

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF ARMENIA



AN INITIATIVE OF GEBERT RÜF STIFTUNG IN COOPERATION  
WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG



# ARMENIANNNESS EVERY DAY:

*from above to below...*

Yerevan - 2015

**UDC 572.028**

**Armenianness every day: *from above to below...***

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**Editor: M. Gabrielyan**

This study was conducted with the support of the Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN). ASCN is a program aimed at promoting the social sciences and humanities in the South Caucasus (primarily Georgia and Armenia). Its activities are fostering the emergence of a new generation of talented scholars. Promising junior researchers receive support through research projects, capacity-building training and scholarships. The program emphasizes the advancement of individuals who, because of their ASCN experience, become better integrated into international academic networks. The ASCN program is coordinated and operated by the Interfaculty Institute for Central and Eastern Europe (IICEE) at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland). It was initiated and is supported by Gebert RUF Stiftung.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Gebert RUF Stiftung and the University of Fribourg.

ISBN 978-9939-1-0222-1

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## INTRODUCTION

Scientific hypotheses have even fewer chances for “successful” realization than some prophecies do. As a rule, they are either proved or disproved in the course of research. The first years of independence suggest to the explorers of today a unique mix of insights into and prognoses about the Armenian future. However, as we have learned since independence, the inspirations of prophetic visions are gradually and necessarily being replaced by argumentation and facts based on academic research. This transformation has also occurred in the humanities. As has become obvious, many research themes that were either studied during or partially inherited from Soviet times now clamor for exploration from new perspectives. It is now necessary to explore a large number of new research themes that were totally neglected by the Soviet academy, including the *stratification of society, polarization, poverty, emigration and labor migration, ethnic relations, and conflicts*. Some of these themes – for example, poverty and ethnic conflicts – did not find a home on the Soviet research agenda simply because they were considered nonexistent. Some of the other themes were studied as characteristic realities of the antagonist capitalist system, and the research does not address either Soviet realities or the intricacies of the Soviet Union.

Armenian studies in the Soviet Union developed in the frame of dominant trends and ideological dogma. Since independence, there has been a partial improvement, with the appearance of

new research topics and the rearrangement of others, certain themes achieved prominence with remarkably innovative theoretical and methodological approaches. However, the majority of problems have not yet been engaged and challenged. Indeed, science is an incessant process, and in this sense, anthropology is not unique. In addition, in recent years, the number of issues requiring immediate engagement and resolution has multiplied.

First, the obvious deficiencies in theory and methodology call for adequate solutions. Today it is necessary to learn about advances in social sciences and humanities that were inaccessible to scholars during the Soviet era. It is no less important to consider perspectives on the implementation and popularization of newly obtained knowledge. Broadly considered, this is a process of integration. Few, if any, elements of the former Soviet academic system have survived, and we do not have a sufficiently definite picture of what has replaced it. The current trends in Armenian social sciences and humanities are split along a binary nexus of willy-nilly adoptions originating from either Western or Russian academic thought and traditions.

For our research team, the research fellowship of the Academic Swiss Caucasus Net (ASCN) was an exceptional opportunity to overcome this pronged position, to learn new things and to research selected issues based on new approaches. This fellowship is different from and more favorable than many other similar projects in that it suggests an opportunity to engage in a “pure” science. For researchers, this opportunity was also important because on the one hand, it allowed them to unite around



their common scientific interests and, on the other hand, it enabled them to focus on the subject of daily nationalism or the cultural dimension of nationalism as an insufficiently studied topic in Armenian ethnology.<sup>1</sup>

Some problems had already been identified in the course of writing the research proposal. The research team has engaged in an uneasy search for terms and notions or, more accurately, for the correct terms and notions in an attempt to define the research task as precisely as possible. This was clearly very important as a means of clarifying and defining both the objective and the research hypothesis. The relevant terminology, which is primarily in English, and, with some reservation, in Russian – was and still is conceptually firmly attached to concrete contents.

The concepts of “*nationalism*” and “*ethnicity*,” despite the ongoing scientific debate over their contents, are more or less both bold and solid in both the Western and Russian academies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A member of the research team, Mkhitar Gabrielyan, has studied the post-war situation and border anthropology in the mountainous Karabagh and in Armenia’s Tavush province since the mid-1990s and has published (together with Artak Dabaghyan) two books (Dabaghyan and Gabrielyan 2004, Dabaghyan and Gabrielyan 2008). R. Tzaturyan explores in detail the Armenian-Georgian, Armenian-Turkish, and especially Armenian-Azerbaijani “culinary wars.” S. Mkrtchyan is interested in school textbooks, which are so important to understanding modern nationalism as a constructive element of ethnic identity and its transformations. Finally, H. Melkumyan explores the issues of socialization and acculturation of space in the context of everyday culture.

<sup>2</sup>Here, the authors consciously avoid the large body of literature on nationalism, which is considered a separate research problem. Sidestepping this detailed analysis is one of the conditions of the feasibility of our research task, which is to study everyday nationalism instead of nationalism *a priori*. There-

However, their simple translation into Armenian or the use of synonyms for those terms presents problems. For example, primarily because of the efforts of Yu Bromlei, “ethnicity” has long been a widely used term in Soviet ethnography, which developed spectacularly as the discipline engaged with problems of “*ethnos*” and “*ethnicity*” (Bromley 1981, 257-355). Today, “*ethnicity*” is still broadly deployed in ethnological (or, more broadly, historical) discourse, simultaneously demonstrating “pretensions” to develop a scientific discourse of its own. In recent years, conferences dedicated to the problems of ethnicity (*Armenian Ethnicity in Native and Alien Environments, 2014*)<sup>3</sup> have been organized sessions and panels on ethnicity and ethnic identity have been held during representative colloquia in Armenian studies (*Armenian Studies and the Challenges of Modernity, the 2nd International Congress in Armenian Studies, 2013*)<sup>4</sup>.

Notwithstanding these precautions, even while composing this monograph, it was difficult to reveal the exact meanings of con-

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fore, theoretical studies are referenced in order of relatedness to the problems of everyday nationalism.

<sup>3</sup>Given its dedication to direct the development of diasporic Armenian communities and to solve problems while maintaining an Armenian identity, the Ministry of Diaspora is especially active in this field. It has supported the publication of R. Hambarzumyan, “The Doctrine of Armenian Identity,” 2011, the collection of articles, titled “Preservation of the Qualities of Armenian Identity in the Mixed Marriage,” 2010, the compendium “Problems of Identity and Information Resources of Armenian Communities in Post-Soviet Countries,” and other studies and publications concerned with Armenian communities abroad and prioritizing issues of the identity maintenance and mobilization of those communities.

<sup>4</sup> The session “Problems of Armenian Identity” was held during the named Congress.

ceptions in the minds of their users. Thus, speaking about the rise and development of nationalism in the Russian Empire and later in the Soviet Union, it has been stated, “*The situation in Russia developed differently. Here the nationalism appeared in the last decades of the nineteenth century as a reaction of ethnic and religious minorities against systemic discriminations of the authorities. This ethnic nationalism was in fundamental opposition against the monarchic regime, and as such perceived Bolsheviks as their allies. However, the honeymoon ended as soon as it became clear that the ethnic nationalism, supported by Bolsheviks, can be as uncompromising opponent of the Soviet empire as it was shaking the foundations of Tsarism. And then in the USSR began the endless war against nationalism, leading to mass repressions and enormous casualties, but unable to destroy it. The Soviet ideology differentiated ‘good’ patriotism and ‘bad’ nationalism, which is still a popular option. Still, coming to these terms does not adequately reflect the subject matter, because if in totalitarian age the society was allegedly identical to the state, in the age of democracy these categories are perceived as separate.*” (Tishkov and Shnirelman 2007, 4). We agree that this perception still prevails today. Our analysis of observable research reveals that “good patriotism” and its explanation or argumentation survive as the most important subject in this field. Its argumentation always assumes an uninterrupted historical development (i.e., the persistence of a “*longue durée*”), the existence of heroes and so on. At the next stage, this results in the outcome of both the creation and further reproduction of a “standard” narra-

tive of history, behind which we may notice the influence of the political situation, political “demands” and in general, the character and aims of the persistent political system. This may be illustrated by the recent “Armenian History” university textbook (Simonyan 2012). This is actually constructed in accordance with the logic and expectations of the pre-existing narrative. The First Chapter (“The Origins and Formation of the Armenian People”) represents Armenian, Greek, Georgian, Arabic, and Hebraic versions of the origin of Armenians; it also describes various hypotheses of the formation of the Armenian people from the historical sciences. In other words, it reproduces the standard found in all Armenian history textbooks through the twentieth century. A slightly different approach was attempted in the volume “The Armenians,” published by the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences, Armenia, in the series “Peoples and Cultures” of the Miklukho-Maclay Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences (in Russian, Moscow, 2012). This volume contains a detailed description of Armenian folk culture, its complexity and themes. However, it also has not managed to avoid reproducing standards explanations. Here, the first chapter contains a brief ethnic and political history of the Armenians, with special reflection on the process of ethnogenesis. Therefore, disregarding few exceptions to the rule, “*ethnicity*” is present as a research condition and problem in every broad-view monograph on Armenian history or culture. However, in recent years, certain

alternative attempts to interpret “*ethnicity*” have been made in ethnological and anthropological studies.

The problems with definition of “nationalism” are hardly less numerous. The “Philosophical Dictionary” in Armenian (1975), translated from the third edition of the Russian original, has the following curious entry for “Azgainakanutyun”: = “Azgaynamolutyun,” see “Nationalism.” The book goes on to explain that nationalism “*is one of principles of the bourgeois ideology and politics, reflected in the propaganda of national isolation and exclusiveness, in distrust and enmity towards other nations. It has appeared in the course of nation formation in capitalist societies and is conditioned with specifics of capitalist development... Nationalism in any form is intolerable for workers, whose real interests are expressed only by socialist internationalism... The reign of socialism establishes de facto equality of nations, annihilates the social roots of nationalism, and its reflections persist only as survivals of capitalism in consciousness and behavior of individuals*” (Philosophical Dictionary, in Armenian, 1975, 308). Thus, nationalism is represented as unequivocally negative and remorseful, but with a ready alternative in socialist internationalism and good patriotism.

The relationship between “*ethnicity*” and “*nationalism*” has been a hotly debated subject in academia for several decades. As reported in the “Introduction” to a Russian language volume, “*E. Gellner supposed that ‘ethnicity’ originates from ‘nationalism’ in the course of the political process. The ethnic group in this case obtains a value, equal to ‘nation,’ which renders possible*

*societal access to High Culture through total literacy. Gellner stated that modern High Culture is not 'cosmopolitan' but 'ethnographic' (through language, etc.), i.e., it is ethnically colored. If this point of view is accepted, any nationalism, based on the cultural component, appears to be indivisible from ethnicity, and therefore the division between ethnic and civic nationalisms seems misplaced, as it was noticed by R. Brubaker” (Tishkov and Shnirelman 2007, 7).*

Similarly, in Armenia, following the global trends, the concepts gradually become more definite, but do not at all approach a strict “convention.” With respect to this state of art, in preliminary discussions the research team was using an alternative term, which may be translated as “*nationalness*” or “*nationhood*,” but later refuted it to return to the more precise concept of “*nationalism*,” also accepting that with some reservation, the term can be *ethnic* and *civic*, *positive* and *negative*.

One sound point in the theoretical section of our research proposal was the thesis that “nation,” as it is widely accepted, is a discursive structure, in the formation of which the elites play a great (and sometimes essential) role because they create, determine and propagate the basic perceptions of nations. Indeed, this discernment is important. At least, it is no less important than the corpus of those primordialist conceptions, which, after long domination in Soviet reality, continue to preserve a certain actuality in the post-Soviet academy (see, e.g., *Armenian History*, 2012, 17-25, Iskandaryan and Harutyunyan 2010). That notwithstanding, anthropological studies of last two to three decades have

brought new insights and nuances to the fore. Michael Billig's famous work on "banal nationalism" (1995) has already succeeded with the "simplification" of complex notions. C. Palmer (1998), E. Gellner (1983), and R. Brubaker et al (2006) have responded to the challenge of the emerging concept of "everyday" or "daily" and have answered the question of what "everyday nationalism" is in both positive and negative senses.

Both in the course of research and in narrating this work, the research group has consciously prioritized Billig's theoretical principle of the "banality of nationalism," which in this context promotes daily nationalism. As the named author noticed in Billig's preamble, "*...For this reason, the term banal nationalism is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry... One point needs stressing: banal does not imply benign. A number of observers have claimed that 'nationalism' as a phenomenon is 'Janus faced,' or that it possesses a Jekyll-and-Hyde duality. According to this reckoning, some forms of nationalism, most notably movements for national liberation from colonialism, tend to be classed as positive, whilst others, such as fascist movements, belong to the shadowed half. It would be wrong to assume that 'banal nationalism' is 'benign' because it seems to possess a reassuring normality or because it appears to lack the violent passions of the extreme right. As Hannah Arendt (1963) stressed, banality is not synonymous with*

*harmlessness. In the case of Western nation-states, banal nationalism can hardly be innocent: it is reproducing institutions that possess armaments. As the Gulf and Falklands Wars indicated, forces can be mobilized without lengthy campaigns of political preparation. The armaments are primed, ready for use in battle. And the national populations appear also to be primed, ready to support the use of those armaments”* (Billig 1995, 6-7). In short, the study of banal nationalism must not only consider facts and details that are invisible at first glance but also enable us to solve the puzzle that we customarily call ‘*ethnic identity*’ while observing its transformations at the microscopic level. “*Identity, in common talk, is something which people have or search for. One might think that people today go about their daily lives, carrying with them a piece of psychological machinery called 'a national identity.'* Like a mobile telephone, this piece of psychological equipment lies quiet most of the time. Then, the crisis occurs; the president calls; bells ring; the citizens answer and the patriotic identity is connected” (Billig 1995, 7). This research suggests summarizing daily nationalism as a collection of micro-texts, as a life lived, in which conceptions and theories are unimportant, nonexistent. In this life, “own theories and methods,” dimensions of time and space, good and evil, enmity and friendship are more important and create a system.

The principles and models of the typology of nationalism, which are numerous and often contradictory, are fairly considered in the course of the research and in the process of writing this book. Miroslav Hroch’s well-known scheme is both quite



acceptable and applicable as a vantage point for solving the questions posed by this research project. Hroch has discerned three stages of small nations' nationalism. The first two stages explain how national ideology engulfs intellectuals and is further disseminated downwards. The third phase is characterized by the masses' desire to transform the national idea into the idea of the nation-state. M. Billig, after discussing this approach, concludes that this scheme does not include a fourth phase that would adequately explain the period during which the nation appears as an idea of the nation-state. It is as though nationalism suddenly disappears (Billig 1995, 44). Acknowledging Hroch's stages, this research team has tentatively agreed on the definition of a "stage D," namely, for *daily nationalism*. This obviously tentative decision was obviously a working hypothesis, given that daily nationalism is discernable in all phases. However, when considering the character of the development of Armenian society, especially its features during the last two decades, the daily has become an important and essential factor in Armenia's ongoing systemic change. The book values nationalism as a feature of the everyday lives, sentiments, behavior and actions of ordinary people, individuals, families and community stories. In other words, nationalism is studied "*from below*" as the entirety of the daily realities and events lived or evaded, valued or neglected.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>R. Brubaker, characterizing his work in the Romanian town of Cluj, has "*come to appreciate the force of Eric Hobsbawm's dictum (1990: 10), that nationhood and nationalism, while constructed from above, 'cannot be understood unless also analyzed from below, that is in terms of assumptions, hopes,*

The installation of the matrix of “the everyday” into the field of nationalism investigation is indeed an effective procedure. On the one hand, it provides an opportunity to understand the texts, the macro and micro narratives and the microhistories created at lower levels and often consumed therein because they are usually not interesting to students of political nationalism. On the other hand, it creates an opportunity to compare “upper<sup>6</sup>” texts to those below, to observe their mutual connectedness.

