consider Armenian 2A as their favorite course. When asked which of his classes were his favorite this semester,

Dustin Vartanian exclaimed “The Armenian language class is my favorite. I love that I can use what I learn in the real world.”  
Overall, the familiarity between the students and the dedication of the professor make for an enjoyable, rewarding, and eye-opening semester of Intermediate Armenian Language Course thus far.

Dr. Kılıçdağı Teaches History of Ottoman Armenians

DUSTIN VARTANIAN  
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Ohannes Kılıçdağı, the 17th Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State taught a new course called “Awakening, Death, and Survival: History of the Ottoman Armenians in Modern Times,” during the Fall 2020 semester.  
This course focused on the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire prior and during the Armenian Genocide. Each Kazan Visiting Professor is invited to teach on different aspects of this time period. Dr. Kılıçdağı explained that his class “was about the trajectory of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey from the early 19th century to today, which makes it necessary to know the general changes in Ottoman-Turkish politics and social developments throughout the period. Therefore, the course builds a context of Ottoman-Turkish history which is layered with the history of the



Dr. Ohannes Kılıçdağı

Armenians.”  
This class provided a great opportunity for students to be engaged in conversations with Dr. Kılıçdağı and each other because of its seminar format. Students were encouraged to express their opinions on the topics covered. Since Dr. Kılıçdağı was born and educated in Istanbul, Turkey, the course also provided an opportunity to learn about this period of history from a different perspective.  
Throughout the semester each student was assigned to create a presentation on a topic of their

choice related to the course. This enabled students to learn in-depth about that subject and gave them experience in presenting interesting in-depth details. It was also a way to learn from fellow students.  
During the Fall semester the class discussed the Tanzimat Era, beginning in 1839, when a reform movement was implemented in the Ottoman Empire. Dr. Kılıçdağı then went on to discuss the Armenian Enlightenment, the Armenian Constitution of 1863, the Armenians of the provinces, the role of Europeans, the Armenian Question, the emergence of Armenian political parties, the numerous massacres that took place in the 1890’s, and the Sassoun massacre of 1894. The Young Turk revolution in 1909 and the events that led to the beginning of the 1915 Armenian Genocide were also reviewed.  
Many sub-topics of the Genocide, discussing how

SEE COURSE PAGE 8



Komitas Museum-Institute, Yerevan

**BOHIGIAN, FROM PAGE 1**  
the Armenian longing for reunification with the homeland, not necessarily to reclaim it, but “to be buried under it,” according to Dink.  
This account inspired the title of Dr. Joseph Bohigian’s doctoral composition, “The Water Has Found Its Crack.” On February 19, 2021, a Zoom audience enjoyed an enlightening virtual presentation from Dr. Joseph Bohigian explaining his composition. Dr. Bohigian’s presentation, “‘The Water Has Found Its Crack’: Finding Armenia Through Music,” was organized by the Armenian Studies Program as part of its Spring Lecture series.  
Dr. Bohigian graduated from Fresno State in 2015 with a bachelor’s degree in Music Composition and a Minor in Armenian Studies. He completed his doctorate in music through the Stony Brook University (New York) Department of Music. As an Armenian-American from the diaspora, his works express themes of exile, cultural reunification, and identity maintenance. Dr. Bohigian’s compositions have been performed at the Oregon Bach Festival, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Aram Khachaturian Museum Hall, and several other venues.  
Dr. Bohigian explained that a sense of longing pervades the psyche of Armenians living in the diaspora. “This longing motivates the need that Armenians display for reunification, if not physically

then at least spiritually,” said Dr. Bohigian. As a great grandson of genocide survivors, Dr. Bohigian was well acquainted with the burden of displacement that came with being an American-Armenian. On a journey to confront his feelings of cultural detachment, Dr. Bohigian traveled to Armenia in 2019 and worked at the Komitas Museum Institute in Yerevan.  
Komitas Vardapet lived during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was dedicated to preserving Armenian music as a living art meant to be used in daily life.  
Dr. Bohigian found a recurring theme of dispossession in Komitas’s collected works, including a genre of migrant folk songs which demonstrated a longing for homeland. These folk songs utilized water as a metaphor for distance, longing, and loss.  
Dr. Bohigian calls his composition, “The Water Has Found Its Crack,” a “musical manifestation of [his] exploration of Armenian identity.” His piece is written for three soprano vocalists, violin, viola, cello, and percussion. The lyrics were derived from fragments of eight Armenian folk songs, collected and transcribed by Komitas. The piece is sung slowly and freely and is highly ornamented.  
Dr. Bohigian deconstructed his piece explaining its intricate structure and symbolism of displacement, dispersion, and reclamation, meaning either a


spiritual or physical reconnection with a lost homeland. The opening of the piece incorporates long slides between notes, called *glissandi*, which stretch over small pitch ranges. The fluidity of the *glissandi* is a metaphor for the flow of dispersion from the homeland.  
The central section of Dr. Bohigian’s piece is a quasi-folk song reminiscent of the migrant song genre that conveys a longing for the homeland. The piece culminates with the theme of reclamation as expressed through Armenian sacred chant.  
Dr. Bohigian remarked that defining what constitutes Armenian music for the purpose of identity preservation can be a controversial topic. “The search for Armenian identity in music has at times led to the exclusion of music shared with other cultures such as the Ottoman era music in which Armenians played an important part,” stated Dr. Bohigian.  
He contended that when understanding Armenian music, one must take into consideration the interaction with other cultures at home and in diaspora settings. As a third generation Armenian, Dr. Bohigian relates to the “contrapuntality of exilic awareness.” In other words, his Armenian and American identities exist not in opposition but in conjunction with one another.  
Living in Armenia and composing “The Water Has Found Its Crack” helped shape Dr. Bohigian’s sense of identity. “The negotiation of internal and external boundaries is a central feature of identity maintenance for the dispersed,” stated Dr. Bohigian. “Music plays a prominent role in this negotiation as art can bring a sense of belonging to people otherwise disconnected from their culture.”  
To listen to “The Water Has Found Its Crack” and Dr. Bohigian’s additional compositions, visit [www.josephbohigian.com](http://www.josephbohigian.com).



