

Prof. Tonoyan Begins New Teaching Position in Business at Fresno State

MICHAEL MAZMAN
STAFF WRITER

“Coming from a relatively poor background, it feels like a privilege to serve a community like this because you know that you are planting a seed that is going to grow.”

Dr. Vartuhi Tonoyan, professor of entrepreneurship and management in the Craig School of Business, has found a home at Fresno State after travelling across the world in pursuit of her advanced education and professional career opportunities. In every project that Dr. Tonoyan has taken on, she has advanced her lifelong mission of serving the underprivileged class, something she hopes to continue to do during her tenure at Fresno State.

Dr. Tonoyan was born in the village of Ninotsminda in Javakh, an Armenian enclave in southern Georgia. At the time Dr. Tonoyan was living there the town’s name was Bogdanovka and was part of the Soviet Union. She recalled stories from her childhood like putting on a red neckerchief as part of a Young Pioneers outfit to deliver speeches and poetry to her neighbors and relatives.

For her primary education, Dr. Tonoyan attended a Russian school in Georgia. Her Soviet upbringing and study of Russian literature greatly affected her familiarity with the roots of the Armenian culture. “When I was growing up, there was no Vartan Mamikonian or Sasuntsi Davit in the Russian school. I grew up reading Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Lermontov, and Yesenin – those were my idols.” While reminiscing about her experiences as a student, Tonoyan fondly looked back on those memories. “I always liked going to school. I loved surrounding myself with books and I adored my teachers. I was always happy when summer break was over, and I got to go back to school.”

Dr. Tonoyan’s admiration for her teachers is surely due, in part, to her own mother being a teacher of Armenian language and literature. Despite this, Tonoyan did not always aspire to become an educator. Growing up, she always envisioned becoming a lawyer, to defend the poor and the victims of petty corruption in Armenia and Georgia.

Dr. Tonoyan went on to explain that small-scale, petty corruption occurs on a daily basis in countries with economies in transition. “For example, you could be driving down the road and a policeman will pull you over just to ask for *baksheesh* (bribe). Either you bribe him or you’re not going to be able to keep driving.” On the other hand, advanced economies such as the United States are much more subject to grand corruption, which happens on the governmental scale, rather than petty corruption. “In the United States, most of the corruption is formalized in lobbying activities which aren’t necessarily observable on a daily basis to the average person,”



Dr. Vartuhi Tonoyan

stated Dr. Tonoyan.

When Dr. Tonoyan turned sixteen, she completed her secondary education in Georgia and moved to Yerevan where she studied international economic relations at the Yerevan Institute of National Economy. After receiving her bachelor’s degrees in economics and international relations, Dr. Tonoyan transferred to the University in Mannheim as a foreign exchange student. It was at the University of Mannheim where she completed her master’s studies in economics and management, and then began her doctoral studies. Dr. Tonoyan has been awarded with academic honors from every school that she has attended.

When asked about her motivation to move to the United States, Dr. Tonyan after some thought replied, “There was lots of serendipity involved with that decision. At the time I was entrenched in the University of Mannheim as a research assistant. Most of the professors at the business school knew me because of my success in getting published, acquiring third-party funded projects, and attending international research conferences – all while being quite young. On a whim, I decided to apply for a one-year postdoctoral studies program at Stanford University. I didn’t expect to get accepted, but when I found out that I did, I made the decision to move to the United States.”

After completing her post-doctoral position at Stanford, Dr. Tonoyan found a visiting position at the University of Alberta in Canada. While teaching there, she applied for full-time positions at a handful of schools on the west coast of the U.S. Dr. Tonoyan mentioned that she was “particularly interested in Fresno State due to its mission to serve students coming from an underprivileged background.” Clearly, Dr. Tonoyan has been attracted to institutions that promote entrepreneurial and educational equality regardless of gender, race, or socioeconomic class throughout her entire life.

Dr. Tonoyan attributes her academic and professional success to her parents. Her mother, Tsagik Darbinyan, was strict during her childhood but always made sure that she brought home the best grades. “Looking back, I would say that her imprint on me was very important... she taught me to always seek to learn and give my best,” said Dr. Tonoyan. Her father, Kimik Tonoyan, built and

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California State University, Fresno

Armenian Studies Program

Fall 2021 Schedule of Courses

Course	Units	Time	Day	Instructor
General Education-Breadth, Humanities, Area C2				
• Arm 1A-Elementary Armenian (Class #72435)	4	10:00A-11:50A	MW	B. Der Mugerdechian
General Education-Breadth, Arts, Area C1				
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia (Class #72968)	3	9:30A-10:45A	TuTh	B. Der Mugerdechian
General Education-Breadth, Area D2				
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies (Class #73272)	3	9:00A-09:50A	MWF	H. Ohanessian
General Education-Integration, Area IC				
• Arm 148-Mastpcs Arm Cult (Class #73978)	3	10:00A-10:50A	MWF	H. Ohanessian
• Arm 148-Mastpcs Arm Cult (Class #73350)	3	2:00P-3:15P	MW	H. Ohanessian
Upper Division Armenian Studies Course				
• ArmS 108A-Arm History I (Class #73761)	3	11:00A-12:15P	TuTh	B. Der Mugerdechian
Upper Division Armenian Studies Course				
• 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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Editor

Andrew Hagopian

Layout

Barlow Der Mugerdechian

Photographers

Andrew Hagopian
Barlow Der Mugerdechian

Staff Writers

Arshak Abelyan
Sosse Baloian
Sara Beberian
Michael Mazman
Christine Pambukyan
Carina Tokatian
Dustin Vartanian

Advisor

Barlow Der Mugerdechian
barlowd@csufresno.edu

Armenian Studies Program Faculty:

Barlow Der Mugerdechian, Berberian Coordinator, Armenian Studies Program and Director of the Center for Armenian Studies, ASO Advisor, *Hye Sharzhoom* Advisor (barlowd@csufresno.edu)

Sergio La Porta, Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies, Interim Associate Dean, College of Arts & Humanities

Hagop Ohanessian, Lecturer, Armenian Studies Program

Dickran Kouymjian, Berberian Professor Emeritus of Armenian Studies

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ARMENIAN STUDIES PROGRAM

5245 N. BACKER AVE. PB4

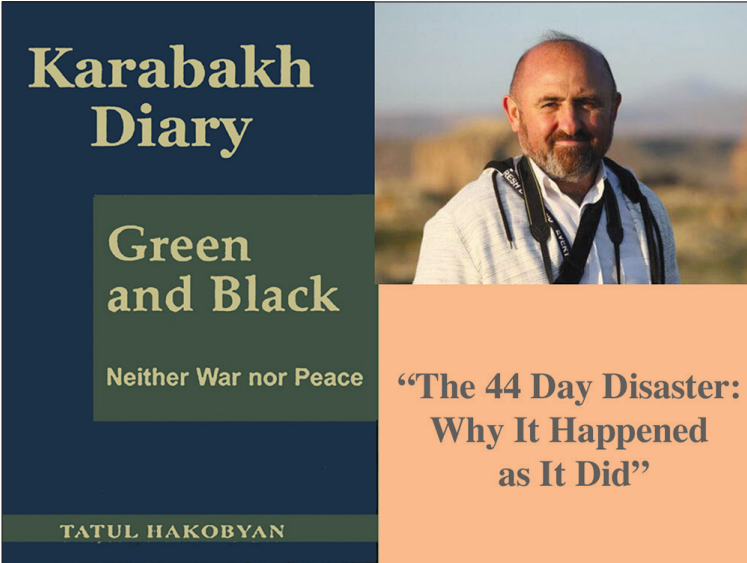
FRESNO, CA 93740-8001

TELEPHONE 559.278.2669

WWW.FRESNOSTATE.EDU/ARMENIANSTUDIES

BARLOWD@CSUFRESNO.EDU

Journalist Hakobyan Speaks on 2020 Artsakh War and its Causes



Journalist and political commentator Tatul Hakobyan spoke on March 6.