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*needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national, and still less nationalist.’ Studying the everyday preoccupations of ordinary Clujeni -to which ethnicity is indeed largely irrelevant-helped make sense of certain puzzles: in particular, the lack of popular mobilization in response to, and the considerable popular indifference in the face of, intense and intractable elite-level nationalist conflict.” R. Brubaker, Ethnicity without Groups, Harvard University Press 2004, 2.*

<sup>6</sup>Research group members M. Gabrielyan and R. Tsaturyan conducted another study partially simultaneously with this research: “The National/Ethnic in the Modern Armenian Political Discourse,” which was financially supported by OSI-Armenia, attempts to explore “up,” or the attitudes of the political elite. That study also provided us with the opportunity to compare its results with the outcomes of this research. The named results quite clearly indicate that primordialist approaches prevail in the political discourse, and lay at the base of individual politicians’ public rhetoric and political parties’ programs. Below are few examples from the party documents. The first row in the program of the ruling party—the Republican Party of Armenia (RPA)—formulates the most essential point, vital to the next postulates in the text: “*The RPA is a **national conservative** party. ... The objectives and activity of the RPA come from the ideas of the eternity of the Nation and Fatherland.*” The next statements purify the nationalist discourse: “*The **supreme purpose** of the Armenian Nation that approves its **existence created by God**, is the everlasting existence in the fatherland, assertion of its vital force, creative genius and free will. The main guarantee for the achievement of this purpose is the Armenian national ideology in which, according to the RPA’s convictions, the theory of Garegin Nzhdeh has its substantial place. The national Armenian ideology is built on the basis of combination of Armenian value system and historical-cultural experience in conjunction with the national values and the ones common to all*

The research permits the observation – which was not unexpected – that the texts of “political” and “daily” nationalisms, armenianness are neither similar nor always complementary. More importantly, we discovered many cases in which the “political” and the “daily” may also oppose each other, particularly if the discourse is fused with social-economic factors, which are defiantly present in nearly all narratives.

The nationalism that is emphasized as a component of daily life – or as itself a daily life – is not studied in Armenia, at least from the anthropological perspective. This monograph is the first attempt, with all of its related advantages, risks and shortages. Naturally, it does not and can hardly exhaust all of the appearances of “daily nationalism” or ‘armenianness every day’ One may also notice problems in its theoretical and methodological aspects: the research team has given preference to Billig’s approaches and emphases, but naturally has tested other authors’ approaches and opinions. Acknowledging the possibility of uncertainties and research limitations, we view this monograph as an attempt to address a range of problems, the first of which is to

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*mankind. It must strengthen the credence of Armenian people in their own power and in the future. And it must be permanently developed as an ideological system.”* In the next step, nationhood is objectified “*The cradle of the Armenian people is the Armenian plateau, which is the godsent Fatherland of Armenians. ...By God’s will, we were created Armenians and therefore the eternal contact between God and the Armenian nation is ensured by the perpetuation of the Armenian type. On this basis, the RPA highly values the heathen and Christian periods of our history on the principle of national priority.*” These points from a political party’s program figure the national as a hypertext, mythological and irrational: a direct link to God, eternity, the infiniteness of the type (race?), and so on.

provoke more active debate about daily nationalism and nationalism in general. The persistence of consistent discourse and the importance of its more active formation were obvious during the course of the research.

During the two years of the research, many events occurred that have revised the contemporary narratives of political and daily nationalism. At least two events of importance in the area or region may be discerned. The first are the events in Ukraine that partitioned the country and brought Russia and Ukraine to the edge of de facto war. Reviewing this example in the context of everyday nationalism reveals how despite the political rhetoric and innumerable media and academic publications, the differences between the west and east of Ukraine were not surmounted, and during a crisis, manifestations of everyday nationalism can be extremely cruel. The second significant event was the dangerous unrest that began in August 2014 (and continued for months) along the Nagorno-Karabakh/Azerbaijani border and in Armenian border communities. The shootings along the frontier, including in the village of Koti (which was part of our research sample), enhanced the impression that the texts feeding everyday nationalism in Armenian society both locally and general will be long lived. Indeed, the unfinished war continues to act as an important – if not the most important – formative element for narratives of everyday nationalism.

The methodological questions and the sample were thoroughly discussed in the course of preparing the research proposal. At the core of this discussion was the choice between quantitative

and qualitative methods of data collection. Quantitative research might permit recording representative data nationwide. Our hesitations in this case were grounded on the nature of everyday nationalism and its models and sub-models, the vagueness of which might hinder the reliability and representativeness of a quantitative survey. Therefore, it was decided to organize the research work using case studies and research in selected communities, supposing that these subjects might be typical of larger groups and units. The fieldwork was conducted in accord with classical ethnological/anthropological methods. Six focus group discussions, more than thirty expert interviews and approximately fifty individual in-depth interviews were carried out in Yerevan, in the villages of Koti and Gandzaqar in Tavush, and in Nerqin Bazmaberd in Aragatsotn region. The interlocutors represented different ages, social groups and professions, suggesting an average snapshot of Armenia's urban and village populations.

The study makes allowances for the primary restraint of modern qualitative research, namely, its limited ability to make generalizations (which makes it efficient on a local scale) in identifying and analyzing particular phenomena. Such research is best in the context of strictly localized overviews and comparisons. With this constraint in mind, we have suppressed any temptation to expand the results of our research to the national level. However, the research has provided us with an opportunity to suggest a certain typology of local forms constituted as models and micro-models once Koti, Nerqin Bazmaberd and Gandzaqar – while serving as sampled pieces of pan-Armenian canvas – be-

come finished canvases with their own narratives of everyday nationalism, everyday armenainness.

Communities were sampled in accord with several principles. The intraethnic variety of the population was one of our core principles. Nerqin Bazmaberd maintains, reproduces and transfers the already century-long memories of “Ergir” (the “Land,” i.e., Western Armenia) and the Genocide of 1915. It is settled by genocide survivors from Sasoun (a mountainous region in West Armenia) who have inherited and transferred through generations both narratives and micronarratives about “Ergir.”

Koti, which is located in the northeast, was sampled as a border community that has its longest frontier with Azerbaijan. Koti is also a place of a long, memorized history of relations with its Turkic/Azerbaijani neighbors. The village is settled by East Armenians who remember decades of border fights. Because of its position on the border, the community does not cultivate the fertile lands on the frontier and from time to time, it becomes a target of cross-border shooting from neighboring Azerbaijani villages.

Few other principles were considered in the case of Gandzaqar. One of the largest villages in the province of Tavush, it is mostly inhabited by Eastern Armenians. From the Soviet era to the present day, Gandzaqar’s closeness to Ijevan, the center of the province, has infused its everyday life with certain elements of urbanism. Unlike Koti, Gandzaqar is not immediately on the border, but it preserves memories about the clashes and fights that occurred in the early 1990s.

In addition to the use of interviews as a classic tool of ethnographic/anthropological research, we relied on the method of ethnographic observation. More specifically, the research team was split not only to be present at events on April 24 (Genocide Commemoration Day) both in Yerevan and in Nerqin Bazmaberd (2013) but also to monitor television broadcasts and other media for three consecutive days. September 21 – the Day of Independence – was similarly observed in Yerevan and Gandzaqar. More than three thousand photos were taken during our observations; a portion was analyzed. Republic Day (May 28) was also observed and recorded in the same way.

Another important research procedure was landscape mapping from a socio-cultural perspective. In the communities, the research-group members were willingly guided through local memorials – khachqars (cross-stones), cemeteries, churches, springs and so on – attempting to reconstruct a mental picture of the modern cultural landscape and to grasp the causes of its most recent transformations. In the same way, the research-group members have attempted to reconstruct and analyze other tangible and intangible landscapes and symbols: educational space and schools, food, festivals, everyday life in general, and a variety of symbols deemed essential.

The implications of our research toolset have indeed provided tremendous volume of unfiltered material, albeit simultaneously has established certain confines.

The research proposal was quite strict in defining both the main questions and the objective. However, the field research

exposed new and important features, cases and events, observable from the vantage point of the daily, which are described and analyzed in the monograph. One example is suggested by the local newspaper, “Young Koti.” For many years, in addition to representing and discussing everyday life, the newspaper either has attempted to shape or has shaped the narratives of local nationalism and has broached community-wide discussions on the history of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, the problems of learning the village’s socio-cultural landscape, the memory of the heroes of self-defense and ordinary people, and so on. Interestingly, the publishers have never planned this as an editorial policy – i.e., they have not claimed to publish texts related to “*daily nationalism*.” Instead, their contribution has appeared without planning, simply because the daily nationalism always actively or passively contributed to community life.

Another unexpected case was the increase in the number of visits to “Ergir” from Nerqin Bazmaberd in recent years; this increase has affected the existing narratives of everyday nationalism and added new symbols, without which those local narratives would become unimaginable. Although configured as research problems, these cases simultaneously act as restrictions because the monograph could not be enlarged *ad infinitum*.

The next self-imposed restriction involves the structure and contents of the text, which is more of a collection of essays than a text in one piece. This structure was selected as the most appropriate in discussions between the four teammates (Mkhitar Gabrielyan, Hamlet Melqumyan, Satenik Mkrtchyan and Ruzan-



na Tsaturyan), each of whom “*tells his/her individual story of everyday nationalism in Armenia or armenianness every day, consistent with personal field experiences, research interests, theoretical and methodological priorities.*” We were acting in accordance with the primary idea of representing micro-narratives instead of packing everything into a single narrative because we were aware of the possibility of repeating what many others do when they *create or invent narratives*. Perhaps for this reason, our study quotes our interlocutors verbatim in many cases, and sometimes the researcher becomes invisible. We believe that this approach is the most productive at the current stage.

We also acknowledge the support of representatives of various organizations with whom we have effectively cooperated during two years of the study. The research team is grateful to the Academic Swiss Caucasus Net, Friburg University’s initiative for financial support of this research undertaking, which in scientific terms was quite risky. Program head N. Hayoz and coordinator Dennis Dufflon have done everything possible to direct an intriguing research idea to its realization. We were also fortunate to have our Armenian coordinator because our colleagues from the Caucasus Institute, following the principle of “not interfering is the best help,” have done much more than expected. Both S. Minasyan and M. Saryan have done an inestimable job of sparing the research team’s time for its immediate work.

The administration of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, in the person of its director, Correspondent/Academician of the National Academy of Sciences Pavel S. Avetisyan,

has provided perfect support to the research organization, putting at our disposal the institute's network and other opportunities. Not surprisingly, we have not encountered any serious problem in the course of our fieldwork.

We are also grateful to all those whom we have met during the period of our research, including the heads of the host communities, principals of schools, associates of local cultural and media institutions, experts, our always-willing respondents, and many others who have supported the realization of the study and the publication of the book.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A CLOSER LOOK AT: NATIONALISMS POSITIVE OR NEUTRAL?

In addition to its geopolitical, economic, political and other dimensions, the fall of the Soviet Union – like the disintegration of previous great powers – suggests social and cultural dimensions. The controversial and bizarre period of 1980-1990s was a time of simultaneous crisis and exhilaration for both society and its various elite groups. In particular, the new elites seemed convinced that the “death of the dragon blocking the water spring” (i.e., the USSR – M.G.) would immediately restore the cosmic harmony about which they had both dreamed and developed ample or fragmentary conceptions. Whether those conceptions matched reality is another question. More importantly, they certainly existed and were rooted in decisiveness to resolve the accumulated national problems. Animated by the same euphoria and optimism was the academy, which was eager to identify and to answer numerous questions that challenged society. Various concepts were transfigured against the background of vigorous national/national-liberation movements, including such fundamentals of the Soviet system as concepts of nationalism and ethnicity. These transfigurations were not linear: they were spiraling or cascading at each stage of the national movements, configuring and reflecting the increasingly different perceptions of social groups and strata. However, the problems with these conceptions

were not so urgent in the 1980s. The movements – not only as seen by their leaders and activists but also in their true nature, rhetoric, aims and objectives – were simply *national, national liberation movements*. With respect to academic traditions in the USSR and in the face of public discourse, the terms “nation” and “nationalism” were perceived as negative, undesirable and deplorable notions; thus, they were missing from the word list of national movements.

Conversely, the political and party elites were trying to conspire about specific perceptions of the “national” and the “nationalist” and to equate the two so as to amplify the negative connotations of “nationalism” in transforming national movements whose leaders and participants considered those movements to be national. Thus, the rhetoric of the Soviet political elite - especially Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the CPSU who was depicting the movements as nationalist and separatist and its leaders as nationalists, separatists and extremists - largely supported the intensification of negative perceptions of the notion of “nationalism” in public discourse from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Accompanying the increasing public support of the movements, Moscow’s policy and rhetoric were becoming increasingly aggressive and impertinent (curfews, a special regime in Nagorno-Karabakh, and detention of both the members of the “Gharabagh” Committee and the other leaders of the movement), which in turn was enhancing the reaction of new national elites and societies. Loyal to tradition, the elites were

insisting on the national, national-liberation nature of the movements, laboriously avoiding the term “nationalist.”

The latter continued to be perceived as something negative, and this perception has roots in the national policy of the Tsarist and Soviet states. Russian nationalism has always been specific. From the very beginning, it developed as an anti-government phenomenon. Despite many efforts to resolve the national question, the Tsarist regime never found a model to satisfy all or even the largest ethnic communities. The Soviet government was more determined, and by the 1920s, it claimed to have solved the national problem. The resettlements of the 1930s and 1940s were another demonstration of the impossibility of revising the national question (see details in: Brandenberger 2009; Fitzspatrik 2008a; 2008b). Memories from this period, as reflected in our fieldwork, remained fresh and alive in the 1980s. These memories consisted of individual biographies and stories that were remembered at both the family and community levels. All families remember stories from the 1930s about repressed and expelled people. Individual and family memories unite in a public discourse that reproduces a collective horror of the “almighty and omnipresent” state. In certain cases, everyday mode has caused people – believing in the power of the state - to refuse to record their memories. Perceptions of nationalism also play a role. Nationalism is not only disgusting and mysterious but also “*one of principles of bourgeois ideology and politics, reflected in the propaganda of national isolation and exclusiveness, in distrust and enmity towards other nations*” (Philosophical Dictionary 1975, 6). In the initial period of the Karabakh movement, this

logic was still present: it is a “national,” not a “nationalist” movement, and it demands realization of the self-determination right in the frame of the USSR’s laws. Leaders of the movement, taking this feature into account, were avoiding the term, which was so alien in the Soviet Union (details in: Marutyán 2009). What “*We*” were doing (the collective “we” was then either standing or had already acquired some simple forms) in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Chechnya, North Ossetia, Transnistria, Karabakh and Tatarstan had nothing to do with nationalism. “*We*” were attempting to restore historical justice. The “Other” or the collective “They” were against “Us,” and were doing everything to bear down upon and repress the national movements. To analyze everyday nationalism and the related (and ensuing) nostalgia for Soviet times, it is important to show that initially, it was supposed that the Soviet Union had restored historical justice in accord with Lenin’s theses on national policy and the principles of national self-determination, both of which were confirmed in the Constitution of the USSR.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the collective “*We*” had chosen “Them” as unjust adversaries dissenting from Lenin’s true line. Unsurprisingly, one of the most popular slogans in the first months of the Gharabagh movement – “Lenin, Party, Gorbachev – Stalin, Beria, Ligachev” – clearly marked

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<sup>7</sup>As stated in article 70, Chapter VIII of the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR, voted in October 1977, “*The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics is an integral, federal, multinational state formed on the principle of socialist federalism as a result of the free self-determination of nations and the voluntary association of peer Soviet Socialist Republics.*” Article 72 adds that “*Each Union Republic shall retain the right to freely secede from the USSR.*” More details at: <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1977.htm#iii> (accessed: 03.15.2015).

not only the positive and negative political figures in pictorial opposition to each other but also the exact chronology of certain developments (Marutyan 2009). “They,” or the collective “Ligachev” in this instance, were adhering to the collective deeds of “Stalin” and “Beria,” which had already been rejected and condemned by “progressive Soviet society.” To “Them” were also ascribed mass killings and exiles, ethnic cleansings, bloodshed and wars. The existence of such formulae in the public discourse emphasizes a clear and certain task: either to resolve the issue of Artsakh or to restore historical justice inside the system. At least during the movement’s first years, there was neither the task of disintegrating the USSR nor a desire to search for justice beyond that state’s borders. On the everyday level, everything had obvious appearances and multiple symbolic manifestations.