ONE WOMAN'S DESTINY LIES IN THE CROSSFIRE

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Armenian Studies Program



the Fresno screening of


"The Last Inhabitant"

April 9-16 • watch the film by going to this link:  
https://vimeo.com/228430667 • Password: tti16\*

Friday, April 16 • 5:30PM

Discussion with director  
Jivan Avetisyan  
http://bit.ly/thelastinhabitant

Evicted as a result of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, Abgar stays behind alone in a gradually shrinking enemy ring. He is waiting for his daughter, who has become a witness to her husband's tragic death and was hospitalized with a trauma disorder. An Azerbaijani neighbor, finds Abgar's daughter Yurga, in one of the psychiatric hospitals of Baku and brings her to her Father. In exchange for finding his daughter, Abgar constructs a mosque for his neighbor. A powerful historical drama that delves straight into the heart of the Artsakh conflict, resulting in the mass deportation of Armenians from Azerbaijan prior to the fall of the Soviet Union. The film is based on the story of "The Last Inhabitant of Gyurjevan" by Tsovinar Khachatryan, about the expulsion of an Armenian village in Azerbaijan in 1988.



The Last Inhabitant

The Armenian Studies Program

presents

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by



Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian

Berberian Coordinator  
Armenian Studies Program

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7:00PM

Part of "Arts in Motion Week"

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**GÜRSEL, FROM PAGE 3**

to “mug shots,” Dr. Gürsel asserted how the portraits were “motivated by suspicion” and served as “anticipatory arrest warrants.” After the growth of political organizations such as the Hnchak Party and the Dashnak Party, Ottoman leaders feared that Armenians would revolt. After all, as an “American fever” surged in the 1880s and 90s, many Armenian emigrants settled in American cities such as Fresno, Boston, Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. So, there was a fear among the Ottoman Empire that Armenians would return to their homeland as revolutionaries. As Dr. Gürsel explained, “it was not that they wanted them to leave; it was that they did not want them to return politicized.” Therefore, the police and even many successful Armenian photographers captured these photos and required them at ports if Armenians were to board

**Kılıçdağı, FROM PAGE 7**

the Young Turks were able to carry out their policies and why the Genocide occurred, were considered. The students learned how to incorporate both long term and short-term events to fully understand the Armenian Genocide. The class ended with learning about the Armenians relationship with the newly formed Republic of Turkey in the 1920’s and how the Armenians planned to give a “re-birth” to their nation.

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any ships. “The passports issued to these Ottoman Armenians are unique in that they permit travel but prohibit return,” she mentioned.

In the second half of her lecture, Dr. Gürsel stated how she sought to capture the “double-sided history of migration.” Comparing her project to the photographs, she explained how the project faces “two directions: the Ottoman past in which the photograph was produced and circulated and an American future in which the lives of the subjects in the photographs unfolded.” With this in mind, she shared how the project “meant taking copies of the photographs out of the archive and into the world, out of Ottoman bureaucracy and into the life experiences of migrants and their families.”

In total, Dr. Gürsel managed to collect migration information for 62 families by searching through ship manifests, tickets, arrivals

Dr. Kılıçdağı wanted his students to learn two main things from the course: to have a good idea about the history of the late Ottoman Empire and of the Republic of Turkey, in order to understand the role of Armenians living there.

“I hope that students adopted a perspective about ethno-religious conflicts, democratization, and tensions of transition from empires to nation states,” said Dr. Kılıçdağı.

Dr. Kılıçdağı had planned to be at Fresno State for the semester, unfortunately, due to the pandemic and the transition to online courses, he was unable to come.

“It would have been a great

on Ellis Island, etc. Thanks to the tedious Ottoman interception of documents, she was also able trace letters of Armenian-American immigrants corresponding with other Armenians in the Ottoman Empire such as Cercis Gürjian who humorously describes Fresno in a letter: “this place has become Turkey.” In addition to her collection of documents, Dr. Gürsel has been afforded the opportunity to meet with living descendants of fourteen families whom she has traced. One such family is Hosrof Kevorkian’s, who moved to Fresno and established the Valley Fruit Co.

As Dr. Gürsel stated in her conclusion, “while the Ottoman State’s instrumental view of these photographs anticipated a very particular future intended to be prevented by these very portraits, I believe the trajectory of these photographs and that of the subjects within them is more radically open.”

opportunity to travel to Fresno,” stated Dr. Kılıçdağı. “It would have been an opportunity for me to get more familiar with one of oldest and most important Armenian communities in the United States. I was excited for the chance to visit William Saroyan’s hometown, especially since I have translated some of Saroyan’s works into Turkish for publication. I wanted to see the streets he wandered as a paperboy and the places that he lived. I hope I will have an opportunity to visit Fresno in the future.”

This unique course offered students the opportunity to learn about the Armenian people of the Ottoman Empire during a critical period.

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