Photo: ASP Archive

DUSTIN VARTANIAN
STAFF WRITER

“Unfortunately, we did nothing to avoid this disastrous war.” These are the words of political analyst and author Tatul Hakobyan. Eight months have passed since the war between the Republic of Artsakh and Azerbaijan began on September 27, 2020 and the Republic of Armenia also finds itself in the middle of a political crisis.

On Saturday March 6, 2021, Hakobyan presented his thoughts about the recent war in Artsakh and the rising political tensions occurring today in Armenia. His lecture was titled, “The 44 Day Disaster: Why it Happened as It Did.” Hakobyan is an expert on this topic as he has covered the relationship between Armenia, Artsakh, and Azerbaijan for many years.

The presentation was moderated by Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian and was part of the Armenian Studies Program Spring 2021 Zoom Lecture Series and co-sponsored by the Homenetmen Fresno Sassoun Chapter.

The main topic of the presentation was outlining why the war was such a disaster for Armenia. Hakobyan explained several reasons why Armenia failed in the September war. He began by saying that Armenia “engaged in wishful thinking instead of facing reality” in terms of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Hakobyan stated that the Armenians were overconfident and that many Armenians thought that “if Azerbaijan started a war, we could win a war and we can win new territories.”

Hakobyan also explained that since the first Artsakh War, which ended in 1994, Azerbaijan has been strengthening its army with help from its “friends”: Turkey, Israel, and Russia. He stated that after the experiences with this war “we understood that there is a new reality in the Southern Caucasus. The reality is that the Azerbaijani Army is strong enough to defeat the Armenian and Karabakh armies.”

Hakobyan also explained that the Armenians were at a disadvantage with Azerbaijan’s use of drones and Russia’s neutrality in the war. Altogether, Hakobyan’s assessment was that

“The 44 Day Disaster: Why It Happened as It Did”

“there was no chance for Armenia to win this war.”

One of the sub-topics of the lecture was about Armenia’s Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan. Today in Armenia, there are opposition groups organizing protests calling for Prime Minister Pashinyan to resign.

Hakobyan agreed that Pashinyan should step down because, “Pashinyan is trying to persuade Armenians that he is not guilty of losing the war. I believe he is guilty. He is responsible for our defeat... Nikol Pashinyan must resign.”

Hakobyan also added that it was known that the war would be a failure from the very beginning. “By the third or fourth day it became obvious to me that we were badly losing this war. I understood at that time there was no organization and that Mr. Pashinyan was the person most responsible,” stated Hakobyan. He also believes that holding snap elections as soon as possible would be one of the best ways for Armenia to get past its political crisis.

Hakobyan interestingly places most of the responsibility of this disastrous war on Armenia. Instead of focusing on the external issues that started the war, he looked internally to understand what Armenia could have done to prevent this war.

He explained that it was very obvious that Azerbaijan was going to start a new war and Armenia missed the opportunity to strengthen itself in preparation. Numerous interesting questions were asked by the participants during the second half of the presentation. One of the questions was why Armenia has failed diplomatically in the last thirty years pertaining to the Karabagh conflict. For the past several years, Armenia has not been able to create stronger diplomatic ties with other countries throughout the world.

Hakobyan had a thought-provoking response. He stated that Armenia’s diplomacy is not the problem but rather the problem is “all of the countries in the world clearly said that Armenia should withdraw from the five adjacent territories in Nagorno Karabagh, but we did not listen to them. That is why we do not have friends in this world.”

This is also obvious because

Dr. Khatchig Mouradian Presents His Research in a New Book *The Resistance Network*

CHRISTINE PAMBUKYAN
STAFF WRITER

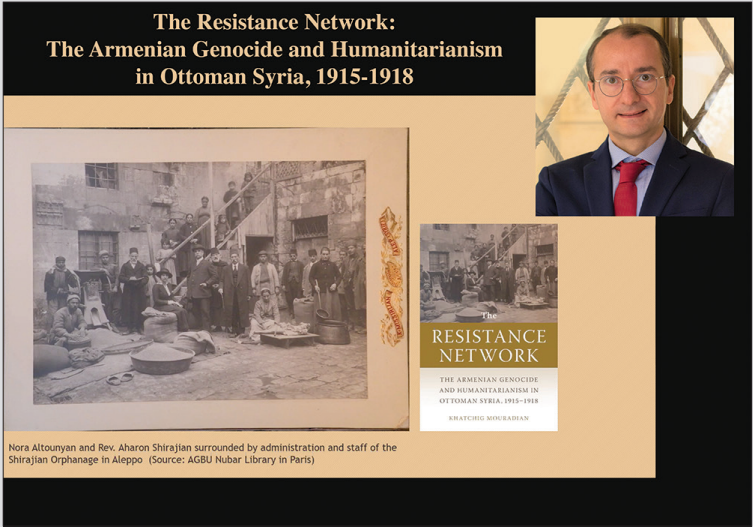
“Often times, when we think about the Armenian Genocide, we think about destruction, death, deportations, and ultimately... a narrative of massacres. ... In that kind of narrative, the role played by Armenian deportees in pushing back against the genocidal policies, in resisting these actions, is often understudied or altogether ignored,” explained Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist in the African and Middle Eastern Division at the Library of Congress. His book, *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915-1918*, demonstrates how secret local groups of Armenians, Jews, Arabs, missionaries, and diplomats aided Armenians during the Genocide.

On Saturday, March 27, 2021, Dr. Mouradian discussed *The Resistance Network* through a virtual presentation on Zoom, organized by the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State. In his discussion, Dr. Mouradian emphasized the humanitarian aid efforts by Armenians in Ottoman Syria.

Dr. Mouradian began his lecture with an overview of his research journey. Der Zor was an important symbol of deportation for Armenians in the summer of 1916. “To this day, the discussion of the Armenian deportees who had arrived in Ottoman Syria, central as it is to the history of the genocide and omnipresent as it is in the memoirs of survivors, remains understated with the exception of a few works” stated Dr. Mouradian.

Furthermore, while conducting his research, Dr. Mouradian only found summaries and excerpts of what happened. The lack of access to primary sources and Turkish denial campaigns added to the difficulty of compiling information.

“Had it not been for the many families who shared their stories and their account with me, one of the most important parts of the history of the Armenian Genocide would have remained less known; and would have been something



Dr. Khatchig Mouradian was a guest of the Armenian Studies Program on March 27, 2021.

that is forgotten,” emphasized Dr. Mouradian.

He then stated that despite the presence of non-violent resistance, the resistance narratives of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 focus on armed resistance in places like Van, Urfa, and Musa Dag. In those narratives, the role of women’s involvement in resisting the genocide, as well as that of other humanitarian resisters, is diminished if non-violent resistance is not mentioned.

Those who helped risked their lives, imprisonment, and torture, because their actions were against the Ottoman Empire should be included. Many who did aid the Armenians, including missionaries, Jews, and Arabs, were killed, imprisoned, or died of diseases they contracted from deportees.

Dr. Mouradian then presented a few key points he discovered in his research about Armenian humanitarian. “Armenians and others not only launched an extensive effort moments before any funds started flowing in from the United States and Europe, but also looked to themselves to supply aid to the deportees, beyond the reach of consuls and missionaries,” said Dr. Mouradian.

Dr. Mouradian mentioned a few specific examples of humanitarian resistance. “Armenians did indeed resist as soon as the Committee of Union and Progress enacted the empire-wide arrests, deportations, and massacres in the spring of 1915,” asserted Dr. Mouradian.