The euphoria of the last years of the USSR’s rapid downfall was followed by new and unexpected “situations.” Notwithstanding the promises to quickly build capitalism and to secure normal development, the movements managed to resolve only a few problems. The greatest share of the problems that occurred immediately after independence was institutional in nature: state building, foreign affairs, resolving conflicts with neighbors, and internal policy. These problems were closely related to difficult tasks such as the economy, social relations, education, culture, or the advancement of relations with the diaspora.

Looking at these great changes from an anthropological perspective means considering an entire context of relations between the rational and the irrational, the formal and the institu-

tional. The behavior of both the elite and the general society in mass meetings, public and community events, is mostly emotional.

The core of the matters discussed is limited: the solution to the Karabakh problem and the restoration of historical justice. The situation changes in accordance with the progressing conditions of the independent state due to questions posed by not/not only the level of attending meetings, demanding, accepting or denying, but on the level of ideas, concepts and actions. This transformation of a (mostly) irrational plain into a rational one is essential for everyday nationalism as it shapes its texts, symbols and actions. This is also a transition from negative nationalism to neutral and positive nationalism. At the level of everyday nationalism, that means not only freedom of speech, expression and discussion but also the removal of limitations and taboos.

This point is illustrated by the following two opinions. The first opinion, which held that “*Though everything was better than now, but there was some tension ..., there were differences ...*,” was expressed when interlocutors were asked about Armenian-Azerbaijani relations. The second opinion, which held that “*We were already freely talking about Andranik, Chavush and other heroes*,” was expressed when the theme of a conversation was Armenian-Turkish relations and the issue of “Ergir.”

Therefore, these opinions and their transformations are very important not only to the realization of everyday nationalism but also to the analysis of that nationalism.



Following the disintegration of the USSR, a remarkable corpus of writings in the social sciences and history has developed in which the term “post-Soviet” is truly prevalent; that corpus is fundamentally valuable in nationalism studies. If condensed to its essentials, the contents of the corpus show that the Soviet still survives as the starting and most important perspective on the various social and cultural institutions, relations and systems that are scrutinized in the contemporary academy. As revealed in our study, nationalism continues to be perceived in the same way: it has not entirely severed its “connections” with the Soviet and consequently, at least in part, it preserves “negative” features that were developed and reproduced during the Soviet period. This statement seems even more plausible if we consider that the vast majority of the formative symbols of everyday nationalism developed during the Soviet years.

Every society is developing, self-organized and reproduced under the influence of multiple internal and external factors. It is often difficult to measure those factors’ mutual relatedness, especially in “extreme situations.” Our study initially presumed that Armenian society is a society in an “extreme situation” and therefore that the symbols and developments of everyday nationalism display that same feature of “extremity.” For that reason, a correspondingly elaborated research methodology and approaches were applied. We noticed that nationalism was thoroughly studied before the fall of the USSR, albeit in a special manner. Moreover, nationalism was an important ideological tool used to display the advantages of socialism *Vis à Vis* the shortcomings of

capitalism.<sup>8</sup> The focus of the Soviet scholars' attention turned toward nationalism not only in the capitalist world but also in African, Asian and Latin American countries.

The collapse of the bipolar world created a qualitatively new situation, and the research on the life experience of the post-socialist world revealed an enormity of new and interesting “*nationalisms*.”

The research showed that at the level of basic questions and displays, Armenian nationalism is “multifaceted” both in time and in space.

Several research questions were related to mapping of “social” body of nationalism. Hamlet Melkumyan, a culturologist and a member of the group, mapped community socio-cultural landscapes to reveal the “faces” of nationalism. Initially, it was decided to organize the observation and analysis according to spatiotemporal statistics by assuming a specific community during the independence period as the basis. However, the observations made in the very first community proved that the spaces and times that we were studying had exact beginnings and, in

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<sup>8</sup>Here are few examples from the USSR's history texts. Theme 16, with the telling title “The Feat of Creation,” provides as follows: “*The enemies of socialism were nurturing a hope that the destruction of and harms to our country will sentence it to backwardness and to dependence from the West. But they were mistaken. Med In the post-war years the Soviet people performed one more feat: the feat of creation. It fully exposed the abilities of people, spirited with the great aims of socialist construction.*” Or, in relation to foreign policy: “*In 1956 the USSR supported the fraternal Hungary to destroy the armed counter-revolutionary coup, aimed to throw down the people's democratic government.*” Details in: Yesakov et al. 1989, 133, 173.

some cases, exact ends, which in turn originated wavering varieties or faces of everyday nationalism. Thus, it became obvious that time – which is in no way monochromatic – also needs to be mapped and calculated if we want to understand local nationalisms. Finally, the research gave us an opportunity to record and to analyze a phenomenon that we conditionally named “situational” or “temporary” nationalism. This phenomenon is actively displayed, especially in the everyday, where approaches, principles, actions and behavior are both situational and in many cases dependent on what is being talked or asked about and by whom. During individual interviews, a situation might emerge because of a family member’s entry to or exit from the room; similarly, a situation might emerge because of the unintentional creation of a sacred environment both by introducing a family relic and generally by giving individual and family stories a sacred, mystical tint. Situational nationalism actively bows to political influences, and certain actions and events can activate it. Active displays of such events were seen in August 2014, which provided the conditions for the activation of an incident on the border. High-ranking state officials, along with businessmen and hundreds of notable figures in science, education, culture and the arts visited border communities and military units during that time. It is difficult to observe and anatomize this phenomenon without a thorough and comprehensive analysis, but it is obviously a remarkable display of Armenian nationalism, including everyday nationalism.

Situational nationalism is an indicator of another fact that is important from an anthropological perspective. Even factually under conditions of peace, as the different narrators mention, people live with “*sense of danger in their minds*,” which they do not express. Every day, a villager of Koti passes an eagle column erected near the village. However, he perceives it as merely an entrance sign, and neither relives nor wants to relive the entirety of its symbolic depth and content. Every day, a teenager passes by the genocide victims’ memorial or the statue of Artsakh war participant Rem Mardanyan at Gandzaqar without being reminded of the family and community stories connected to them. Positive and negative symbols of nationalism lose their importance in everyday life because they are consistent with the landscape, they accomplish it – the landscape about which people harbor everyday attitudes.

The ways of displaying nationalism change with the tolling of “Billig’s bell,” which awakens dormant (or rather, those that are considered unimportant) perceptions and visions. The tension on the border, the unfavourable developments of Armenian-Turkish relations, or other negative facts are those very bells, while the political, as well as art and culture figures become the ‘bell-ringers’ in emergency situations, making those same situations to serve their political benefits and goals. However, the bell is not necessarily tolled “from outside” or “from above.” There is also an abundance of internal bells: in Koti, for instance, situational, temporary nationalisms emerged during discussions of the extent to which families (clan, patronymic group) participated in border

defense or when comparing Koti with its neighboring communities.

Conflicts and their consequences in different planes also have an essential impact on the origins and development of everyday nationalism texts in Armenia. Socio-economical, moral-psychological and other complications change communities' calm, sometimes monotonous development process. They also activate the tendencies that lead to social polarization, indifference, and distortion of the socio-professional structure. According both to statistics and recorded ethnographic data, this negative background has been present since Armenia's first years of independence.

An increase in the impoverished population, with high levels of extreme poverty (Statistical Yearbook 2014, 106),<sup>9</sup> began in the 1990s and continues today. The picture is extremely negative in terms of population movement: more than 1 million people left Armenia between 1991 and 2014. More than 90% of this population migrated to Russian Federation. Disproportionate territorial development has not yet been overcome. Approximately 1/3 of the population resides in the capital city of Yerevan, which has the most economical, educational and financial resources. Obviously, this situation affects the perceptions, notions, behav-

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<sup>9</sup> In 2013, 2.7% of Armenia's population was extremely poor, and 32% were poor. In urban settlements, the same indices were 2.9% and 32.2%, respectively; in rural places, the indices were 2.2% and 31.7%, respectively. More details are available at: <http://armstat.am/file/doc/99489188.pdf>.

ior and actions of individuals, groups, communities and other units.

Let us discuss how these problems affect the narratives of everyday nationalism. The goal of the 1988 movement that began in Soviet Armenia and NKAR (Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region) was to detach NKAR from Soviet Azerbaijan and unite it with Soviet Armenia. From a socio-ethnographical perspective, the movement was also a phase of remarkable transformations. It involved a transition from Soviet conditions to new ones, and the creation/recreation of the “cosmos” was considered within the irredentist context of unifying the Armenian nation. To understand the narratives of nationalism and their later developments in the everyday context, we must observe the public perceptions of good and bad.

As noted above, during the first phase of the movement the perception of everything “Soviet” was neutral. However, that perception became negative in response to the Soviet authorities’ refusal to restore historical justice. The war has also changed our perceptions of our Azerbaijani and Turkish neighbors.

Intrasocial developments and transformations are no less important. The Artsakh movement is distinct because *clearly outlined civic and national/ethnic components were present in it, along with a long-lasting, constructive combination*. It was a phase of public, socio-civic and national/ethnic collectivity. One of the collectivity’s fundamental assumptions was Artsakh’s reunification. The second, more comprehensive assumption consid-

ered Artsakh's reunification the first step in restoring historical justice.

Social relationships, however, have interesting "features." They do not always "obey" the priorities suggested by certain theories and methodological approaches. The context in which these "features" are best displayed is everyday life. People live, eat, dress, and become parents without being acquainted with or giving importance to theories of nationalism. These same people occasionally even build relationships considering both their similarities and their differences.

In most of Armenia's territory, Armenian-Azerbaijani relations have a century-long history, whereas Armenian-Turkish relations have a history of nine to ten centuries; both relationships are very important to the texts of everyday nationalism. This history is primarily a history of differences, especially when the community is experiencing an emergency or – if we turn to Michael Billig – when the "bell tolls." In conditions of drastic change, many values that are important to researchers become unimportant to communities/their separate groups. Simultaneously, the measurements of the social faces of "nationalisms," and especially of ethnic nationalisms, have changed rapidly over the last 100-200 years. Communities are now more dynamic, faster developing, and both more and completely "visualized."

The 20th century has been remarkable in that Armenians have upgraded their perceptions of foreigners towards a higher unitarity: the Genocide and Armenian-Azerbaijani tensions are perception-shaping cornerstones. According to many genocide experts,

one of reasons for genocides, including the Armenian genocide, is that the ruling (in Armenians' case, the Turkic or, more generally, the Moslem) element does not tolerate inferior people having better lives or greater prosperity. Moreover, the political elites, which are the main authors of nationalistic narratives, further exacerbate this feeling through manipulations, creating the myth that "injustice is a consequence of bad governance," which later counsels eradication and genocide through political and military actions. By using genocide, the political elite also targets the elimination of civilizational differences because otherwise, they would live as subordinates and thus be unable to escape their "inferiority complex." These perceptions of high and low, strong and weak are reproduced even now as texts of everyday nationalism. For example, one narrative that passes on stories about "Ergir" and exile in Nerqin Bazmaberd is about wealth left behind, about buried gold. This narrative is so enduring that nearly all families have fabulous stories about a stranger from Turkey who has appeared some time ago, learned where the gold was buried by promising to share it, and then disappeared to become rich in Turkey.

The history of the USSR showed us that elites with such a complex, regardless of their mission, are often driven by a maniacal desire to eliminate those who differ, to weaken them, or to make them "equal to us or even worse," thus implying class affiliation instead of ethnicity. It is probable that Stalin's ideology of collectivization arose because the "poor rulers" who came to power never managed to tolerate stronger "stuffed fists."



Independence in Armenia has brought about two-sided changes in the dimensions of the nation and system. The social measurement of the latter, and generally of political processes, has become essential. This condition was revealed dozens of times throughout the research. One of the most complete and thorough formulae is the phrase constantly repeated in interviews: “...*back then, back in the Soviet Union, and now...*” Even in Koti, where negative perceptions of Azerbaijanis clearly exist, “*back then*” has a slightly different meaning. “*I never had dosts (friend of family), but I had a very good friend, Ahmad, a truck driver. A huge man, whatever I asked of him, - ‘Ahmad, I need some iron’ - he wouldn’t say no. When building the house he brought cement from Akhstafa for me, let’s say the train, the railway was in Akhstafa, it was risky for him, he loaded the cement and brought it, unloaded it here, said ‘pay me when I come next’, and went to work there... I told him I needed plaster for the whole building, he brought plaster from Kirovobad – two trucks, with a driver boy who was in deportation, a truck driver... drove and stopped there, this room was open, and we tipped it down from there. We did trade by trust, he brought stone cubes (local bricks) with a KrAZ – 700 of them, said ‘count them, throw away the broken ones and give me the money for what’s left’. We did it this way, by trust...*” (Individual interview, Koti, 2013. The narrator is a pensioner, a former teacher.)

Everything that was routine and ordinary during the Soviet years<sup>10</sup> suddenly became unreachable, creating what is known as “Soviet nostalgia.” The element of unexpectedness, as the studies also show, has had a remarkable effect on the situation. People never thought that the Soviet Union could crumble. Consequently, they sought for solutions in the conditions associated with the Soviet Union.

Communities and social groups always avoid a vacuum – they attempt to fill it with something new. A search for such an alternative has taken place in Armenia. Initially “the West” was considered a possible alternative. However, now that more than two decades have passed, it is obvious that the “West” and everything Western are far less clear-cut than some people think. People in Armenia once had certain perceptions about the West via the Armenian diaspora, repatriates into Soviet Armenia, etc. (Stepanyan 2010) – but most of those perceptions were merely that: perceptions. As an economical and political system, the West was both unknown and incomprehensible. Nevertheless, what was offered to the public was not only incomprehensible but also unacceptable: shock therapy, privatization, and disappearing bank savings. Again, these developments were largely

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<sup>10</sup>We do not consider the everyday and the customary to be completely positive. In everyday Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, there were tension, conflicts, and restricted contacts. The majority of people in the border areas knew that after hosting an Armenian visitor, the “Turk” would either wash the serving utensils many times or simply throw them away. However, this has not hindered mutual contacts and visits. Details are available in *Dabaghyan and Gabrielyan 2008*.

associated with the West and therefore, negative perceptions of the West emerged. Marginalization also began during that time. Not only families but also social and professional groups that lost opportunities for social mobility found themselves in extreme poverty and survival conditions with few possible coping strategies other than emigration or swearing loyalty to the authorities and seeking a place in the pyramid of power.

These perceptions of all things Soviet and Western have paved a road for other narratives of nationalism. Ever since the first months of the Artsakh movement, national symbols and texts have become/have been made predominant in various public meetings and protests (dense details may be found in many of H. Marutyan's studies published in the 2000s). It is difficult to determine the usage of these texts and symbols in the everyday context. However, it is obvious that the nationalist/ethnic texts of riots or protests were caused by them. However, these texts were later transformed.

The research has enabled us, by using the example of specific communities, not only to observe those transformations but also to delineate models of everyday nationalism. In the research proposal, the sampling criteria have been described in detail. That notwithstanding, we were certain that the differences were not great – but the research proved the opposite. In each of the three villages, the recorded order of things enabled us to outline both models and submodels.

In Nerkin Bazmaberd, everyday nationalism texts have been and are being built based on perceptions of “*the Ergir, the West-*

ern Armenia, the abandoned and lost homeland.” In this case, the symbols are multilevel and numerous. In recent years, the number of people who have left for Western Armenia, especially to their ancestral villages, has increased (*more details in: Khachatryan and Neyzi 2010*). Every adult in the village acknowledges these deeds; moreover, almost everyone is informed of the successes and failures of those who have traveled.<sup>11</sup> The stories told by those who have been to “Ergir” about the village, the house,

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<sup>11</sup>Success is not solely measured by having visited the ancestors’ (i.e., our) villages, even for a short time; it is also measured by having been in “our” home. In all of the stories, the narrative of finding “our home” is very clear. The question, “How did you find your house?” usually had a very clear answer: “*My grandfathers have told me or my parents where our village is located... And our house, I found it easily because my father has told me that it was on the bank of a river, that there was a mighty walnut tree in front of the house... and so on.*” The narrators were thinking of finding “our” house as a blissful experience because they (along with their parents and grandparents even more than them) have been dreaming about it for decades, and they now consider it a partial compensation for their hardship and suffering. “*From what my uncle has told me, and let’s say generally, he was little back then, he too has learned from his ancestors and grandfathers, maybe added a thing or two, well, they at least remembered the escape route and the Aruch events, the events of Western Armenia that he couldn’t have remembered, was too little then... Our people have been so naïve, they were hoping for a comeback, most of them left their gold there, buried it, hoping they would come back and claim their lands. There is even a story that tells how he buried his gold.*

*And haven’t you tried to go and find that gold, now that you can go?*

*Most of us don’t know the exact places, besides, a hundred years have passed, or what amount of gold would that be? Each of them must have had a kilogram or less of gold.*

*But when it became possible to go, there were people who actually went, right?*

*Yes, by the start of the 1980s it was possible to go. It was a little bit difficult to go back then, but people did, say, after 1988, but more of them at the end of the 1990s and in the 2000s, several groups go every year, there are people who’ve been there 5 or 6 times already.”(Individual interview, Nerkin Bazmaber, 2014. The narrator is a teacher in highschool.)*

the river, the tree, are symbols of everyday nationalism. However, next to these new symbols are the old ones that have been and are being told. These symbols are of importance not only at the individual and family levels but also (and simultaneously) at the community level because in this case, the entire community is the bearer of a common historical memory. During a focus group discussion, G. Grigoryan, the headmaster of the cultural center in Nerkin Bazmaberd, displayed a map on which he marked his village. He then laid the map on the table and began to note the villages of the other participants in the conversation, saying “*Your village is here, you’re from this village.*” From the perspective of perceiving everyday nationalism symbols, the existence of the model of Nerkin Bazmaberd, or in broad terms, the “Sasounian” model, is phenomenal. Ethnographically, this area has been adequately explored and discussed (*Petoyan 1965*). Recent studies have also discussed the mechanisms of protection and reproduction of historical memory (individual and group levels) (*Kharatyan-Araqelyan and Neyzi, 2010*). The uniqueness of Sasoun and its people, however, has never been a subject of separate ethno-anthropological examination, though it clearly reflects the century-long “survival strategy” of an intraethnic group that survived the genocide. It can be inferred that one of the fundamental reasons for the Sassoun phenomenon is that the group survived mass elimination and found refuge in Armenia. Another reason for the phenomenon is the group’s collective resettlement in different communities of modern-day Aragatsotsn and consequently, their incomparably greater possibilities of reproducing collective levels of historical memory, albeit not without the existence of numerous difficulties. Thus, much like other cases, a certain

degree of mystification of the national takes place, with the popularization of the following sentiment: “*it was very difficult to protect, but we, our fathers, or our grandparents managed to do it.*” In some cases, this is done with the goal of pointing out the importance of the individual or the family and the heroism of the deed. Studies have revealed almost no political texts of everyday nationalism. Moreover, the reason for their absence have been clearly indicated: “*The authorities are not national; thus, they are only doing or willing to do very little for the protection of reproduction of national values.*” At the individual or group levels, especially for the younger generation, the reasons for the weakening of the national were considered to be the difficult socio-economic conditions and the availability or attraction of alternatives. The alternatives are what the youth and the general community view on the Internet, television or other sources.

The second model or sub-model revealed by the research is the Koti or “border” community (*Dabaghyan and Gabrielyan 2008; 2011; Gabrielyan and Dabaghyan 2014*) model.<sup>12</sup> This model is not new: it has a history of more than a century and descends from Armenian-Tatar and Armenian-Azerbaijani rela-

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<sup>12</sup>The definition of the border community as a model was based on the previous research of M. Gabrielyan (with A. Dabaghyan), in several such communities in the Tavoush region. The texts of the national and nationalism in borderlands have specific meaning and contents. Here, we also see different perceptions of “Us” and “Them,” good and bad, kind and evil. Thus, the simple question “Who is the hero?” provoked the following answer: “*These villagers (Of Koti – M.G.) are all heroes, dear young man. We truly or untruly (‘We are the heroes,’ her husband interjected) ourselves engaged in fighting on the first day, to open up another front. Ghalumyan was in Ijevan (Mayor of Ijevan – the capital of the region, M.G.) and we attacked them from our side to ease the fight over there. We remained in this valley. I carried my mother-in-law on my back upwards from this valley to a safe place, and returned.*” (In-depth interview with a middle-aged woman, Koti, 2013).

tions. In addition, it is clearly divided into chronological phases. The first sub-phase occurred at the beginning of the 20th century: tense, sometimes harmonious, generally featuring conflicting relationships and their evaluations. During this phase, the main stages of the clashes were clearly noted and memorized (through generation-to-generation reproduction) while constant attacks on Koti, its neighbor Barekamavan and other Armenian villages from nearby communities were being (and continue to be) made. One wonderful example of understanding the model from the perspective of symbols of everyday nationalism is the “Young Koti” newsletter, which was published for several years through the efforts of local youth and their sponsors. The symbolism of the beginning of the century is much objectified: families, the representatives of which participated, died and became heroes; and locations where people died and became heroes. The symbolism was maintained throughout the Soviet period, but the symbols and local texts of their interpretation were changing. Here, notwithstanding the “*positive symbolism*” of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, caution is maintained, and the stereotypes characterizing the neighbor were both operating and being reproduced. It is interesting that from the perspective of everyday nationalism, a certain narrative is always present, expressed by the saying “*Turks remain Turks.*” As a subject of social anthropology, this phenomenon has varying interpretations. If we see these interpretations in their corresponding temporal settings, it becomes obvious how either individual or group memory actually feeds the precautionary nature of those interpretations. The children and grandchildren of active participants in the 1920 inter-ethnic clashes were still alive in the 1960s and 1970s, which is

considered to be the phase of interethnic friendship and brotherhood. However, these interpretations did not clear and recharge memory, and never could have done so. The narrative of conflicts and clashes remained too strong to allow for a final settling of the relationships. We also see an exclusive corroboration of the contemporaneous existence of the state or official historiography and the everyday. A villager consistently receives a good share of carefully considered information from the government about the unbroken friendship between Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples, while in his everyday life, after having visited Ahmed or Hassan from the neighboring village, he observes how they throw away the dishes that he has used or recalls the events of the early 20th century while sitting at the Teacher's fountain. These two models have essential similarities. First, it is the clear and objectified image of the foreigner, the enemy or the opponent. However, the differences are also obvious: in a border community, the objectified foreigner, enemy or opponent plays a major role both in appreciation and generally in the processes of the formation of everyday nationalism texts. In the case of Nerkin Bazmaberd, the opponents and foreigners are the Turks, who once were on the other side of the safely guarded Soviet border and now are on the other side of the Armenian border. They are unseen, and interactions with them are limited.

In the case of Koti, along with other border communities, a transformation of the character of the foreigner, the enemy or the opponent takes place in which fragmentation of historical memory is also present. Thus, at least three phases of Armenian-Azerbaijani relationships were noted in almost all of the inter-



views, the first being the pre-Soviet period of a unique blend of peaceful co-existence and unrest. It is remembered well enough to be retold today. The second phase is the Soviet period, during which aggressiveness was gradually being overcome. Here, everyday nationalism symbols' unique tendency to transform is displayed in different stories. Thus, in stories covering the period until the end of the 1930s (when memories of the aggressive co-existence of the previous phase remained strong), negativity is dominant and precautions were prevalent in people's speech. Later, even in texts published immediately before the conflict period, positivity becomes more emphasized, although negativity remains present. Finally, a return to initial conditions occurs during the conflict phase, although positivity occasionally also emerges.

The third phase is the Gandzaqar model. The team's field ethnographical research experiences enable us to conditionally call this phase the model of communities populated by Eastern Armenians. In Gandzaqar, memories of the genocide are far more vague and non-individual than in the Aragatsotn region and other areas populated by Western Armenians. In Gandzaqar, although genocide is a narrative, in no way is it an individual or a family story. This affects the processes of reliving and memory transformation at the individual level. Compared with communities directly neighboring the border, in Gandzaqar, the perceptions of Armenian-Azerbaijani relationships and of Azerbaijanis as one of the main actors in those relationships differ slightly. Negativity is present here; it is remembered and retold. However, espe-

cially with respect to the Soviet period, memories of the Ghazakh bazaar and of shopping in that bazaar appear; these memories partially neutralize the effects of negative stereotypes. These three models or sub-models uncovered during the research also give birth to different texts and stories of everyday nationalism. Generally, it can be said that they shape the different micronarratives of nationalism.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SOVIET HISTORY OF DAILY NATIONALISM AND ETHNICITY IN ARMENIA

Although issues of daily nationalism and ethnicity played an important role in public life during the Soviet age, they became objects of anthropological debate only after Armenia declared its independence.<sup>13</sup> These debates, however, are characterized by unique concepts and formulations, along with a unique scientific tradition and its long-lasting inertia. Compared with the general approach of Western scientific thought<sup>14</sup>, in Armenia, this field seems to have dual tendencies. Some academic circles still adhere to the theories and approaches used during the Soviet era; the “new” theories, methods and specific units of the research field to be studied in the context of daily nationalism and ethnici-

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<sup>13</sup> During the Soviet period, the introduction of Soviet values, social change, and the process of the “making” of the Soviet people were all the focus of anthropologists’ attention. Publications covering these issues include, *inter alia*, Vardumyan 1956; and Vardumyan and Karapetyan 1963. Two of the best collective monographs from the Soviet period contain insights into various aspects of everyday life, see Arutyunyan and Karapetyan 1986; and Arutiunov and Margaryan 1983. Despite the ideological influence that was inevitable during the Soviet period, these studies provide a comprehensive description of that period. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenian anthropologists L. Abrahamian, H. Kharatyan, A. Dabaghyan and M. Gabrielyan, *inter alia*, studied the topic of daily nationalism and its expressions. See Kharatyan (ed.) 2001; Kharatyan (ed.) 2003; Dabaghyan and Gabrielyan 2008; 2011; Gabrelyan 2005; Marutyanyan 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Brubaker 1996; Billig 1995; Palmer 1998; Calhoun 1993; Gellner 1983; Smith, 1983.

ty are in the clarification phase. The bulk of post-Soviet publications that cover these topics still refer to a perception of ethnicity based on historic homeland, language, memory and other components that represent the maintenance and reproduction of ethnic identity. If one of these factors were to be endangered, the very foundations of ethnicity would be threatened.<sup>15</sup> These perceptions and formulations of ethnicity were outlined in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. In his analysis of the approach of the Communist Party's leadership (Lenin, Stalin and Shahumyan, among others) to national questions, F. Silnitski, a noted researcher on the USSR's national policy, speaks of contradictions, variations and, in certain cases, tendencies to redefine specific situations.<sup>16</sup>

The main principles of national policy and construction of a federation based on the nation took shape after the October Revolution, when it became clear that the process of nationalization that had begun in the Russian Empire was not going to “transform” the population into a faceless, ambiguous class unit. Regardless of the standing of certain party leaders, ethnic and na-

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<sup>15</sup> This proposition is best supported by the school (and university) Armenian history textbooks, which are required to include topics related to the historical homeland (i.e., the Armenian Highland), language, religion and certain mythical and real heroes. The newly published university textbook of Armenian history (Simonyan (ed.) 2012) is also based on this principle, and the compulsory sections are preserved. It is noteworthy that textbooks do not cover daily expressions of national and ethnic identity. History is perceived as political history or historical chronology, whereas culture is predominantly viewed as professional culture.

<sup>16</sup> F. Silnitsky, *Nationalities Policy of the CPSU, 1917-1922*. Washington (D.C.), Problems of Eastern Europe 1990.

tional principles were built into the very foundations of the construction of the Soviet federation. In addition, a new issue emerged during the first years of the formation of the Soviet Union. According to the first population census, approximately two hundred ethnic communities resided in the USSR. Party leadership “promised” a certain degree of autonomy to each ethnic group, without which it did not seem possible to contain the ongoing tensions given that until the late 1920s and early 1930s, islands of opposition to Soviet authority remained in various parts of the USSR. To maintain a multiethnic state and alleviate interethnic tensions, the authorities implemented the principle of “hierarchical federation,” establishing a union and autonomous republics, autonomous regions, national-cultural autonomies and so on.

Armenia was given the status of a union republic, which provided it with certain liberties and privileges but also meant that any expression of nationalism would be severely punished.<sup>17</sup> Although Armenia “fit into” the general logic of Soviet national policy, it also had peculiarities that influenced daily nationalism and ethnic discourse throughout the period.

Interethnic relations in the Southern Caucasus were quite strained by the end of the 19th century. It is no coincidence that

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<sup>17</sup> The repressive state machine of the 1920s-1930s took the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Party leadership and intellectuals did not escape that fate either: the “suicide” of Armenian Communist Party leader Aghasi Khanjian, the killings of poet Yeghishe Charents and writer Aksel Bakunts and the imprisonment of dozens of other intellectuals were “manifestations” of the Soviet Union’s national policy.

in 1918-1920, the newly established Transcaucasian republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan failed to overcome tense inter-ethnic and interstate relations, constantly asserting mutual territorial claims and pretensions that often entailed armed clashes and military operations. The emergence of the Soviet Union merely assuaged these relations. Armenian-Georgian relations appeared to be relatively easy to settle because the reciprocal blames and claims were “mild”; Armenian-Azerbaijani relations froze instead of settling. In later years, the issues of Kharabagh and Nakhijevan continued to shape the approaches and perceptions of intellectuals on both sides.

Indeed, the late 19th-century nationalistic movements, efforts to create national history narratives and political party activities based on the idea of nation contributed not only to the creation and institutionalization of stereotypes and but also to the entrenchment of perceptions of “us and them,” if not in the broader society, then certainly among the elite. Most of these stereotypes survived throughout the Soviet period.

Armenia’s multilayered ethnicity and nationalism were not determined by the abovementioned factors alone. Soviet Armenia had a multilayered, intraethnic composition from the time of its establishment.<sup>18</sup> In the 1920s, at least two major intraethnic

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<sup>18</sup> Processes of nation building that had been activated in Armenia in the 19th century resulted in a gradual reduction of regional characteristics. The development of a literal Eastern and Western Armenia helped to disseminate professional culture, fiction and the periodical press to larger shares of the population. Nevertheless, intraethnic peculiarities continued to exist throughout the Soviet era.

groups stood out in Soviet Armenia: Eastern Armenians (the population of Eastern, then Soviet Armenia) and various communities of Western Armenians, who settled in Soviet Armenia after the 1915 genocide committed by Ottoman Turkey. There were subgroups of all of these groups, particularly Western Armenians, who came from all of Western Armenia's historico-cultural regions. Later, during consecutive waves of repatriation,<sup>19</sup> tens of thousands of Western Armenians moved to Armenia from Middle Eastern and European countries, thus influencing the intraethnic image in its own right. This intraethnic setting of the 1920-1930s outlined two major vectors in Soviet Armenia.

The first vector can be conventionally called the “*daily nationalism of Eastern Armenians*.”<sup>20</sup> We mentioned above that this “*nationalism*” arose out of Armenian-Georgian and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations that were nearly muted under pressure from the USSR.

By 1921, it had become clear that the Bolsheviks, who came to power using nationalist slogans, did not seek a fair solution to national problems; instead, they manipulated national problems

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<sup>19</sup> Repatriation was the organized migration to Soviet Armenia of hundreds of thousands of Armenians who had scattered worldwide after the genocide. It was conducted in several phases until the 1970s. The majority of repatriates came from Arab and European countries, Iran and elsewhere. Most of them were settled in large cities, i.e., Yerevan, Gyumri, and Vanadzor.

<sup>20</sup> This vector was based on Armenian-Georgian and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations of the past several decades. Studies suggest that those relations were not necessarily conflicting, which is crucial given the considerable Armenian population in Georgia's major cities and the high density of Armenians in certain rural areas of Azerbaijan (see more details in: Dabaghyan and Gabrielyan 2008; 2011).

to strengthen the Party's monopoly and to rule over a manageable society. The administrative and territorial division of the Northern Caucasus is discussed in the same context. Placing Abkhazia inside Georgia, creation of the South Ossetian autonomy and putting the Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhijevan inside Azerbaijan are all vivid examples of how the USSR's national policy succeeded through controlled conflicts and interethnic relations.