“What is striking is how fast some deportees who were arriving in Syria became part of this resistance network despite the risks involved, and in many cases despite their unfamiliarity with the region,” said Dr. Mouradian. In fact, from the fall of 1915 on, deportees used abandoned buildings and false documents to avoid attacks by Turkish officials. They organized schools, hospitals, hotels, orphanages that they used to house deportees. They also transported funds and prevented human trafficking. Many sacrificed their own well-being to aid the victims of genocide.

Dr. Mouradian concluded his lecture with photos of Syrian children he met in Der Zor as he and a few archeologists were looking for the Armenian remains from the Genocide of 1915. The children helped them by giving them some of those bones which they referred to as *Armenie*, or the Armenians. Today, the children in this photo were most likely evacuated and have become Syrian refugees.

“Their stories are the stories of today, and how we think, how we react, and how we engage with their stories and experiences will very much define the stories that people will tell one hundred years from now, when they are talking about this particular catastrophe” insists Dr. Mouradian.

A recording of the discussion, along with other lectures of this semester can be found on the Armenian Studies YouTube Channel at bit.ly/armenianstudiesyoutube.

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led four different companies from scratch in Georgia. A former math Olympiad winner, he taught Dr. Tonoyan an appreciation for math and analytical thinking, as well as an entrepreneurial mindset. Sadly, Kimik Tonoyan passed away a few weeks prior to the

“no country in the world blamed Azerbaijan for starting this war.” Hakobyan concluded his response by stating that “we thought we could keep all of the territories and that is why we lost everything.”

Another participant asked what the prerequisites were for a peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict.

Hakobyan gave several different scenarios for a possible

completion of this article.

Since Dr. Tonoyan holds a tenure-track position, research is a significant aspect of her job at Fresno State. Currently, she is continuing her lifelong studies and resubmitting papers on topics like gender inequality in entrepreneurship and innovation,

peaceful solution. He stated that the conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan will never be solved through war.

“With zero-sum games the Nagorno Karabagh conflict will never find a solution. We need a reasonable solution. We need a well-balanced solution. ... war is not an option.”

This presentation provided the participants a great opportunity to ask questions to an expert on

as well as the impact of corruption on firm innovativeness in emerging economies.

Dr. Tonoyan has found a home in Fresno and looks forward to making new friends in the Armenian community. She loves to paint, cook with and for friends, and host parties and book clubs.

the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict, who has witnessed the events unfolding throughout the years. It was also intriguing to listen to all of the questions the participants asked as it contributed to this uniquely styled lecture.

Hakobyan answered the participants questions in detail and gave an informative presentation which educated the audience on the current situation in Artsakh and Armenia.

Congratulations Armenian Studies Minors and Graduating Seniors of 2020-2021



GARO MINASIAN
History
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

Prof. Hagop Ohanessian is one of the best instructors at Fresno State because his courses are well organized and very interesting. He was among the first people to encourage me to pursue a Minor in Armenian Studies. On the other hand, Professor Barlow Der Mugerchian, who

is a great professor, encouraged me as well once I was pursuing my Minor.

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

My favorite Armenian course so far has been Armenian Studies 10 with Prof. Ohanessian because we learned a lot about Armenian history, immigration, and identity. We learned about the major developments of the first and second Armenian Republic which impacted Armenia, and we discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On the other hand, my other favorite Armenian course was “Arts of Armenia” with Prof. Der Mugrdechian, which went over the history of Armenian art, including paintings, sculptures, and carpets.

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

Armenian Studies courses helped me to continue shaping my identity within Fresno and within my relationships with my friends and family in the diaspora and Armenia. Knowing more about Armenian history made me more excited to share about it to other Armenians or non-Armenians. Being part of the Armenian community in Fresno makes me happy and excited. I would encourage everyone who is interested in pursuing a Minor in Armenian Studies because it is filled with many interesting courses taught by very professional instructors and faculty members. Plus, taking Armenian courses will help students financially through scholarships provided to the students who take an Armenian course at Fresno State.

What are your plans after graduation?

I would like to stay in Fresno and start working on my credentials program and to work on a master’s degree in history at the same time.

GREGORY KRIKORIAN
Business Administration-Management
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I wanted to learn more about my Armenian identity and I was really excited to learn the language, learn more about our history, and spend time with my fellow Armenian classmates.

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

My favorite classes were Armenian Studies 20, the “Arts of Armenia,” and Armenia 1A, “Elementary Armenian.” Seeing all the different paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and architecture was so interesting and I learned a lot. I also had a lot of fun learning the Armenian language because I had no prior knowledge of it coming into the class. A big thank you to Prof. Der Mugrdechian for teaching me so much and doing such a great job.

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

I was able to learn about my heritage, culture, and family history. I was able to learn a lot from my teachers about the Genocide and a lot from my family as well. I am leaving Fresno State now with much greater knowledge about who I really am as an Armenian.

What are your plans after graduation?

My plans are to find a house in the Fresno/Clovis area and to start working full time. I have really enjoyed my time here at Fresno State and I want to thank all my professors for being so great to me over the years.



DUSTIN VARTANIAN
Business Management
Minor in Armenian Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I took my first Armenian Studies course because I was interested in learning about my culture and my passion for Armenian Studies grew tremendously after that first course which was an Armenian literature course. My interests in Armenian studies continued to grow after each course. I never would have thought how involved and interested I would

have become in Armenian studies.

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

The Armenian language classes have been my favorite classes. It is so awesome to be able to take what you learn in class and use it outside of the classroom. The class is always a fun environment to be in.

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

There are several things I value from my experiences. There are too many to write down but I especially value the friends I have met through the Program and through ASO because I know these are life-long friends. I also value everything I have learned from this Program.

What are your plans after graduation?

To find a good job that I enjoy.

ERIK ABRAHAMYAN
Business Administration-Accountancy

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

For me as an international student from Armenia it was extremely important to stay close to the Armenian culture while studying far from Armenia. Honestly, I did not know how those courses would go, but that seemed like it was the best way to stay in touch with the Armenian culture and learn something new about it.

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

My favorite Armenian Studies class was the Armenian Studies 20, “Arts of Armenia” course. I learned a lot of new things about Armenia. When I lived in Armenia I thought that I knew all the places, all the important things about our culture, but after taking that class, I discovered that I knew only a little part of Armenian culture.

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

The Program is a hub for all Armenians in Fresno and also a chance for non-Armenians to discover Armenia. All the events and all the activities organized by the Program give a chance for Armenians to stay in touch with each other, to gather together, and to feel the warmth of being Armenian even if they did not know any Armenian. No one can imagine how important it was for me to feel that I was surrounded with Armenians in a foreign country.

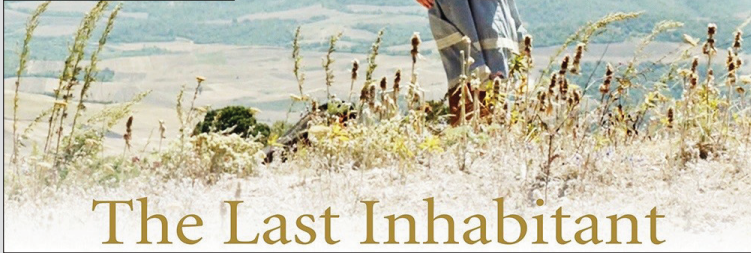
What are your plans after graduation?

My most important plan was to pursue a master’s degree in Moscow. However, COVID and the war in Armenia changed all my plans. I lost my some of the people I love in war [Artsakh War of 2020]. My view of life changed after that and now I feel that I must stay close to my family and stay in Armenia. Right now I am an intern at an accounting company and I am planning to work as an accountant after finishing the internship.



Photos: Andrew Hagopian and Barlow Der Mugrdechian

“The Last Inhabitant” Director Jivan Avetisyan Discusses Film



SARA BEBERIAN
STAFF WRITER

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” – Matthew 7:12.

This well-known verse is the opening to the film “The Last Inhabitant,” which tells the story of an Armenian man Abgar,

his daughter Yurga, and their Azerbaijani neighbor Ibrahim in Artsakh. Members of the local Fresno community had the opportunity to watch the film and meet via Zoom to discuss the film with director Jivan Avetisyan and Executive Producer Adrineh Mirzayan on Friday, April 16.

“The Last Inhabitant” was

the feature film in the weekly CineCulture series and class. Dr. Mary Husain teaches the course and the film screening was co-sponsored with the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State.

Avetisyan, joining from Yerevan, Armenia and Mirzayan joining from Los Angeles, were present to answer questions about the film and to delve deeper into the details of the film and the inspiration behind it. Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian provided the English translation for Avetisyan’s remarks.

Students in the CineCulture course, as well as community members, had the opportunity to watch the film the week before the April 16 discussion.

Avetisyan’s message to the students of the class was that they “should not be silent. They should speak out.” The world was silent in the face of the tragedy of the 2020 Artsakh war. The worst types of violence inflicted on the Armenians was ignored by the world. Women bore a special burden in the war as they had to

tend to children as well as suffer the loss of husbands.

Director Jivan Avetisyan was born in Gyumri, but grew up in Stepanakert, Artsakh. He attended the Yerevan Institute of Cinematography and Theatre and has produced over twenty documentaries to tell his stories. “The Last Inhabitant,” which is set during the Artsakh war, is especially dear to him, because Artsakh is extremely close to his heart. When speaking about Artsakh, his passion and love were visible. Avetisyan filmed the story in the same village he grew up in, Khachmach.

The film is based on a true story and parallels his life in many ways. Avetisyan was able to portray a glimpse of the overwhelming real-life horrors and traumas that Armenians face in the Artsakh region.

“This film is my life story. I live what you have viewed.” And for those who watched the film, this is a sad realization. However, it is the reality for our fellow Armenians still today. Being

Christian and Armenian is in no way easy. Every day is a fight for our lives and for what we hold dear.

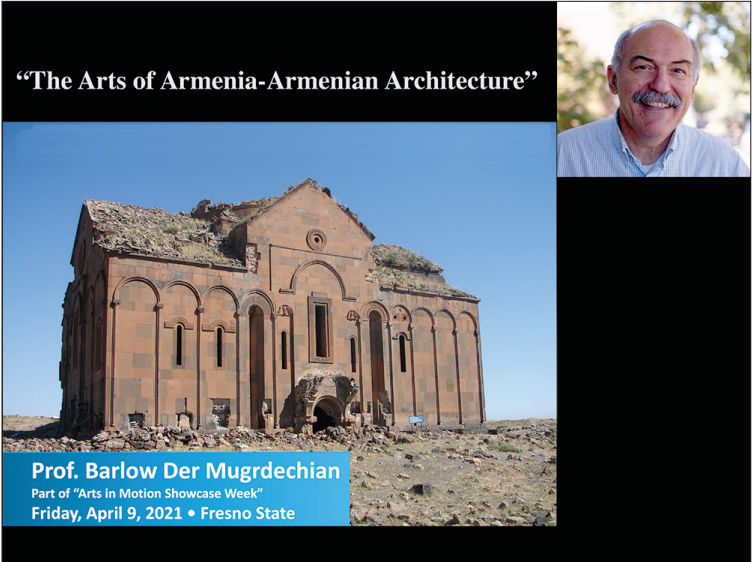
Avetisyan chose the verse from Matthew to portray the brutality and torture Azerbaijanis inflicted on Armenians, and to remind the viewers that others do not treat Armenians the way they should be treated. But this verse also reminds us to look within ourselves. Are we treating our extended Armenian family the way they should be treated?

It can be easy to forget about our Armenian brothers and sisters, our Armenian family, living in Artsakh and Armenia while living in Diaspora.

As Armenians, we should continue to treat our fellow Armenians, who are in need, how we would want to be treated.

Avetisyan’s film, “The Last Inhabitant,” it is now streaming on Amazon Prime, along with his first film, “Tevanik.” Leaving positive reviews on Amazon prime as well as on IMDB is also greatly appreciated.

Presentation on “Armenian Architecture” by Prof. Der Mugrdechian in “Arts in Motion Showcase”



SOSSE BALOIAN
STAFF WRITER

Armenian churches dominate the sphere of Armenian architecture. 3,788 Armenian churches were built in Greater Armenia in the period from the adoption of Christianity in the early fourth century to the early twentieth century.

Unfortunately, this number has diminished significantly and only 2.3% of Armenian churches in Turkey survived after the 1915 Genocide.

On Friday, April 9, 2021, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program, gave an overview of Armenian church architecture in his presentation, “The Arts of Armenia-Armenian Architecture.” This lecture was a part of the Armenian Studies Program Spring 2021 Lecture Series as well as the “Arts in Motion Showcase Week” of the College of Arts and Humanities at Fresno State.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian stated that art historians typically categorize Armenian church architecture based on the style or the period of construction. Early Armenian church construction is divided into two periods. The first period dates from the late fourth century to the late seventh century followed by a brief interruption when the Arab Empire conquered most of Armenia.

Then from the ninth to eleventh century a “renaissance of Armenian church building” took place under the Armenian Bagratuni and Artsruni kingdoms.

Present in both periods are four key characteristics that make up the “National Style” of Armenian church architecture: the use of large cut stone, usually tufa; vaulted ceilings; a dome; and composite roofs.

Although Armenian church architecture has a national style, Prof. Der Mugrdechian highlighted the diversity in Armenian church production throughout the centuries by discussing several different churches throughout Greater Armenia.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian explained that the use of large cut stone in construction pre-dates the period of Armenian Christian architecture.

In Yerevan, Armenia, archaeologists excavated the remains of the ancient Urartian

fortress of Erebuni, dating to 782 B.C. Within the fortress, the remnant walls of the Temple of Erebuni demonstrate “the use of large cut stone [which became] the basis for the building of monumental buildings in Armenia,” according to Prof. Der Mugrdechian.

He explained that volcanic tufa or basalt was abundant in Armenia whereas wood was often scarce. Volcanic stone is relatively easy to cut and has the quality of becoming stronger over time.

Another prominent stylistic element, the vaulted ceiling, is a series of self-supporting arches above walls. Der Mugrdechian stated that one feels a sense of space when standing inside the structure and looking up towards the ceiling.

He expressed this concept by showing images of the Tanahat church which was built during the fifth-sixth century. Although the Tanahat church is in ruins today due to damage from earthquakes, art historians have been able to learn a lot about Armenian architecture by examining its ruins.

When designing churches, Armenian architects initially adopted the basilica style from Roman architecture. Eventually, Armenians developed new styles of church architecture to reflect their Christian beliefs.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian remarked that “the Armenians wanted to form spaces for worship that were different than what were used in pagan times.” The central worship service of the Armenian Church - the Divine Liturgy and Holy Communion - helped inspire the theological purpose behind Armenian church architecture.

By the sixth-seventh centuries, the use of domes dominated Armenian church construction. Prof. Der Mugrdechian explained that many view the dome as a “symbol of heaven, perfection, or the greatness of God.”

Holy Etchmiadzin, the church of the “Descent of the Only Begotten,” was actually one of the earliest Armenian churches built with a dome.

It was constructed in 303 A.D. according to Agatangelos, a chronicler of Armenian Christianity, but was partially destroyed during the Persian wars and rebuilt in 484 A.D. The church is categorized in the

centrally planned style because the structure is designed to support the dome with the use of pillars and buttressing to help reinforce the walls.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian explained that an interesting aspect of Armenian church architecture is that the outline of the spaces in the internal structure is not always visible from the outside. This is accomplished by the use of composite roofing. Many Armenian churches, including the Cathedral of Ani and St. Hripsime demonstrate the use of composite roofs.