Over thousands of years, Armenian-Georgian relations have resulted in a fair and mutual understanding of the characteristics of ethnic communities. One factor contributing to this awareness was the existence of multiethnic towns such as Tbilisi, Batumi, Gori, Telavi and others. Armenians and Georgians lived alongside each other in these places for centuries; cultural interplay and interaction took place quite naturally. Armenian-Georgian relations were also active in contact zones, especially in Armenia's Lori region.<sup>21</sup>

However, the existing studies and collected anthropological data show that despite relative amicability, everyday life was not void of certain stereotypes that reflected disputes about the righteousness of either side. Thus, the Armenians deemed it unjust

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<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, both in the pre-Soviet and Soviet periods, and sometimes even today, people in the Lori region refer to Tbilisi (not to Yerevan or any other city in Armenia) with the word "city." A great number of villagers used to sell their goods in Tbilisi markets, and emigrants from Lori were generally headed to Tbilisi. Knowledge of Georgian and Armenian was very high among the people of the border villages. There were numerous mutual borrowings in daily colloquial speech.



that a portion of the Lori region was left in Georgia, whereas the latter thought it unfair that most of the region belonged to Armenia. Another point in the daily nationalist narrative is related to perceptions of Tbilisi/Tiflis. Setting aside matters of the city's composition, population and structure, it is worth mentioning that Armenian stereotypes are based on the presence of a large Armenian population in the city and on the reality that numerous former mayors were of Armenian descent. The Georgian side, in contrast, was inclined to either reject or dispute these facts. Such formulae were not commonly manifested in everyday life but can be regarded as narratives of daily nationalism that could be placed into circulation at any time. For instance, contemporary Armenian discourse stresses the Georgian authorities' anti-Armenian politics, evoking the Georgian side to condemn the Armenians' ungratefulness, and so on.<sup>22</sup> This interaction can be called "*soft nationalism*" because even under these circumstanc-

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<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, in everyday life, Armenian-Georgian relations have found different expressions. One of the hottest recent topics in Armenian-Georgian relations is the dispute over some churches located in the territories of both states. The matter was discussed at the presidential level and was present in the meeting agenda of Armenian Catholicos Karekin II and Georgian Patriarch Ilia II. Delivery of public speeches by historians, architects and clergymen on this topic has become a common practice. Another remarkable trend of daily nationalism is the topic of the "cuisine wars," which has extended far beyond the Armenian-Georgian context to become an important part of South Caucasian reality. Anecdotes have developed around appropriation of particular dishes and each side's arguments for grounding its "copyright." There is even a series of anecdotes beginning with "*an Armenian, a Georgian and a Russian ...*" (For details, refer to 'Cross Analysis of School Textbooks of the South Caucasus', Yerevan 2012; R. Tsaturyan ' Politics, Conflict and Tolma/Dolma: It's Time to Save the National Cuisine from Invaders' (in publication).

es of stereotyped thinking, Armenian-Georgian relations remain good. Additionally, these realities are peculiar to only few regions and have not spread across Armenia.

Armenian-Azerbaijani relations and their expression in daily nationalism discourse were more sophisticated than Armenian-Georgian relations, which were fairly localized either in Georgian territory or in contact areas. In the case of Armenian-Azerbaijani relations, the discourse eventually addressed the issue of to whom Kharabagh and Nakhijevan would belong. Since the 1960s, this issue had actively engaged intellectuals and was boldly articulated in the public consciousness. Daily nationalism was quite “active” due to the large number of Azerbaijanis living in Armenia and Armenians living in Azerbaijan; intensive daily contact was a part of their context. The lack of professional analysis and research makes it difficult to reveal the entire process of stereotype formation.<sup>23</sup> Contemporary studies are also somewhat problematic because the conflict profoundly affected peoples’ perceptions about neighbors, and anthropologists from both sides have no opportunity to work in the other’s country. However, the available material enables preliminary observations: both Armenia and Azerbaijan have developed an atmosphere of mutual tolerance conditioned not only by the politics of the time but also by the tradition and logic of interethnic relations<sup>24</sup>. Conversely,

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<sup>23</sup> Armenian-Turkish relations in Nagorno Kharabagh and surrounding regions at the late 19th-early 20th centuries are best analysed by A. Mkrtyan, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Perceptions of Azerbaijanis may vary among the peasants of the Armenian villages bordering Azerbaijan. A villager who had once had an active relation-

the degree of tolerance was insufficient to maintain the potential for coexistence when conflict arose.

The second vector was that of the Western Armenians. The problems faced by Western Armenians were much more complex than those faced by Easterners. Because the Westerners had suffered genocide, for them the genocide was significantly more than the mere extermination of Armenian people: it also meant “an end of history,” at least as experienced in their historical homeland. Apart from the problems of socio-economic and cultural adaptation, Western Armenians who settled in Soviet Armenia faced the issue of securing historical continuity.

The first issue was relatively easy to overcome: despite differences in landscape and climate, Western Armenians continued to engage in agriculture and animal husbandry – in other words, the reproduction of economic life was not problematic. It appeared more difficult to solve the second problem.

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ship with the population of the neighboring Azerbaijani village might speak of the impossibility of restoring the formerly friendly relations, whereas a high-ranking official who is expected to remain neutral would speak about the possibilities of cross-border trade. Quantitative opinion polls are needed to determine the dominant image. However, the available data indicate that restoring active trade relations seems impossible, even to the older generations. The middle-aged villagers—i.e., former members of self-defense groups—have even less faith in that possibility. At the same time, these same men remember the special attitude of the neighbor villagers towards them: they informed Armenians about forthcoming offensives, asked them not to shell their village, contributed to prisoner exchanges, returned captured herds and so on. In such cases, the Azerbaijani neighbor is opposed to the “Gray wolves from Baku.” For a still younger generation, Azerbaijanis are mere strangers, vague figures left in the past, and the prevailing attitude toward them is indifference (see: Dabaghyan and Gabrielyan 2008).

Anthropologic and folkloric data, along with the historiography and fiction of this period, suggest that prior to the establishment of Soviet authority and settlement of Russian-Turkish relations, some Western Armenians considered their residence in Eastern Armenia temporary, hoping that either Russia or European powers would help them return to their homeland. However, when it became obvious that these expectations would not be fulfilled, people began to reconstruct their former harmonious and all-encompassing “cosmos” in the new environment. The new settlements were named after the old ones. Microtoponymy was similarly modified; the new settlers tended to dwell in areas that most resembled the climate and landscape of Western Armenia. There are many examples of people establishing villages in places where they could see Western Armenia across the border.<sup>25</sup> This drift was particularly common in the present-day Ar-

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<sup>25</sup> On April 23, on the eve of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, descendants of Western Armenians living in the villages of the Aragatsotn region of Armenia climb onto the mountain slopes facing the border and make huge fires so that those on the other side of the border can see that “we still live and one day we shall return.” This ritual, however, is not directed to the outer world alone. The organizers say it is of immense educational value because it teaches the younger generations about their “Homeland, Ergir, the lost Motherland.” On that day, many people from Yerevan gather in the villages to participate in this event. This is also a peculiar event for community mobilization. Another unique expression of daily nationalism in the Soviet period is a monument dedicated to the leaders of the Armenian fight for freedom in the village of Ujan, which is located in the Aragatsotn region. Construction of such a monument must have caused “anxiety” among Soviet authorities. Both sides agreed to compromise, however, and a stone face of a Soviet soldier found a place in the middle of the monument. Similarly, almost all bus and truck drivers kept a picture of Andranik, one of the legendary heroes of the freedom fight. His pictures were hung in many houses, which was quite auda-

mavir, Aragatsotn and Shirak regions, which became the sites of compact settlements of mostly Western Armenian communities. Unlike the Eastern Armenians, daily nationalism and ethnicity among Westerners stemmed from historical memory, historical discontinuity and a victim complex. Accordingly, the landscape and environment were symbolized. Symbols of Eastern Armenians were typically more “daily” because of their everyday presence in people’s lives: cultural heritage, churches, monasteries, chapels and other monuments. Before the genocide, symbols were also daily in nature for Western Armenians; afterwards, however, their symbolism underwent significant changes.

In this context, symbolization of a historical or lost homeland, same as “Ergir,” developed connotations in meaning. “Ergir” became a common symbol, although there were local symbols as well, such as a specific town or village, an abandoned home, church or chapel. The formation of Ergir as a common symbol also changed the perceptions and dimensions of time and space.

This symbolization, however, was not expressed in the same way throughout the life of the USSR. During the years of Stalin’s dictatorship, especially before the beginning of the Second World War, the subject of Ergir was not overt in public discourse. Even the fiction of the time does not address any specific, essential aspect of it. The narrative of condemning genocide was there, but the public discourse was missing. In that period,

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cious for that period (see Neyzi and Kharatyan-Araqelyan 2010). In the village of Nerkin Bazmaberd in the Aragatsotn region, our research team collected stories related to this issue during the 2013 research project.

each statement or action might be a reason to be labeled “dashnak”<sup>26</sup> and exiled.

Partial changes occurred after World War II, when the victorious USSR decided to use the more favorable political situation to voice territorial claims to Turkey. For this reason, the government permitted another wave of repatriation to support its claims with historical evidence.

Despite these changes, Western Armenians’ nationhood remained “underground.” Studies of this period reveal that in this context, the older generation set a foremost goal of keeping and passing on to the next generations the “text” of their historical homeland, which was considered significant for preserving national identity. The situation changed in the 1960s, when for the first time, the memory<sup>27</sup> of the genocide victims was publicly

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<sup>26</sup> Armenian Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutyun in one of the traditional Armenian parties. Dashnaktsutyun was created in 1890 and was one of the parties that led the national freedom fight against the Ottoman Empire. It was the ruling party of the first Republic (1918-1920); almost all key governmental positions were held by Dashnak statesmen. After the establishment of Soviet authority in Armenia on December 2, 1920, the majority of Dashnaktsutyun members left Armenia, and only a small number of those who stayed in Armenia managed to avoid Stalin's repressions. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation began an extensive campaign for the recognition of the Armenian genocide, primarily in Europe and the US. In the late 1980s, Dashnaktsutyun was legitimised in Armenia and it remains one of the most influential national powers in the diaspora.

<sup>27</sup>The construction of the memorial dedicated to the victims of the Genocide of 1915 was finished in 1967 (the decision had been made 2 years prior by the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR). The decision of the Council of Ministers “conceded to public demands.” This formulation is crucial for understanding modern nationhood discourse because it shows how the dissidence of the latter in the near past gained legitimacy. During this period, fic-

commemorated in Armenia. The 1960s overall appeared to be a turning point for expressions of daily nationalism. Permission to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the genocide actuated the manifestations of daily nationalism because it had become possible not only to speak up about this issue but also to voice certain demands. The legitimization of the issue remarkably extended the range of symbols “*in service*” of daily nationalism, including fiction, music, and the arts.

Noteworthy changes also took place in Eastern Armenian “nationalism.” Attempts were made to speak about the Karabakh issue: Armenian party leaders, famous intellectuals, artists and other influential people sporadically addressed the issue with the Soviet authorities. These efforts, however, did not yield tangible results because they were perceived as defying the Soviet national policy, which had so “successfully” coped with the national problem and “*secured a happy life for all nations in the fraternal family of Soviet peoples.*” However, it was during exactly this period when gaps in national policy began to surface. With the beginning of Nikita Khrushchev's tenure in 1957, the ethnic

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tion works about Ergir were published, and works of different genres were created. The works of M. Galshoyan, Kh. Dashtents and others show that this “text” not only existed but also became an important component of public discourse. Since the construction of Tsitsernakaberd’s memorial, hundreds of thousands of Armenians have visited it every year to commemorate the victims of the genocide. During the years of independence, another interesting transformation took place. A park was founded right next to the memorial, around the modern-day genocide museum-institute, where all high-ranking heads of delegations and other notables symbolically plant personally nominated trees.

communities deported during World War II were either allowed to return to their homes or were partially “pardoned.” However, during the 15 years of the deportation, the history of “traitor” peoples was “changed” and the historical texts depleted. Moreover, there were cases of the destruction of historical monuments; evidence of cultural presence was being wiped out. The major ethnic communities of the South Caucasus escaped deportations; during those same years the “*process of creating and re-editing historical narratives*” almost ended. Researchers of Soviet political history argue that these histories sought to “endow” the main ethnic communities of the Soviet republics with a specific *longue durée*, which explains the keen interest of Soviet historiography and ethnography in ethnogenesis and early stages of ethnic history.

The “*egalitarian*” policy of nationhood did not allow any nation the explicit “*advantage*” of possessing a “more ancient history.” In the South Caucasus, the documented history of Armenians and Georgians did not pose much of a challenge, and theories of their ethnogenesis might have been slightly changed due to the ongoing political situation. The “Caucasian Albanian” that was made dominant in Azerbaijan caused serious public and academic debates, providing an opportunity to mention, *inter alia*, the Kharabagh issue.

Further developments followed the same logic: whereas the Soviet Union was attempting to tame or mold everyday manifestations of nationalism, its carriers and creators were reproducing old stereotypes and developing new ones, which together contin-



ued to shape interethnic relations and the discourse of daily nationalism in general.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FROM ABOVE TO BELOW: HOW THE TEXTS OF ARMENIANNES ARE GENERATED

The everyday is a “constructed” reality. As highlighted in research, the everyday is constructed and organized in a stream of various phenomena and actualities: symbols, significant events, people and so on. In context of the constructed everyday, a disparity between urban and rural dimensions of time and space is essential. What is important in the urban environment is of secondary (or less) importance in the village.

The Soviet everyday discussed in the previous chapter was also constructed and reproduced within the frame of this logic. Remaining latent under so many conditions, everyday nationalism in the USSR was nonetheless incorporated into a certain tempo-spatial system. In many cases, these dimensions were the subjects of the system’s logic and coercion. Notwithstanding these constraints, there was a point next to which the dictum and logic of the system were powerless. In the opinion of certain analysts, intrasystem processes that plausibly began after the death of Stalin ultimately convinced the Moscow and local party leaders that it was both impossible and senseless to control everything, every day. This was fairly reflected in the increasingly disseminated flood of anecdotes about Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and other party leaders. These anecdotes targeted the visible changes in everyday life, testifying to the weakness of the system. That

notwithstanding, communities were not capable of guessing the time and shape of the forthcoming transformations.

In Nerqin Bazmaberd, for instance, the middle-aged and older respondents remember that in the 1970s, every April 24, they promptly visited Tzitzernakaberd either with or without their parents; most of those respondents had a blurry understanding of genocide as a total systemic narrative. At their young ages, genocide was an idea transmitted by parents and grandparents. There was also a general, community-level idea, but the closer, family-level, secret and often-unpronounced history was probably more important. Consequently, it may be stated that any involvement and intervention “from above” into creation of the texts of everyday nationalism was reduced to a minimum: sometimes the “up” was even an obstacle and a barrier. Fieldwork has also enabled the recording that the “up” is conventional and depends on the vantage point. Though they were “from above” and unlike the higher bureaucracy, the village- and county-level party and state officials shared the same narratives, thus imitating the role of censors. At least in Nerqin Bazmaberd and other villages settled by Western Armenians to which Nerqin Bazmaberd’s example may be expanded, the texts of everyday nationalism in the Soviet period were created from below. The uniqueness of the situation arose out of the real or rumored presence of the genocide on the agenda of Soviet-Turkish relations and thus, the creation and transformation of narratives were directly linked to the changes in that agenda.

In the case of Koti, the texts of nationalism and their variations center on relations with the neighboring “Turks.” In the face of made-up “brotherhood and friendship,” despite mutual visits, individual and collective memories were fresh and stuffed with micronarratives about clashes and feuds at the turn of the previous century. An observation of parallel ethnographic materials from Koti and Nerqin Bazmaberd in comparative perspective suggests more details about their differences. Everyday nationalism in Koti was more visible, substantive and tangible because in that case, relations were more open, immediate and domestic. The “Friendship of People” eliminated and temporarily frozen only a portion of the existing problems. Thus, the participation of the village- and county-level elite in creating the everyday narratives and symbols was quite expected. This participation was both definite and practical: on the one hand, it was necessary to provide evidence of normal relations with the neighboring Azerbaijani villages; on the other hand, it was vital to protect the communal economy from their cravings and keenness. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s, cross-border Armenian-Azerbaijani land disputes became more frequent, which triggered the participation of the local bureaucracies in creating narratives.