According to Prof. Der Mugrdechian, the Cathedral of Ani is arguably one of the most outstanding examples of Armenian church architecture. The Cathedral of Ani was built during the period of the Bagratuni kingdom in 1001 A.D. Today it is located on the border between Turkey and Armenia. The Cathedral is built with polychromatic tufa stone, ranging from different shades of orange and black and the external walls are decorated with elegant arcades.

St. Hripsime was built in 618 A.D. during the Catholicosate of Komitas I. It is considered one of the most popular Armenian churches because it commemorates the spot where the virgin Hripsime was martyred by King Trdat in the 4th century.

This church is a popular pilgrimage site that houses the tomb of St. Hripsime underneath the main altar. The church was built in the Armenian radiating style which features a massive faceted dome covering the main hall.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian demonstrated that the Armenian radiating style became a common style in Armenian architecture, with individual differences as in the church at Aghtamar.

The Church of the Holy Cross was built in Lake Van during the period of the Artsruni kingdom in the tenth century on Aghtamar island.

It is unique for its extensive decoration of externals reliefs, particularly the program of Old Testament reliefs. Inside the church, the walls are decorated with frescoes reflecting themes from the New Testament.

“Armenian churches are still being built throughout the world in a variety of styles, some imitating the earlier church styles but some using modern building techniques which are different but at least try to give the distinctive look to Armenian architecture,” concluded Prof. Der Mugrdechian.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian’s presentation was based on a course that he teaches, “The Arts of Armenia” developed from Dr. Dickran Kouymjian’s book *The Arts of Armenia*, which is available as an online resource through the Armenian Studies Program website, <http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/armenianstudies/resources/artsofarmeniaindex.html>.

Armenian Studies Program Continues Activities During Pandemic Year



The Armenian Studies Annual Banquet is one of the highlights of the year. Shown here is the 2019 Annual Banquet. The 2020 Banquet was postponed due to the pandemic.

MICHAEL RETTIG
SPECIAL TO HYE SHARZHOOM

This article initially was published in the March 11, 2021 issue of The Armenian-Mirror Spectator and is being republished with their permission.

It was one year ago this March that the world ground to a halt in order to slow the rapidly spreading COVID-19 virus. Institutions and organizations around the world were forced to quickly adapt to the changed reality or drastically cut back their activities. The pandemic has been especially challenging for colleges and universities that serve as centers of learning, collaboration, and socialization for students and teachers. Colleges, like institutions around the world, have had to transition their services online, finding novel ways to meet the needs of students and community.

Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian, the Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program (ASP) at Fresno State, met these challenges head on when California first went on lockdown and events transitioned online. “People wanted to feel connected and that’s why I felt that I could not just shut everything down, though that would have been the easy route. I took the opposite approach and decided we needed, at the very least, to continue to schedule regular events, or even to increase the number of events per semester.”

For over 40 years, the Armenian Studies Program has played a unique role in the Fresno community. Since he began teaching at Fresno State in 1985, Prof. Der Mugrdechian has sought to maintain that role. The program not only educates a wide variety of students on Armenian culture, literature, language, art, and history, but it provides avenues for the students and community to engage with one another and with other prominent Armenians from around the world. Since its inception, the program has regularly held events including concerts, lectures, film festivals, banquets, exhibits, and more for students and the community. Each event brings prominent Armenian scholars, directors, and authors to Fresno. “We bring people to the university and fulfill an educational role that no other institution in Fresno fulfills,” said Prof. Der Mugrdechian. “Students, their parents, their grandparents, and their family

become tied to the university through the program.”

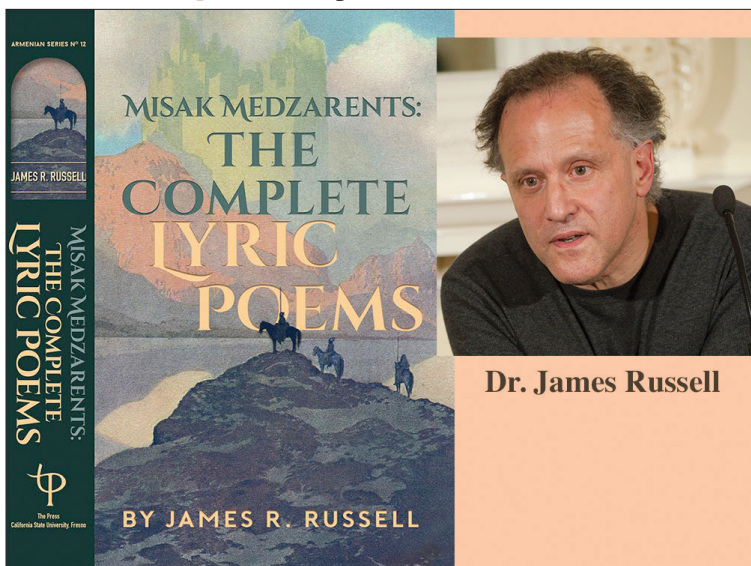
During the pandemic, the Armenian Studies Program has maintained a rigorous calendar of online events to keep the year as normal as possible for students. Classes are held synchronously over Zoom and the Program continues to hold some twenty community online presentations each year. In some ways, the online setting has given the program a greater reach than ever before. “Now our events are bringing people from literally all over the world because all you have to do is get a link to participate,” Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian stated.

Before the pandemic, ASP events fulfilled not only an educational role, but a social one, bringing Fresno Armenians together from across political, social, and religious divides. At any given ASP event, one could expect to run into fellow classmates, distant relatives, friends from church, or one’s local dentist. Ariana Garabedian, Vice President of the Armenian Students Organization (ASO) at Fresno State, especially misses being able to socialize and network after events. “They’re not just lectures or programs that we attend and then and forget about. These events are something that people really engage with after the fact.”

Fellow student and ASO President Dustin Vartanian echoed these sentiments, noting that the level of learning has not been disrupted due to Prof. Der Mugrdechian’s efforts, but the social and networking opportunities have inevitably diminished. “To be able to meet and interact with the visiting lecturer in person and spend time visiting with community members over coffee and snacks is something I truly miss,” said Vartanian. It is this social aspect of the Program that coronavirus has most disrupted over the past year as courses and community lectures transitioned online.

For Vartanian, the Armenian Studies Program became central to his college experience soon after he became involved. “Even though I’m a business management major, I feel like my entire college experience has been centered around Armenian studies. It’s made me think about my Armenian-American identity in new ways and introduced me to some of my closet friends,” said

Dr. James Russell Gives Insight on His New Book “Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems”



ARSHAK ABELYAN
STAFF WRITER

“The magician works his alchemy not upon stone and gold but upon something deeper in us, the uniquely human gift to perceive language,” stated Dr. James Russell, describing the poet Misak Medzarents.

On Thursday, March 11, 2021, Dr. James Russell, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies, Emeritus, at Harvard University, discussed his newly published book, *Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems*. Dr. Russell praised the significance of Misak Medzarents as a writer and poet.

“They [Misak Medzarents and Bedros Tourian] were alien to their own time. They were poets of the future trapped in a past to which their beauty was alien and unappreciated,” said Dr. Russell.

Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poems was published in 2020 as volume 12 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno, under the general editorship of Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdchian.

Misak Medzarents, who Dr. Russell calls “dreamer, time-traveler, and magician,” was born on January 18, 1986, in the village of Pingian, in the Armenian Highlands, where he spent much of his early childhood. He and his family, aware of the rising chaos and massacres against Armenians in the mid-1890s, decided to move to Sepastia thinking that it would be much safer there for them. Safety was not guaranteed as they had hoped it would have been. Shortly after arriving there Medzarents was stabbed in the back by the son of a Turkish butcher. Dr. Russell stated that this “spurred his first very anguished poem, ‘Wound to the Body, Wound to the Heart,’ in which Medzarents is overcome by horror, not so much at the physical abuse but at the hatred that accompanied it.” Although most of his poetry is not political, Medzarents was very much affected in his life and in his work and by what was happening in the Ottoman Empire.

In the book, Dr. Russell presents nearly two hundred poems by Medzarents, translated into English, with the accompanying Armenian text in the appendix.

The work includes extensive commentaries by Dr. Russell that investigate the complexities of Medzarents’ varied use of Armenian vocabulary.

“I think it has helped one to understand the poems better. Tracing Medzarents’ language allows us also to enter the laboratory of his mind, to explore the furnishings of his imagination, to browse in his secret inner library, that is to understand his creative process,” said Dr. Russell.

Most of Medzarents’ poems were of memories of his childhood in Pingian, of love, in which Dr. Russell explains that Medzarents was in “love with love itself,” although the traditional culture he experienced restrained him of his desires. According to Dr. Russell, Medzarents faced criticism for his poems about love. He added “the literary establishment, the cancel culture of the day, savagely attacked him as a decadent, a degenerate.” The restraint he faced created a sense of loneliness and anguish in which he “deploys against through a seductive vocabulary.”

In a specific example of the use of this type of vocabulary, Dr. Russell referred to the imprisoned King Arshak II’s final moments, prior to stabbing a fruit knife into his own heart. In those moments, Dr. Russell painted a picture of King Arshak II enjoying himself in the luxury of wine right before his fate. He says that Medzarents recreated a similar “Nocturnal Bacchanal” where the moment of dawn breaking on the Bosphorus drew a feeling for the moment to linger. Medzarents composed a word to describe the moment, “herahosan,” which he defines as “flowing with fire.” Dr. Russell explains that “water flows, fire does not flow, but it is the peculiar power of language that it can shape a word in which contraries exist in which fire does flow a word.”

Dr. Russell completed his book in the Judean Hills near Ein Karem in the summer, while he was teaching at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His motivation to initially start writing the book came when “it became clear towards the end of the 20th century that the Western Armenian language, that

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Monuments in Artsakh and Syria in Danger of Destruction Subject of SAS-SSA Panel of Experts

MICHAEL MAZMAN
STAFF WRITER

With the signing of the ceasefire agreement between Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan on November 9, 2020, several historically Armenian regions of Artsakh were surrendered to Azerbaijan – leaving thousands of monuments exposed and in danger of defacement and destruction. With these historic Christian sites in the hands of the Azeris, the risk of further “de-Armenization” in the Nagorno-Karabakh region is incredibly high.

On February 27, 2021, the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS), in collaboration with the Syrian Studies Association (SSA), held a discussion panel with the title “Heritage Imperiled: Wartime Destruction of Antiquities from Syria to Artsakh.” The panel was moderated by SSA board member, Dr. Heghnar Watenpaugh, who is a professor of art history at the University of California, Davis.

Professor Watenpaugh opened the discussion by introducing Dr. Christina Maranci, professor of Armenian art and architecture at Tufts University and award-winning author of numerous publications on medieval Armenian art and architecture. Professor Maranci began by describing the broad scope of the monuments in the regions of Nagorno-Karabakh occupied by Azerbaijan.

“Some sites in this incredible range [of monuments] date back to the earliest periods of Christianity, while others were built as recently as the twentieth century,” stated Dr. Maranci. She continued that the wide variety of these regionally historic artifacts, which are now under Azeri control, “makes the extent for potential damage very great.”

Dr. Maranci also addressed Azerbaijan’s destructive policies in the past as a precedent for what might happen to today’s monuments in the region. She cited the state-sponsored destruction of the Armenian cemetery in Julfa, Nakhichevan as cause for concern.

To this day, Azerbaijan continues to deface Armenian inscriptions on monuments in an attempt to strip away the true historical roots of the region. Recently, Azeri politicians and public figures have taken to social media to “deliberately misrepresent the origin of these Christian monuments by claiming that they are not Armenian, but rather Caucasian-Albanian.” This process, often referred to as “artwashing,” is a calculated effort by Azerbaijan to remove the long-time Armenian presence in the region.

The next speaker was Dr. Ani Avagyan, chair of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) National Committee of Armenian Museums. Dr. Avagyan’s main focus was on the effect of Artsakh war on the Armenian museums and their collections in Nagorno-Karabakh. The data from her



Top row, left to right, Dr. Stephennie Mulder, Dr. Christina Maranci, Dr. Elyse Semerdjian. Bottom row, left to right, Dr. Bedross Der Matossian, Dr. Ani Avagyan, Dr. Heghnar Watenpaugh, and Dr. Salam Al Kuntar.

discussion was astounding – out of 22 museums operating in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, 12 have been destroyed, along with over 20,000 pieces of cultural art and heritage.

Dr. Avagyan spoke primarily about the six museums in Shushi, the cultural center of the Nagorno-Karabakh region. “Only the collection from one of these museums, the Shushi Carpet Museum, was partially evacuated,” stated Avagyan. The Shushi Carpet Museum was established in 1992, in a large 19th century house which was used as a Soviet maternity ward. The original collection consisted of over 210 unique exhibits, however only a portion of the carpets could be evacuated to Armenia in early September. On February 20, 2021, the Tamanyan National Museum-Institute of Architecture in Yerevan “opened a beautiful exhibition of the saved carpets.”

The next speaker was Dr. Salam Al Kuntar, lecturer and assistant professor in classics at Rutgers University. Dr. Al Kuntar spoke about the destruction of cultural heritage in Syria over the last decade. “Syria is home to six world heritage sites... and all six of them have been damaged in one way or another.” These cultural monuments have been subject to unprecedented destruction by way of collateral damage and also targeted bombings. The perpetrators of these attacks are many – the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF), the Islamic State (ISIS), Shi’a militias, Syrian rebels during the Syrian civil war, and more recently, Turkish and Russian airstrikes.

In the wake of Syria’s perpetually unstable political atmosphere, Al Kuntar and her colleagues started the “Safeguarding the Heritage of Syria and Iraq Project” as a platform for the preservation of Syrian heritage. They provide training workshops for Syrian and Iraqi professionals to teach them proper conservation techniques and aid the evacuation of artifacts to safer cities like Damascus.

The final speaker was Dr. Stephennie Mulder, associate professor of Islamic art and architecture at the University of Texas at Austin. Professor Mulder

made several observations regarding the reactions that global media has towards different kinds of cultural cleansing throughout the Middle East. While her discussion was mainly focused on the countries of Iraq and Syria, her thoughts apply to the ongoing crisis situation in Armenia as well.

“Although it was hardly reported in the Western media, June of 2014 was the beginning of the ISIS movement of cultural destruction that targeted local communities first and foremost,” stated Dr. Mulder. These initial attacks were primarily targeted towards the ancient Christian sites in Mosul, including the tomb of the Prophet Jonah and the monastery of Saint Elijah. Although this series of destructive episodes devastated the local communities in the region, “it wasn’t until the January and February of 2015 that ISIS got the attention of the world when they published that infamous video of themselves destroying sculptures with sledgehammers in the Mosul Museum.”

Professor Mulder made it a point to indicate the difference in the reactions to these events. She attributed this phenomenon to the idea of “global heritage,” or the thought-process that cultural heritage belongs to all people and it is the world’s duty to protect it. Professor Mulder claimed that “this idea denudes the sites of local cultural participation and engagement by reducing their relevance to the local populations.” By expecting all nations of the world to make a collective effort to protect endangered cultural monuments, a diffusion of responsibility has taken place with regard to resisting cultural genocide. Such is the case for the destruction of antiquities and monuments in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, perpetuated by Azerbaijan.