Further examination of these two cases allows delineation of another important aspect of the mechanisms of the “creation” of everyday nationalism and the nomenclature of its constituents. In Nerqin Bazmaberd, everyday nationalism seems to exist *ab origine*: the community’s members include the generation of genocide survivors who preserve the historical memory and

transmit its narratives and micronarratives. The core narrative has undergone very few changes since the arrival of the first settlers, and the same is true for micronarratives, the core stories of which are constantly repeated. Koti's narrative also seems to have been in place from the beginning: it embraces a history of at least one hundred years. In addition, that narrative has some dynamism and vitality; thus, unlike the prevailing "monologue" in the Nerqin Bazmaberd narrative, in Koti, we see "dialogue," which is particularly observable in Koti's micronarratives. Here, the communal narrative boils down to family and individual narratives in which positive memories coincide with negative experiences because there have been everyday contacts, trade, interpersonal relations, and most importantly, "dost" and "qirva," whose relations were truly more than formal: they were relations of mutual hospitality, trust and respect, capable of transforming the community-level narrative.

Adding Gandzaqar to the aforementioned context permits the observation of its neutral texts. The narratives of nationalism, including its everyday forms, are not that important or far ranging here compared with those of the other two communities. The symbols of everyday nationalism result from limited trade and other contacts with Azerbaijanis in neighboring Ghazakh, and they rarely surface in individual and family stories. This and other peculiarities, which will soon be detailed below, have influenced variations on the post-independence, everyday nationalist narrative.

Micro-models prove the variety of micro-texts while demonstrating the relativity of time and the availability of private, local, more diversified and grounded temporality in each community beyond time in general: *Time* to visit the genocide memorial, *time* to remember the clashes and fighting of the turn of century, *time* to trade in Ghazakh's market and to discuss the neighbors.

For researchers, the persistence of microtimes raises the question of looking for the sense of time in general to understand the relevance of these two systems: does one of them give birth to the other, or do they exist apart from one another? This question provides important perspectives for researching the “political” background of everyday nationalism. In our research proposal, the issue of “text creation” was defined as a separate topic. Our questions addressed to the educational system highlighted the extent of state intervention in that field. Simultaneously, it became clear that the agency of local actors such as school principals, teachers and parents is no less important. Finally, in addition to the state-run narrative there are also created local narratives, which may contradict each other. Consequently, it is necessary to find a universal dimension of time, if such a dimension persists in this case-dependent nexus. From the anthropological perspective, Harutyun Marutyan's studies are the most relevant of the publications of the last two decades: they summarize the movement as the beginning while transforming it into a film of separate blocs. At least to us, however, these studies have not enabled a determination of the factions of time in the context of

the everyday. Plausibly, we have dealt with a thicker, more substantial dimension of time: the Artsakh Movement.

This event was described by our interlocutors as a unique initial point, suggesting itself as an opportunity to install microtime in the scope of complete and perfect time. In Nerqin Bazmaberd, microtime occupies a niche in the microtime of the “Artsakh Movement” as the ensuing talks and actions for “Ergir” (the Land) have become freer and more substantial, which shows that the construction of the genocide memorial complex in that village preceded the Movement. This means that the event was first perceived as termination of restrictions and barriers, an opportunity for free talk, speech and discussion.

Koti’s local time span also finds a niche in microtime, simultaneously awakening the artificially weakened Soviet-period narrative about the ethnic clashes and tension of the early 20th century. One of the most interesting facts observed in this village is the monthly paper “Young Koti” (“Yeritasard Koti,” in Armenian), published by an NGO of the same name. In the introduction to the first issue, published in February 2004, the initiators publicized their main purpose as regular media coverage of the most important community events, including sports and culture-related news for young people (Yeritasard Koti, 2004,1,1). As shown in subsequent issues, the paper has publicized at least three realities – pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet – and each publication was viewed as an opportunity either to shape a narrative of local history or to activate a dormant one.

For more details, by the second issue the editorial staff had already welcomed the restoration of the traditional, regular meetings of Yerevan citizens of Koti descent at the statue of Avetik Isahakyan (Yeritasard Koti, 2004, 2, 6), which is not only a mere expression of local identity but also a purposeful action. The following issue contains an advertisement about the founding of the charity fund “Border Watching Koti,” which reveals the publication’s purpose (*Ibid*, 2004, 3, 6). As outlined in these three brief examples, the mechanism of constructing local identity obviously works and clearly demonstrates its everyday nature. There is a Koti community that is both important and distinct from all others. Its distinctiveness is easily observable at least in its closeness to the state border, in the difficulties it overcomes, and in the reality of its problems, in disregard of which it publishes a newspaper with distinctive name “Young Koti” that thus showcases its vigor. The restoration of regular meetings of people of Koti descent additionally is an argument for the vivacity and benevolence of the community. Finally, the launch of charity fund with a revealing name concludes this logical chain, stressing the position of the village as a border guardian. The content of this logical chain is the everyday with its thick symbolism. The Koti villagers come together because they reveal their local identity, which in turn is rooted in everyday narratives. With each consecutive issue, the monthly paper clarified the narrative of local history, tending toward completeness but attempting to reveal each “heroic” episode. Thus, under the heading “*Koti: From the History*” we see the title of an article about people who were



wounded in a border clash and died in hospital: “*One Bright Name: Edik* (Shahnazaryan).” It contains, *inter alia*, the following, pathetic paragraph: “If in a moment that day miraculously incarnate immortals Vardan and Aghbyur Serob, General Andranik and Gevorg Chavush, Nikol Duman and Garegin Nzhdeh and the other sons of Armenian people, they would kiss the forehead of the Valiant and would adorn his head with nimbus of hero. He was self-sacrificing in the fight, and maybe at that moment his soul was called by the victims of our village’s self-defense Seyran and Armen, Kamo and Sos, Armen and Karen, Telman and Zhora, Husik and Yura, Davit and Norik, and courageous victims of liberation of Artsakh: Abraham, Zhora, Armen, Seryozha, the others ...” (*Yeritasard Koti*, 2004, 4, 3). This passage assembles numerous symbols related to at least three micro-texts: (1) the Armenian struggle for liberation, i.e., the historical national liberation wars of the 5th and 19th centuries; (2) the belief or pretense to belief in the afterlife of the heroes of the past’ and (3) the same, only for the heroes of the recent struggle. By uniting the mortal heroes of different historical periods, the author not only unites them but also finalizes the struggle by posing the battle, which Koti now fights in the name of all Armenians, as its indivisible part. This unique assemblage of local and general narratives primarily addresses the local audience, and naturally, the local narrative dominates it. The inclusion of recent heroes is an important step constructing the narrative. They are prescribed the function of continuing history because the events of today began during the 5th century. At the same time they are

simple, mundane, fellow heroes, familiar to the villagers, who have been close to them, or have taught them, or were friends. In this way, the antique sacred text is profaned by the assertion that everyone may be a hero, which serves the sense of vitality of the everyday nationalism and securing the opportunity to insert newer symbols. This approach is further substantiated in later monthly issues, in which living heroes – participants in the village’s self-defense – are featured. They are common people, who are engaged in agriculture or employed as guest workers and who complain about socio-economic hardships. Some of them do not even live in their villages any more. The interviews with them contain a few mandatory questions, one of which asks about whether the state and the authorities appreciated their deeds. Nearly all of the heroes respond that they were not rewarded in any way. At the same time, they mention that they fought not for awards, but for their homeland and native villages. These interviews clearly mark the difference – sometimes the overt contradictions – between the local and state discourses, which brings to the fore how important the local discourses can become. The latter impression is enhanced by the village’s current depressive state, the emigration and seasonal outflow of its people, its impoverishment and the indifference of the authorities.

The monthly publication provides examples of symbolic – or, if seriously abstracted, mythological – time with its mythical heroes. An extended paper titled “The Great Teacher Abovyants” talks about an authoritative villager of the late 19th/early 20th

century, Hovsep Mkrtich Abovyants. *“His bright name has become a lucid legend, and people have believed and loved him by accepting the patronage of the great benefactor over their home and household, land and water. For one and one-half centuries, the stories have become brighter like a rock, covered with brilliance, and the consequent generations have praised the great Abovyants – Hovsep the Teacher – with gratitude. And its witnesses and sound testimonies are all around: “The Teacher’s bridge,” “The Teacher’s spring,” “The Teacher’s garden,” “The Teacher’s reservoir,” “The Teacher’s stone” and many others ...”* (Yeritasard Koti, 2004, 5, 3). This quotation, which concludes the observations set forth above, also completes not only the narrative of local history but also the logic of the publication’s future development. The materials published in every issue roughly follow these same principles of worthiness. Occasionally, it is suggested that publications aim to encourage the local identity; an example of such a publication is as the article about Koti’s water mills that was published in issue 11 (2004).

In Nerqin Bazmaberd, unlike in Koti, the local narrative has not achieved that level of “literacy”; instead, it lingers as an oral tradition. Here, however, the local narrative is backed by the pan-Sasoun (a mountainous region in West Armenia) narrative, which is more or less familiar to elderly and middle-aged community members. This is the literature of “Ergir,” represented in writings of Kh. Dashtents, M. Galshoyan and others. The traditional folk dances and songs of Sasoun, which thrived in the favorable Soviet years, are also worth adding to this list. It may be

strange, but these songs and dances are transmitted even when seniors speak incessantly about the weakening of tradition.

Gandzaqar – this time unlike the two other villages – continues to maintain a balance, although in the context of symbols, this community reproduces or attempts to reproduce the same pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet periods: churches, chapels and other monuments around the village, monuments of the Soviet period (see below for details) and two important monuments that have been erected since independence: (1) a monument to Artsakh freedom fighter Colonel Rem Mardanyan’s at the village administration, i.e., in the institutional center, and (2) a new church built in 2014, again in the center of village. In other words, at the local level, various mechanisms and institutions exist to create narratives.

In Nerqin Bazmaberd, the setting is represented by conventional “family histories” or if generalized, memories and stories from and about “Ergir.” As revealed in the research, recent upheavals have not deprived these histories of sacred elements. Thus, with great respect and worship, villagers gathered in a room in Nerqin Bazmaberd’s culture hall introduced me to a very elderly person who was a close living relative of the legendary “Ergir” hero, Aghbyur Serob. The sacredness of the narrative, at least in the Soviet years, was supported by its restricted, covert, private character. The narrative was local to the family but not always to the public. This sacredness remains preserved, and it is difficult to guess the reason. To be brief, our research has not discovered a more or less authentic explanation. However, some

noteworthy versions may be telling. In the course of one of our interviews, my interlocutor, while describing individual and community histories, sketched a clear timeline: initially, the Sasounians found it difficult to endure the new place and conditions and were often doubtful about settling because they considered their resettlement into Soviet Armenia as temporary. Later, as it became obvious that the temporary would last too long, they were required to adapt by preserving and transmitting their narratives on the one hand and nurturing their dream of return on the other hand. After independence, especially with the appearance of opportunities to visit the “Ergir,” its sacredness, though it is not reduced to extinction, seems to diminish because after being there once, *“you understand that it will be never be back again.”*

It is also difficult for any researcher to explore the everyday in essence, especially the pure everyday. It is well known that even the researcher who possesses vast experience because of his/her sole presence can either mislead or stimulate the interlocutor. It was impossible to avoid this effect in the villages that we visited over the course of our research. From time to time, our conversers have attempted to tell us stories, which in their opinion have been interesting to a short-term visiting researcher from the city. In this setting, chance phrases and occasional observations are truly indispensable pieces of academic reconstruction, as was the case with a phone call by one of the researchers to the village administration to make an appointment for a visit on the eve of April 24. The answer was roughly as follows: *“But do you know what day is it? I will not be in the village that day”* (apparently,

the person had to join the regional administration in the mourning march to Tsitsernakaberd). Numerous similar cases have occurred in all research destinations.

The combination of various materials and observations allows us to insist that everyday nationalism nonetheless persists. It may occur in many cases either as something unrelated to nation or as not an ethnic type of nationalism. The facts, which we have now observed, may convince us that further urging its realness is no longer necessary. Armenian society has not accomplished the desired transition in the two decades since independence. Moreover, a sense of *déjà vu* accompanied the decision of the Armenian government (which was made while we were preparing this book) to join the Eurasian Economic Union. The Western Armenians (i.e., the Nerqin Bazmaberd) cannot complete the transition because many questions remain about the “Ergir” issue. The questions become increasingly persistent with the approaching 2015 centennial of the Armenian genocide. Koti, as a model village on an unstable border, has delayed the transition because the community considers the war unfinished and believes that the village may be disturbed at any second, as occurred in August 2014. In just a few days, all of the villages along the border with Azerbaijan, including Koti, found themselves on the front lines of military unrest. Hundreds of children were evacuated and removed to a safe distance. We describe this situation to state that even in the event of resolute willingness, both Koti and Bazmaberd are compelled to maintain their narratives of everyday nationalism. From an anthropological perspective, the immediacy

of the “other” is worthy of important notice. In the counter case of Gandzaqar, which is a safe distance from the “other,” the texts of everyday nationalism are – unsurprisingly – much weaker.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DIFFERENT SYMBOLS, SAME RITUALIZATION: SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPES IN THE SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET PERIODS

The construction of national identity is a continuous process that is most often supported by oral stories or narratives. Usually, the space of identity is also discussed as a lived environment of both the nation and nationalism. One may also encounter formulation, assessing nationalism as formative in relation to the social environment, in which it occupies a fixed symbolic and designated space. This space is associated both with the group identity and with the sense of belonging to it (*Smith, 1991, 9*).

The day-to-day construction of identity is performed either through symbols and iconography or through the symbolization of identity, typically representing several meta-narratives, among which the themes of sacred “territory-land,” “hero,” and the transformation of a new terrain to “home” and community are in the foreground (*Osborne 2001; 39-42*).

Michael Billig considers a “*primitive nationalism*” the everyday reproduction and utility of signs of identity, along with their daily exercise in or by the community, because the signs and symbols of identity are utilized customarily, as elements granted or obtained on numerous occasions of everyday life and thus contrasting with those that have ideologically motivated foundations.



As a rule, the manifestations of nationalism in the day-to-day socio-cultural environment are especially characteristic of conservative societies (*Alemu 2012, 17-47*). In this context, nationalism is perceived as an exploitation of identity signs and symbols that apparently are controlled. In a paper dedicated to the narratives of local identities, Abraham Alemu argues that in Eastern societies, nationalism is most actively reproduced via orally transmitted histories (*2012, 17-18*).

The daily incurrance of narratives and symbols as constructive elements of banal nationalism may be delineated while charting the map of the identity landscape. The spatial organization of downtown Yerevan adjacent to the Opera and Ballet Theater may be seen as an example of the construction of an identity landscape in the urban setting (*Abrahamian, Melkumyan 2012, 48-65*), depicting the greater activity of certain signs as manifestations of everyday nationalism. However, it is also interesting to follow which structural forms are taken by everyday nationalism in the townscape and how they act and express themselves. In this case, the terrain, language, religion, state, nation, and perception of common ancestry may all be taken as indicators of identity.

As noted in the “Introduction,” Koti, Nerqin Bazmaberd and Gandzaqar are the three local communities that hosted the research team. Several realities were revealed in the course of that research (some of which are noted in relevant chapters). Regardless of the similarities in landscape organization, each of the named communities has its own narratives of enculturation,

which in certain cases may act as meta-narratives. Concurrently, we recorded an eye-catching variety of micronarratives, displaying a rich “arsenal” of symbols of everyday nationalism. As it may be observed in comparative perspective, Koti is the most multilayered in terms of its multiplaned nature and the representativeness of its identity (including the context of everyday nationalism), because it suggests both nationwide and local (community and regional) levels. Herewith, the local is much more accentuated simply because localness was strongly backed by the specificity of the border community. The phenomenon of frontier and the existence of fresh histories (only two-three decades old) that directly refer to this geographical feature underscore the “dangerous life at the border,” on the one hand, and introduce into everyday life certain texts that emphasize the endless frontier situation, on the other hand.

While observing the construction of identity in the rural environment and the corresponding manifestations of everyday nationalism, a line between two levels – local and national – must be drawn. Below, we suggest three instances of the appearance of these two levels in daily life, which may coincide, may be similar or may be diverse.

To understand the relationship between a person/society and a place/space, one must discover not only traditional knowledge but also changes in the system of communicating and imagining the past, which are often considered the main means of creatively connecting space with identity. Organization and creation of the national both as a space and by means of space requires the

handiness of a few simple tools, including the reimagination of memorial history and its reperformance in daily life.