Professor Watenpaugh concluded the presentation with closing remarks and facilitated the question-and-answer portion of the panel. From the information presented by the panelists, it is clear to see that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is currently in the midst of a cultural crisis with

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Vartanian. Garabedian similarly established a close bond with her classmates. “I miss sitting in class with like-minded individuals knowing that they’re on the same path of learning our language and history together. It’s special to have those learning moments with classmates that you end up becoming best friends with.”

In a normal year, ASP students would have had the opportunity to participate in a study abroad trip to Armenia, where they would have had the opportunity to experience the culture and art in person, as well as strengthen their existing friendships with classmates. Over

the years, Prof. Der Mugrdchian has taken nearly 100 students to Armenia, many for their first time. A planned trip to Armenia in the summer of 2021 was postponed due to the pandemic; however, the trip will be rescheduled when conditions permit.

Though the pandemic has posed new challenges to education, the Armenian Studies Program has navigated them without sacrificing its mission to educate students and promote Armenian culture in the community. Now, with the vaccine rollout underway, students are hopeful that in-person learning is on the horizon.

BIDEN, FROM PAGE 1

Statement by President
Joe Biden on Armenian
Remembrance Day-
April 24, 2021

Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring. Beginning on April 24, 1915, with the arrest of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople by Ottoman authorities, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination. We honor the victims of the Meds Yeghern so that the horrors of what happened are never lost to history. And we remember so that we remain ever-vigilant against the corrosive influence of hate in all its forms.

Of those who survived, most were forced to find new homes and new lives around the world, including in the United States.

With strength and resilience, the Armenian people survived and rebuilt their community. Over the decades Armenian immigrants have enriched the United States in countless ways, but they have never forgotten the tragic history that brought so many of their ancestors to our shores. We honor their story. We see that pain. We affirm the history. We do this not to cast blame but to ensure that what happened is never repeated.

Today, as we mourn what was lost, let us also turn our eyes to the future—toward the world that we wish to build for our children. A world unstained by the daily evils of bigotry and intolerance, where human rights are respected, and where all people are able to pursue their lives in dignity and security. Let us renew our shared resolve to prevent future atrocities from occurring anywhere in the world. And let us pursue healing and reconciliation for all the people of the world.

The American people honor all those Armenians who perished in the genocide that began 106 years ago today.

MEDZARENTS, FROM PAGE 6

of everyday conversation in the diaspora communities here, had become [according to UNESCO] an endangered language. I felt it was a moral duty to devote serious attention to it accordingly.”

Misak Medzarents died of tuberculosis at the early age of 22. The same disease also claimed the life of Bedros Tourian fifteen years prior to Misak Medzarents’ birth. “Yeghishe Charents was in my humble estimation the greatest Armenian poet who ever lived, and he too also died early and tragically. He was only forty,” said Dr. Russell.

“Even if Medzarents had overcome his disease and lived on, it is very likely he would have been killed in the genocide of 1915 with the hundreds of other Armenian writers, artists, and thinkers of the capital whom he knew.”

Towards the end of the discussion, Dr. Russell read a few poems in both English and in Western Armenian, including

that of “The Song of Life.” He concluded the presentation by reflecting on the Armenian Genocide and the atrocities Armenians faced in the early 20th century and connecting Medzarents to it.

“We tend to think of the past as having an inevitability, that whatever was happening in the Armenian community in Armenian life led up to 1915, but that’s not true,” stated Dr. Russell. “1915 was an interruption of life. There was nothing in Armenian life and culture that produced that destruction. On the contrary, it was perhaps because it was so thriving that those who were fearful or envious attacked it.”

“I think one should hold on to and recognize that this was a vibrant culture and that by studying it, by translating it, we are keeping it alive,” concluded Dr. Russell.

Misak Medzarents: The Complete Lyric Poetry is available through Abril Bookstore or the NAASR bookstore.

Dr. Derderian on the Role of “Pandukhts” from Van

CARINA TOKATIAN
STAFF WRITER

A nineteenth century Armenian migrant once wrote in a song, “I have left properties and orchards behind. Every time I say *ahh*, my heart breaks apart, oh crane wait for a second, let my soul hear your voice, oh crane, don’t you have any news from our country?” It was verses like these that characterized the experiences of an Armenian *pandukht*, a migrant from one of the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, who left their village to settle in cities such as Constantinople.

On Friday, March 19, the Armenian Studies Program and the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) hosted a Zoom and YouTube lecture, “Migrants from Van and the Transforming Politics of Representation in the Ottoman Empire, 1850s-1870s” by Dr. Dzovinar Derderian.

Dr. Derderian is currently a professor at the American University of Armenia, a member of the editorial board of *Études arméniennes contemporaines*, and editor of the “Entries of the Society for Armenian Studies” website. She has previously written her Ph.D. dissertation on “Nation-making and the Language of Colonialism: Voices from Ottoman Van in Armenian Print Media and Handwritten Petitions, 1820s to 1870s” and has co-edited *The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities, and Politics*.

Dr. Derderian’s lecture centered around *pandukhts*, a multifaceted term that generally referred to Armenians who migrated from their homeland in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire and settled in urban areas such as Constantinople during the second half of the nineteenth century. She explained how this term was often associated with the vast number of labor migrants who settled in Constantinople. However, the term was also loosely applied to any Armenian who left their home. “Whether one was a merchant, a student, a clergyman, or a labor migrant, if the individual traveled away from Van and especially to Istanbul, they would often call themselves *pandukhts*” stated Dr. Derderian. Exploring archives from the AGBU Nubar Library in Paris and the Ottoman archives, Dr. Derderian’s research focused specifically on the prominence of *pandukhts* who migrated from Van to Constantinople.

Pandukhts typically resided in “*hans*” or large inns that remained a distance from the rest of the city. Typically, the residents’ dwellings were located on the second floor of these buildings while the first floor was dedicated to merchandise and newspaper

MONUMENTS, FROM PAGE 6

its historical monuments under the constant threat of defacement and destruction.

Despite Azerbaijan’s attempts to erase memories and rewrite history, the stories will never be lost in the Armenian people. While

Mkrtich Khrimian



“Migrants from Van and the Transforming Politics of Representation in the Ottoman Empire, 1850s-1870s”

Dr. Dzovinar Derderian spoke on March 19.

publishing houses. As residents of *hans*, Dr. Derderian mentioned how *pandukhts* were exempt from taxes in Constantinople but still expected to pay taxes in their hometown. This further linked them to their home provinces. In addition, the emergence of steamships on the Black Sea abbreviated the journey between Van and Istanbul from seven or eight weeks to three, which strengthened the link between *pandukhts* and their villages.

Though perhaps seemingly depicted as uninvolved in the political sphere in articles, letters, songs, and poems, Dr. Derderian emphasized how “*pandukhts* were not just objects of paintings, photography, and literature, but they were also active subjects of history.” As the Ottoman Empire experienced the Tanzimat period, an era when governmental reform and the notion of voting circulated, the Armenian community began to restructure and centralize itself under the *millet* system.

By 1863, the Armenian National Constitution was implemented, and the National Assembly was organized in Constantinople with the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople at its head. Therefore, there existed many opportunities for *pandukhts* to become involved in the political sphere. As Dr. Derderian noted, men who paid at least 75 *khurush* could vote, and there was some representation of the eastern provinces in the assembly.

Hans also had a major influence on *pandukhts*’ political involvement. “*Hans* were a place where people could assemble to prepare a collective petition,” said Dr. Derderian.

Usually petitions sent from Van could take four to seven weeks before being read by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, whereas local petitions could be submitted in six days. This was due to the fact that scribes were easier to access in the capital, and petitions were much cheaper to submit locally.

In addition, Dr. Derderian highlighted how the *pandukhts*’ convenient proximity to

publishing houses gave them immediate access to newspapers as well as opportunities to submit letters to the newspaper. Coffeehouses located at *hans* also welcomed political dialogues and petitions. Some of the concerns that *pandukhts* voiced through petitions pertained to ecclesiastical matters regarding the Catholicos, the Prelate of Van, and other church leaders.

Dr. Derderian underscored that clergymen did not simply have authority over spiritual matters but also collected taxes and unified families through marital alliances among their many responsibilities. For instance, the accusation that Catholicos Khachatur Shiroyan murdered his predecessor Bedros drew much attention in petitions and newspapers. “Petitioning was an important avenue to which the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire could make their voice heard to higher authorities,” Dr. Derderian stated. In contradiction to the notion that Armenians in the provinces were not in touch with Enlightenment ideals, she noted how the concept of popular representation or “the people’s voice” was evoked in petitions.

For instance, in a petition from 1871, she revealed how in contrast to previous petitions, the *pandukhts* did not “appeal to the mercy of the authority” such as the Patriarchate or members of the National Assembly. Instead, they appealed to “the law and their rights.” As she asserted, “it reveals the transformations in understanding of power, justice, and politics that were happening in this period.”

Ultimately as Dr. Derderian concluded, “the depiction of *pandukhts*’ lives in a vibrant setting of communication and sociability allows us to imagine them beyond their menial jobs, beyond the naiveté and poverty which literary works, newspapers, paintings, and books of the nineteenth century usually ascribed to *pandukhts*.” Instead, their presence in the Ottoman capital propelled political and social change.

our physical monuments continue to be destroyed, the Armenian culture will be preserved forever

in spirit; something that no man or nation can destroy.

Read all of the back issues of Hye Sharzhoom

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Flowers at the Monument.

ASO, FROM PAGE 1

past, it is always a memorable time when ASO meets together. On a cool and windy day in late February, ASO members headed eastward into the Sierra Nevada Foothills to hike the perimeter of Avocado Lake. Everyone walked along the rocky path around the uniquely shaped lake. The foothills were covered in green and there were fields of almond blossoms along the way as well. It was great to spend the morning talking with friends and walking through the crisp spring air. In April, ASO also ventured out to walk the Woodward Park Shinzen Japanese Gardens. Within the

James L. Melikian & L.A. Brothers Scholarship
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Sosse Baloian
Suzanna Ekmekchyan

lush gardens there were colorful flowers, ponds, and bonsai trees. The group wandered through the entire garden and even climbed a few trees along the way. Afterwards, the group relaxed at a local frozen yogurt shop.

They dashed around Fresno; it was a big race! In late March, ASO led a “Fresno Scavenger Hunt-Armenian Edition.” Members met at Fresno State as the starting point. They were divided into teams and were given the task of taking a photo at each destination the scavenger hunt took them. The first team to have all seven pictures at each destination and return to campus was the winner. The scavenger hunt included seven destinations which were: The Saroyan House Museum, Simonian Farms, the Tehlirian monument, the bust of William Saroyan, the David of Sassoun statue, William Saroyan’s headstone, and the High Quality Bakery building. The first-place team was Jonathan Chardukian, Mathew Mugerdechian, and Mitchel Statler.

The Armenian Genocide Monument was glowing. Candles

Ariana Garabedian
Krystal King
Gregory Krikorian
Matthew Mugerdechian
Christine Pambukyan
Tatiana Samouie
Angele Soghomonian
Mark Soghomonian
Dustin Vartanian
Anahit Yerdoglyan
Rita Yerdoglyan
Haiganoosh (Agnes) and Simon D. Peterson Family Scholarship
Sarine Petrosyan
Robert V. Saroyan Family Scholarship
Tatiana Samouie
Walter Sepetjian Scholarship
Erik Abrahamyan
Genevieve Tatoian Scholarship
Christine Pambukyan
Harry & Mary Topoozian Merit Scholarship
Dikran Dzhezyan
Triple X, Selma Chapter Armenian Scholarship
Matthew Mugerdechian

Warren Paboojian Award for Hye Sharzhoom Editor
Andrew Hagopian

illuminated the interior and a multitude of flowers surrounded the eternal flame. The quietness of the night enabled one to listen to the peaceful sound of the waterfalls that cascade down each column of the monument. On April 23, 2021, ASO dedicated the evening for the 106th year of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide.

The evening began with the viewing of the movie “The Promise.” “We are still here,” the main character of the movie, Mikael, exclaimed at the conclusion of the film which was one of the major themes of the movie.

After the film ended, students and friends traveled to the Genocide Monument at Fresno State. The participants gathered around the monument and held a moment of prayer led by Father Yessai Bedros, pastor of St. Paul Armenian Church. “Hayr Mer” and “Der Voghormya” were sung by all in attendance. After Father Bedros’ homily, each attendee, one by one, laid their flowers in the center of the Monument. It had been two years since the students

ASP BANQUET, FROM PAGE 1
“We are so proud of you [scholarship recipients] and your hard work and dedication to Armenian Studies,” affirmed Dr. La Porta. “The Armenian Studies Program has been a shining example of how to adapt to a new environment. Our classes, that serve a wide array of Fresno State students, makes sure that the future leaders of this region are educated in Armenian affairs. Our activities are possible because of you [the community] who support us.”

A retrospective on the *Hye Sharzhoom* newspaper was then featured, presenting highlights from the more than forty years of the newspaper.

Armenian Studies Program Lecturer Dr. Hagop Ohanessian introduced Dr. Honora Chapman, Interim Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities. Dr. Chapman offered a congratulatory message to the student recipients of Armenian Studies scholarships. She then thanked the community members who have supported the Program for many decades. She also expressed her appreciation to the faculty of the Armenian Studies Program for their ability to connect with the students and the community.

Forty-seven students were awarded more than \$67,000 in scholarship in the 2020-2021 academic year and photos of each of the recipients were shown along with the scholarship fund from which they had been awarded.

Each year, graduating seniors with a Minor in Armenian Studies are asked to speak at the Banquet. This year Dikran Dzhezyan, Garo Minasian, and Dustin Vartanian

spoke about their experiences in the Armenian Studies Program and expressed how the Program had impacted their careers at Fresno State.

Prof. Der Mugerdechian then introduced the keynote speaker, Fresno State Interim President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, who for more than twenty years has been a professor, department chair, Dean, and Provost at Fresno State, before being named as Interim President in January of 2021.

“Based on my many friends, I have developed a deep appreciation of the Armenian-American community,” stated Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval. “My appreciation for Armenia, its culture and history, deepened with a trip to Armenia with my family in 2019. We visited the most sacred sites in Armenia with Dr. La Porta. It was there that I understood the Armenians’ love for their alphabet, which enshrines their history, their spiritual beliefs as a people and their ethos.”

Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval spoke about the Armenian Studies Program scholarship program. “Giving scholarships has two meaningful outcomes: the first is to help deserving students with an education and the second is to keep the memory of an ancestor alive. A scholarship translates into a meaningful way of showing respect, love, and remembrance to those special people in your life.” He thanked the community by “keeping the flame alive” through their philanthropy.

The special video presentation was a celebration of the Armenian Studies Program and the students involved in the Program.

were able to commemorate this day together. Finally, it was a time of togetherness that could be felt by everyone in attendance.

Again, it was another memorable semester with the

ASO. It was important for members to finally gather after a year of isolation. These memories, socials, and friendship building will continue on next semester.

Ronald J. Garabedian II Scholarship Established at Fresno State

STAFF REPORT

Fresno State alumnus Ronald J. Garabed II of Cliffside Park, New Jersey, has established a new annual scholarship fund to benefit students studying in the Armenian Studies Program.

The scholarship, to be called the Ronald J. Garabedian II Armenian Legacy Scholarship,

will be awarded annually to students enrolled in Armenian and/or Armenian Studies courses within the Armenian Studies Program. The first scholarship(s) will be awarded in academic year 2021-2022.

The Armenian Studies Program expresses its appreciation to Mr. Garabed for his generous support of students.

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