In both the national/nationalist and the everyday contexts, the space of identity is homeland, subdivided into lesser homelands. In the process of ordering the homeland as a space of the national, references are usually made to collective-public historical memory and its reimagination, but not to individual-personal histories (*Osborne 2001, 39-43*). Along these lines, the creation/invention of space is simultaneously a reproduction or reconstruction of the past, an evolution of public traditions and an inclusion of a process of construction of individual identity. The representation of space-identity – “homeland” – to a stranger usually begins with a depiction of homeland as space. However, the representation of homeland/space supposes the preexistence of an imagined and replicated structural model consisting of space, cultural artifacts, language, a sacred landscape of persons and heroes (*Smith 1991, 116, Melkumyan 2011, 112-116*).

In Koti, space is as pervasive as identity. Three levels of the perception of space recur here. The village space is first an everyday identity, filled with signs. Second, the same space is both a state and a historical homeland, after which it performs as place, revealing sub-ethnic and regional identity. In reality, these three spaces coincide in time and the significance or importance of each of them in public life is also time dependent.

The next analysis must display how the connection is established between identity and the “sensed places.” These types of spaces usually include/assume a landscape, memorial marks and

places where memorial ceremonies are performed and that both stimulate community memory and enhance national identity. These places are transformed into a type of vehicle of historical narratives, expressions of social values and as usual, of ideas for creating a desired future (*Osborne 2001, 42-47; Halbwachs 1992, 47*).

Indeed, the fixation of imagined symbols and public myths, with the help of memorial complexes and the performance of relevant procedures, have begun to play the role of history, legacy and tradition, all of which develop identity (*Osborne 2001, 42-47*).

Below, we suggest a brief overview of how the identity landscape is organized in the village of Koti, in which the interconnectedness of identity and “sensed places” is both described and discussed.

The first things suggested by the villagers as representative of their everyday environment were the family memorial fountains, which are perceived as a type of “memorial family tree.” According to our interlocutors, the construction of arboreal (*arbor*: Latin for *tree*) family identity with the help of memorial fountains mostly increased during the late Soviet period. The memorial fountains confirm the local lore about modern Koti’s origins either as a community of several families or as caused by the unification of seven previously ruined settlements. For this reason, each family-clan or patronymic unit attempts to have/build its own memory fountain, at which male family members organize annual “feasts of kins”: “*This is Mamyan’s (the fountain), the*

*man has built a spring for his clan”; “At last Sunday of each July Saratikyans come together (at their fountain)” (male, middle-aged village guide in Koti).*

The culture of memorial fountains is closely conditioned by the place-homeland-identity system to the extent that these fountains represent, and sometimes urge and construe the history of origins. Over time, the memorial springs have developed an interesting microenvironment around themselves: they become places of social and cultural spatial organization where the people – either kin or simply fellow villagers – occasionally unite and symbolically enact or repair the history of their origins. If the gatherings are related to “family trees,” the participants are generally kin males – often from Yerevan, Vanadzor (the third-largest Armenian city) and other cities – who annually “come together” (at their fountains). Females are usually not present. At such events, a woman may be considered to have a place as a systemic member of national/local group identity, if she corresponds to or reveals the symbolic values of identity, according to which “*the Armenian woman, the family woman*” must “*be honorable, have honor ... There were so many cases, when that woman has said that her son must not marry a Russian, she said that the Russians are not even a nation. Her son married a Russian, and she said that she does not want him to marry and to come back. We don’t need them as family women, she says, they only eat, drink and stroll*” (man from Koti).

We also observed interesting transformations of family symbols over the last two-three decades because those symbols and

the related ceremonies have become prestigious. The prestige is primarily either attached to or represented by the act of creation or renovation. The “rich man” of each family “renovates” his family’s authority by building a new memorial stone structure at the natural spring or by reconstructing the old fountain. In this way, the family micro-space is integrated into the community landscape because the family fountain is essentially symbolic capital.

Symbolic capital also indirectly points to the “vigor” of family identity, often marking its advantageous position *vis à vis* the others, which is observable in the following formulation: “*The man has built it because he has money,*” even in cases in which the memorial spring is either built or rebuilt to realize individual motivations. Competing symbolic family capitals actually showcase the economic, political or other power-related capital possessed by certain family members: “*Those with sufficient possession usually build a spring for his family, for a deceased loved one or for entire clan.*” Thus, the symbolic capital indirectly reveals the family or individual’s economic capital and when one says, “*Do you know S.? He was the prosecutor of E. Now has ordered construction of a fountain for his son, for one person. That is because he has money. So everyone in a way ...*” it is revealed how symbolic capital works as both a sign and an indicator of economic and power capital. Despite symbolic “competition,” the memorialization of individual histories initiates a new model of identity construction beyond the community- and histo-

ry-related contexts. However, the family tree identity prevails among Koti's villagers.

A question may be raised about how the family memorial fountains, which are actually symbolic embodiments of narratives of origin, can be discussed and linked to the broader discourse of nationalism. To answer this question, one must understand the reasons for telling origin stories.

Another issue related to the local narratives is that usually they are neither transparent nor pinnacles in everyday human memories. People usually remember them when asked, but the telling – and the stories themselves – become artificial (*Bird 2002, 524*). In addition, it seems highly probable that the continuously repeated and very similar stories of the narrative originate from one “primary source” and that the stories thus often lack variables. In fact, the origin stories of the village and the families are “intellectual” narratives that are constructed and circulated by village schoolteachers and local amateurs. The dominance of such narratives is truly overwhelming and come to the fore at nearly every interview, regardless of the interviewees' gender and age. This repetitious narrative indicates that its structural varieties may have originated not in antiquity but much closer in time: during the Soviet or post-Soviet years. However, certain modifications have occurred due to the efforts of amateurs and local intellectuals, who incessantly discuss it in the context of historical, ethnic and nationalist narratives.

The genealogical narrative of local identity is also transmitted/taught at the school. The inter-republican meetings of pupils

and teachers, mostly in form of sport and cultural-exchange programs, were a Soviet educational practice aiming to support the “friendship of nations.” In the case of Koti – and considering its border position – these school tours were actually a “return to the beginnings and the place of origin,” a type of “pilgrimage,” during which history teachers led their pupils to see the site of the Gag-Gavarzin fortress inside Soviet Azerbaijan. According to the main narrative of Koti’s villagers, their ancestors have inhabited the foothills of this fortress: *“The population, the village you see now here, was not here in the past, the Gag fortress was the main place. Gag fortress .... In 1977, I took a group of pupils to that place for sightseeing, there was no conflict then, nothing, this neighboring village, our neighbors ...”* (history teacher, Koti). Since independence, serious efforts to propagate both the Gag fortress and local identity symbols in general have been made by a villager, A., a local intellectual, who regularly discusses different symbols of local identity in the newspaper “Young Koti.” His topics range from springs to fortresses and churches, thus initiating new micro-narratives. The presentation of the narrative of local identity is also a priority for local teachers of history, the Armenian language and literature: *“They do not want, for example, to learn Armenian history better. We say, ‘Dear children, this is the history of our nation, it has been harsh, written in tears, in blood...’ but they are indifferent. Maybe it is because of living standards: if the people live better, or have some modest subsistence level, they may stay here, may love their land.”*



People's self-identification with certain places also reflects the requirement of being connected to the narratives of social/national identity. In the frame of certain academic discussions, the motivations for telling these narratives to an outside visitor remain questionable. An interlocutor known as "proficient in history," – who actually was an amateur archaeologist – was attempting to construct a new narrative of place and identity while retelling local histories. Experimenting with spatial reconstructions in this way, the person was underlining his own identity and ability of a separate investment – a certain self-sufficiency – which was likely why he was attempting to revise already "written" mainstream lore (*Melkumyan 2014*). E. Bird (2002, 524) has discussed the stylistic differences in the fibulae of the narratives and suggested the underlining of the storyteller's personal identity as the primary motive for this type of revision attempt.

In addition to the network of family tree/history connections, the next actual space-identity node on Koti's map is the memorial, which reflects the narratives of "heroes" and "heroic deeds" that have been in the process of formation since independence. The memorial is a "cross" that has been dedicated to "freedom fighter" villagers who were lost in the 1990s. The memorial was built in the 1990s and immediately began to "absorb" the functions of the village's "memorial landscape" during both the So-

viet<sup>28</sup> and the post-Soviet periods. The similarity between the Soviet and post-Soviet identities in ritual contexts is also expressed in the following phrase from an interview, which explores the village's recent victims of the war during the independence period, comparing their numbers with the much greater losses in WWII: "*Drinking today for the victims, we are reminded of the Gharabagh war casualties, but in the Great Patriotic War (WWII) ... 330 people were lost.*" Although the scenery of Soviet identity has physically disappeared from the modern identity landscape, certain attitudes and memory remain both actual and discernible in the symbolism of independence. The monument to freedom fighters of the 1990s has become a part of community-wide and personal celebrations beyond the frame of the official national festivities on May 8 (Day of Liberation of Shoushi), and May 9 (Victory Day). Thus, at the monument (the public) partakes in local weddings (personal): "*That memorial stone, which was erected for the freedom fighters, ... the recent weddings, when celebrated, usually they visit it, to take photos, then they come to the church, and then go to start the wedding.*" In the militarized border environment, the elements of the adoration of "war casualties" are actualized (*Siekerski 2001, 283*). Those who sacrificed themselves to save their "identity" are naturally perceived as 'symbols of identity,' in accordance with the pattern of heroization of wartime losses in defense of identity

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<sup>28</sup>The monument, dedicated to the Unknown Soldier of WWII, is situated on the edge of the village and is so close to the border of Azerbaijan that visiting it safely is impossible.

(e.g., ethnic, political, religious). Conrad Siekerski has observed the “Tree of Vardan” becoming the identity symbol both on the local (i.e., that of the village of Aknaghbyur) and on the pan-Armenian scales. In these cases, the “heroic” embodies a pathetically masculine and military type of identity, described by M. Billig (1995, 122-124) as an expression of “banal” nationalism.

Although the visit to the victims’ monument takes the shape of a “pilgrimage,” which usually relates to a sacred/holy environment, it does not leave us with the expression of an adequate pilgrimage – i.e., a visit to a sacred/holy place. Even if the reopening of the 19th century church in the village (in the 2000s) has modified the ceremonial route, the visit to the victims’ memorial has maintained its basic position in the ritual landscape: “[the wedding party] *moves towards the church from the monument.*” Everyday practices make it possible to observe how a constituent of local identity – the monument to freedom fighters – predominantly figures and performs a role in the scenario of individual celebrations. It is considered a much more important symbol of identity than, for example, the religious constituent, and therefore the itinerary of the wedding ritual developed during a period in which the church was inactive as an institution of everyday village life. This point is highlighted in another interview, in which it was stated that “*neither before the Soviet, nor in the Soviet time we have truly adhered to the church, we have developed our own traditions.*” Generally, identity must have an “entrance.” Given that the victims’ monument is situated at the

entrance to the settled area of the village testifies to its importance as one of primary symbols of the community's identity.

Our experience with mapping the nodal points of identity in Koti gives us an opportunity to compare the results for Koti with the charted identity symbolism of the other two rural communities sampled for this research. Gandzaqar and Koti have similarities in their linear ground plan that have resulted in a linear distribution of the identity symbols from one end to the other in both villages. In circular-shaped settlements, "identity" has a centripetal pattern and usually concentrates on the center of community, as is the case in Nerqin Bazmaberd. In Gandzaqar, symbols that have a national, pan-Armenian scale primarily traverse the frame of the "official" discourse. This discourse is represented by the ceremonies for May 9, the Day of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, or on April 24, the Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Armenian Genocide. Because these two memorial dates became official as early as the Soviet period, the corresponding ceremonies developed during the same years. The community has more respect for the May 9 festivities and celebrates that holiday more actively. The celebrations assume a visit to the monument of the "Unknown Soldier." It is at the entrance to the village, at the very edge of the settled area. Otherwise, the identity landscape of the village begins with a Soviet symbol. In general, the observation of the community's relationship with national-state symbols reveals a unique picture over the background of the village structure. Since the Soviet period, the village has had two distinct parts: right and left. The right side hosts

the majority of the state-related, official buildings: the administration, the post office, the cultural center, the school, and the kindergarten. State symbols – i.e., the flag and the May 9 monument – are also constants in this “official” environment<sup>29</sup>. The monument dedicated to the freedom fighters is also situated near the administrative building. The trend is quite transparent: “war heroes” are perceived as signs of state-official identity, unrelated to the identity narratives of the local community. The state as sovereign usually attempts to “occupy” both narratives and spaces with imagined meanings through the “expansion” of identity signs, thus enhancing its authority in the public space. (*cf. Siekerski 282-286; Osborne 2001*). However, the case of Gandzaqar may also be interpreted as a policy of “conquering” the identity signs “from above” because to enhance their “power,” political institutions absorb the signs of public/community identity and related places into their “private territory.” (*cf. Siekerski 2010, 273-287*). In such cases, these identity signs do not become a part of the local everyday, and the attitude toward them remains within the official ceremonial frame. Instead of a narrative of identity during the independence period, this village lives with “nostalgic” narratives about the Soviet past – unlike, for exam-

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<sup>29</sup>Interestingly, the shops are also situated in the official section of the village, although logically, they should be distributed in a less institutional, untamed, informal manner, permeating the whole settled area. This fact may have different explanations, but one of these aspects presents itself in the shop owners’ biographies. Nearly all of them are present or former community officials, e.g., village heads or deputies, who belong to the official “landscape” themselves.

ple, in Koti, where the narratives of origins-identity and independence survive and are articulated alongside nostalgic talk about the Soviet Union – a cohabitation that is also reflected by such markers, as are the monuments. The official policy of constructing a “heroic” identity for the independence period replicates the symbolism of Soviet identity. This may be highlighted by comparing a few examples from Gandzaqar, where the monument to victims of the Great Patriotic War that was erected during the Soviet period sits alongside the monument to the victims of the “Artsakh War.” Next, one can notice the bust of Red Army Colonel Hmayak Mehrabyan, erected in the Soviet period in front of the village school, across from a statue bust of Colonel Rem Mardanyan that was erected during the post-Soviet years at the village office building. With respect to the relatedness of monuments and narratives, it is widely known that monument is the symbol of a narrative and contains a public, textual message. During the Soviet period, monuments to “heroism” were built on hilltops (Koti, Gandzaqar) or in schoolyards and served the communities and especially school-age children, for whom (as for the main spectators) this model of “heroic” identity was constructed. The “heroic” narrative of the independence period in Gandzaqar remains in the space of village administration as a part of the official-administrative landscape, distant from the attention of ordinary community members. Thus, the place and environs of monuments prompt at least two observations: (1) their essence as a message addressed to a community and (2) the content of their “texts.”

In the other sampled village, Nerqin Bazmaberd, the “heroic” landscape was also present. Here, too, the text of the creation of “heroic” image addresses schoolchildren and youth. The monument – a bust of archaeologist and freedom fighter Yesayi Asatryan – was erected in the yard of the village school in the 2000s. A comparison of these cases reveals that the route to school always passes through the landscape of “heroic” signs of identity. An extended quotation from an interview conducted in Gandzaqar explains in detail the realization of this principle, which was implemented in the form of selecting the route to school as a place for the memorial fountain dedicated to Hrant Dink. Doing so was interpreted by its builder as a message calling future generations to retain the memory of the genocide: *“There is a stone that I have erected in memoriam of Hrant Dink, I still want to build the fountain around the stone ... I haven’t asked anyone, not even the mayor, to help me, no one. I don’t need anybody’s help because I feel it – [they’re all] doing it for their campaigns (political), I don’t need campaigns ... Now look here, imagine a tall stone, below it a cobblestone basement will pass, the upper part rises higher and there we cast a lonely cross, with Hrant Dink’s relief chiseled over it and engraved ‘Hrant Dink, 1,500,000+1.’ That means none of us is secure today, somewhere, in any place a Russian ... eee ..., a Turk may come across, let it be in Russia, how the brother of Gurgen was killed? Less than one year is left, roughly a year [before the centennial of the Armenian Genocide], and every day this theme must be present on TV, or in movies, or in programs related to history or*

*discussions of books, critiques, to focus the world's attention to what the Armenians do, how they prepare. But, my dear, they broadcast pornography .... How will you own your pain in this way? ... What I do in this case is that I do my best on the route of our children, though they suggested building this in front of the school ...? What are you talking about? You want it built, build it yourselves, you're the government; you might as well do this one thing. Why should I build it in front of the school, who am I doing it for? I know why I build it at the route to school: every child, if there would be nothing else, will return home and ask if there is a spring there, and a man, whose statue is that, whose monument? And by word of mouth people will know that there was such a person, Hrant Dink, whom the Turks killed, and they have killed another one and one-half million Armenians. ... One man is already a genocide” (Gandzaqar, the monument's builder).*

Thus, the school/school landscape/route becomes one method of representing “identity,” both metaphorically and literally. The memorial spring for Hrant Dink is believed to function as a monument to all of the victims of the genocide. The genocide as a basic identity marker is already so mundane that has become even a souvenir (souvenirs from the Tzitzernakaberd memorial complex of the victims of genocide are traded among other souvenirs of “Armenianianness” (Melkumyan 2014, 112-113). Also noticeable is that in Gandzaqar and Koti (as well as in many other villages of Tavoush province), the genocide is not an independent narrative with relevant monumental forms, and although



it is avoided in everyday community life, it is perceived in the context of official “state” rituals. The corresponding date is the officially accepted mourning day and honors the memory of victims at the monument.

This “rite” may not have become a part of Tavush’s local identity; therefore, it is not reflected in the cultural landscape, but it has curiously affected the “ritual” landscape of Soviet times because the monuments to either the “Unknown Soldier” or the Great Patriotic War enable the rite of mourning the genocide. That is to say, the symbol of “victory and heroism” has been transformed to a monument of “victimhood and trauma.” The association of these two types may have become possible because both ceremonials are perceived as official rituals for which there is no alternative place. In the context of Tavush’s local identity, these two rites are largely attached to an identity constructed from above. This highlights that the local communal milieu does not accept the signs of state-political “identity.” Many people even avoid crowds in the rite of giving honor, preferring to visit relatives’ tombs; in doing so, they emphasize the predominance of the narrative of individual origins and memory over the “state” and the “pan-Armenian”: “*the village history begins in the cemetery, what else can be older?*” (villager, Gandzaqar).

Hrant Dink’s memorial is the genocide narrative’s first independent memorialization in Gandzaqar. The story of the construction of this monument also hints at the relevance of the topics of “state-political structure” and memorial “conquering” that are discussed above. First, the monument is observed as a mini-

symbolic prestige capital that can be transformed by its builder into something that is “political-administrative”: *“There, I’ve made a stone for Hrant Dink, going to make the fountain, that fountain, that stone... I haven’t asked anyone, not even the mayor, to help me, no one. I don’t need anybody’s help because I feel it – [they’re all] doing it for their campaigns (political), I don’t need campaigns”* (memorial builder). As became clear from other interviews, the monument’s builder, who was the head of the “culture club,” was considered a possible candidate for mayor. In this case, therefore, if the building of the memorial is perceived in terms of symbolic capital, it can be “prestigious” and “exchangeable capital.” Simultaneously, it is a means of strengthening one’s authority by symbolifying both the identity narratives and the struggle to control them, for “domination” – formal or otherwise. For this reason, the village “administration” attempts to have it built inside its “state-administered territory,” whereas the memorial’s author envisions it on the “way to school” in an informal public area, in his neighborhood and in front of his house: *“...they suggested that I build it in front of the school... what are you talking about? You want it built, build it yourselves, you’re the government; you might as well do this one thing. Why should I build it in front of the school, who am I doing it for?”* (memorial builder).

Unlike the memorial in Nerkin Bazmaberd, which is based on the narrative of “origins” and “memory,” as an identity narrative, the genocide is not “localized” in the villages of Gandzaqar and Koti, supposedly because there are no people who carry the

memories of the genocide and no one to relive that narrative. Thus, the inclusion of a particular narrative in the identity discourse also implies the presence of a person who carries that narrative. Otherwise, the given narrative maintains the status of a “guest-visitor,” “settled next” to the local identity symbols in prearranged days of “state rites”: *“We go to the church with relatives, or with pupils all together when going from the school, there’d be a liturgy in the church that day, we take flowers to the place in front of the church and put them there or we go to the khachqar (cross-stone)”* (pupil, Koti).

Interestingly, in the cases in which the narrative is not memorialized and localized, actors in the related ceremonies remain alienated from the “event,” and consequently, from the genocide victims. It is for this reason that in these circles, “April 24” sometimes carries certain attributes of “pilgrimage leisure,” the most common of which are the dresses worn in the rite and the practice of taking photos there.

As noted above, in Koti, the guide introduces the village by starting with the memorial fountains; in Gandzaqar, the natural landscape (the mountain) was one of the primary emblems. A reminder of these details is necessary for urging the endurance of certain local preferences towards certain subjects that are deemed to serve as primary spatial means for constructing and exposing the landscape of each community’s local and national identity.

In this regard, the narratives of local and national identity in the village of Nerkin Bazmaberd certainly differ from the cases recorded in the Tavush region. Here, local and national identity

develops around the narrative axis of the “lost land” and the “genocide.” When I asked one of my interlocutors to tell his story of the village, he replied: “*So when we migrated... Should I start from here or from Western Armenia?*.” This question from the narrator expresses an inner identity conflict in perceptions of the history of origin, which diverge between two “fatherlands,” i.e., which one is primary for him or whether he is inclined to choose the identity narrative that began in Western Armenia. Considering the logic of landscape organization and its absorption into everyday life, as presented in previous cases, local narratives might be similarly hidden beneath the rural monumental landscape.

In the previous villages, I had asked the guides (who were well informed about local history) to show me around their villages. In Nerkin Bazmaberd, after asking to show me the village monuments, I was first led to the village’s central monument, which was presented as devoted to the genocide victims. The monument-complex was built in the 1980s thanks to the villagers’ donations. The monument is located in the village’s “official” center – the village square<sup>30</sup> – and is surrounded by admin-

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<sup>30</sup> Incidentally, in all three sampled villages, the administrative center (square, quarter) does not coincide with its informal center or central place. If the administrative “village square” is constructed with its corresponding official and monumental symbols, the unofficial public village center in all three cases developed in the space shared with shops (in the Soviet period, a single shop) and the bus station. As one of the guides explained, “*It’s only a cultural center over there, the village center is close to the school,*” and again the named location was near the shopping place. The development of a center around the trading or shopping environment follows the logic of the development of the

istrative institutions: the kindergarten, the cultural center, and the village administrative office. It may seem strange that in the (late) Soviet years, the idea of a monument with a nationalist context has been realized in the “official” landscape, contrary to the previous villages, in which monuments with nationalist leanings have either appeared in a space out of reach of the official symbols or were simply banned. *“To be exact ..., the building of monument before 1990, in the 1980s ... the Soviet times were different, it was a violent state, a tyranny. When the monument to Andranik was built in 1965, it was in the village of Ujan. You know how it was done? It was done secretly ... the old men of Ujan were guarding it with guns at night to not prevent the communists from conducting its surprise demolition or some harm. Therefore, it was an amazing thing that a monument to an anti-Soviet, dashnak person was built in the Armenian village of Ujan. However, I know myself that it was also advertised, on TV, on the radio – the newspapers also have probably written about it. Afterwards Andranik [his monument] appeared in Verin Sasnashen, in Maghda, now it is Gegharot. They are in many places”* (man in Nergin Bazmaberd).

Our observations of monument-community relations on April 24, the anniversary day of the genocide seemed so puzzling because of our own “ungrounded” expectation of encountering cer-

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classical marketplace, which usually rises in a central space and boosts the development of informal public city space. Commonly, these informal public spaces host the facilities of participant development of political, religious, social and cultural environments (cf. Bobokhyan, Abrahamian 2014).

emonies dedicated to genocide victims at the monument dedicated to those victims. However, the gate was locked and no visitors to the monument appeared, except for a few teenagers, who had come simply to sit and smoke cigarettes. Although the monument was cleaned (the raked foliage piled nearby showed its readiness for visits), there was no visitor. A lonely tulip had been brought the day before. The picture was surreal in a sense because the key monument of community memory was estranged from the meaning of the genocide memorial day. Let us try to understand the reason for this. As noted earlier, in all of the interviews conducted in this village, the respondents began with their memories and stories of exile and lost homeland, i.e., they were sharing with the interviewer the predominant community narrative. The feeling of the “Lost Homeland” of “Ergir” was also always present in the family stories and the everyday of the monument’s builder. One of Maestro Khachik’s well-known pictures in the village depicts the “Ergir”: *“one of our relatives, a lonely man from ‘Ergir’ ”* now sitting at the door to his home in the modern village, similar to the lonely woman of the monument *“sitting in that pose her whole life and waiting to return to her homeland.”* Thus, everyday emotions toward “Ergir” have been and remain an important part of family history. The monumentalization of reality has “faded from” the monument. Therefore the villagers celebrate the anniversary of the genocide by “falling-out” from the everyday and leaving its milieu: *“that day the villagers go in groups to the Tzitzernakaberd memorial complex.”*

The continuously reminded memory becomes a rural everyday, and its formal treatment – i.e., visiting the monument – becomes unimportant because the monument simply represents what everyone already has at home, in their family histories, which prosaically renders the monument “invisible.”

However, one of conversations opened up another discourse of the monument’s “invisibility.” In response to my question, “*There is no monument to genocide victims in the village, is that so?*,” the women being interviewed answered hesitantly:

“A. – *There is one, how that,*

“B. – *it is not for genocide, just a monument,*

“A. – *That is the monument, Khachik has built,*

“B. – *It is for war.*

“A. – *For the Patriotic war, also with slots for pictures (photos?), but the pictures were not installed*” (Khachik’s daughter in law).

This short dialogue leads to a discussion of the second narrative about monument building; this narrative is linked to romanticization of WWII in the Soviet period’s “patriotic” narrative. The interviewees cited above are elderly women whose lifetime memories have been affected by the Great Patriotic War and the consequent processes of post-war “heroization,” which easily explains the actuality of the level of Soviet narrative in their everyday memories. In contrast, further investigating the biographies of the woman promoting the monument in Soviet discourse, we discovered that her preference for the Soviet “ideological” “discourse” might be preconditioned by her former posi-

tion in the village bureaucracy elite (postmaster). As mentioned above, the village administration opposed the building of a “genocide monument” and the villagers raised the necessary funds informally.

Interestingly, the role of the monument in community affairs also has gender aspects. In particular, the monument is “missing” in the women’s texts, whereas the men’s texts incorporate the monument into the discourse of “genocide,” national “self-organization” of the community in the Soviet period and “heroic” resistance to the “repressive” state. In reality, the monument was built by twinning both narratives, a sentiment also expressed by the monument’s builder. The core of the monument’s composition is the figure of woman-mother in a sitting position, mourning her ruined homeland, which now is usually identified as the symbol of either Western Armenia or genocide. This traveling image also appears in souvenir art. In 2006, this image was engraved on the cover of backgammon boxes and sold in the “Ver-nissage” souvenir market in Yerevan. As a rule, identity representation refers either to the historical “golden age” or to past “victorious times” (*Smith* 1991; *Edensor* 2002, 24-25). However, in this image of Armenia as a woman/mother, mourning the ruins of former capital cities, the original idea of a prevailing “glorious past” dovetails with an equally powerful mode of tragic representation or imagined “trauma.” The ruins’ symbolic hints of identity in the form of cracked or broken monuments reappear in the composition of the discussed symbols. Thus, the mourning figure of woman-Armenia may be seen as a type of “glocal” im-



age. The frame behind her was designed as a wall of the victims of the Great Patriotic War: “*For the Patriotic War, also with slots for pictures (photos?), but the pictures were not installed*” (the builder’s daughter in law). Although this admixture of the narrative of Soviet war romanticism was never dominant, it may be one reasons for the monument’s “invisibility” to community members and partially explains their behavior. We have already presented cases of Soviet and nationalist signs “in contest” for public space, which is often the same as competition for social or political domination. In the case of Nerqin Bazmaberd, however, these two are joined in the same memorial complex as a result of the author’s desire to harmonize two distinct identity histories: that of the Genocide and that of the Great Patriotic War.

The “Ergir” – related everyday stories and practices create a trend towards its consecration: visits to “Ergir” involve visible features of both religious tourism and pilgrimage. This trend affects local perceptions of prestige and partakes in “elite” construction. Supposedly, individuals who have managed to visit “Ergir” have higher levels of prestige. These travels to “Ergir” and back may be qualified as religious pilgrimage if it is noticed that the pilgrims return not with souvenirs characteristic of the given locality, as is usual in classical tourist culture, but instead with “*some soil, stone or water of Ergir*” as sacred relics<sup>31</sup> that

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<sup>31</sup> Another option for identity construction or reproduction is the “revival of taste” of “Ergir.” In one case, the interlocutor was asked to bring a plant known to the locals as “Grgil,” and in the words of his grandmother, it had been the main cereal or the plant for bread in the homeland. He cultivated it,

they then deposit in the most honorable space: *“I have brought some Gelieguzan spring water from there, then a stone, with minerals from over there ... let him see that Sasna stone ... . The water I have poured on my grandmother’s grave, There was some soil, also the soil I dispensed on her grave ..., my grandmother was born in ‘Ergir,’ neither ‘Ergir’s’ soil nor water have been poured on her [grave]. I maintained that tradition.”* (peasant, Nerqin Bazmaberd).

Identity is developed and continuously enriched through individual practices in enculturated space. In any case, the identity of space is not hereditary but instead is constructed as a result of space-related human behavior and public practices. As material objects, the monuments, the church, and the landscape not only reveal and generate unique meanings but also serve as milestones of identity. Simultaneously, they are associated with certain everyday actions that are continually, ritually and systemically performed by the community. As we observed with respect to memorial fountains and monuments, people create environments to represent nationhood, after which the environment engulfs the identity into everyday life (e.g., the building of the monument to Hrant Dink in Gandzaqar), and transforms into conventionally celebrated “primitive” nationalism. The human creates a “space

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processed it and baked some bread. *“I said to my wife do not touch it: it is seed of grgil. It was the main bread of the Sasounians. You may also take to plant. That call of ‘Ergir’ ... They say grgil bread, we were eating grgil bread. My grandmother told about cheese and grgil ... So it was their everyday food, and therefore I decided to plant ... I will give nobody ... this is the first yield, but I’ll share with you ... take this as a souvenir, hang it in your home.”*

of identity” that becomes both a part of everyday life and a public practice. Given the inconstancy of the public/community, “identity signs/space” may also experience transformations and innovations. *“It follows, therefore, that as society evolves and changes, places themselves change as they become dynamic and reflexive sites of innovation (Massey 1995).* In the Soviet to post-Soviet transitional period, the everyday life of community is being changed as the local, state and national identity signs and symbolic means are being changed, thus transforming the entire identity landscape.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ARMENIANNES AND EDUCATION: HOW TEXTS AND SYMBOLS ARE BORN AND LOCALIZED

Michael Billig has underlined the importance of the creation and reproduction of national identity as a product of daily social practices. His foremost assumption is that of “civil nationalism,” applying the term “nation” to the community of citizens accompanied by argumentation about the active reproduction of nationalism and national identity that never ceases in nation-states. His answer to the question about how people recall their nationality may be abridged as follows: in already established nation-states, the perception of nationality continually flutters as a flag, reminding people of their nationhood. Such “*continual “flaggings” and “reminders”*” of nationhood have multiple forms of public occurrence: words, symbolically burdened songs, flags, banknotes, stamps and so on (*Billig 1995*).

From the beginning, this research was committed to an approach in accord with which the educational system in general and some of its constituents in particular essentially affect, direct and transform the texts and symbols of daily nationalism. However, the people who are engaged in the process of education both create and modify it in a specific way, thus developing their own versions of curriculum content.

Taken in this way, the questions discussed below are concerned with how (or by what means) this everyday “flagging” of

nationhood (concerning the Armenians, [Armenianness, Armenianness, the Armenian way]), is constructed and disseminated through both general education and everyday schooling. We must attempt to describe and deconstruct the named “flags” and “reminders.” The research has allowed us to see that beyond surface similarities, which have plausibly appeared as a result of unitary and universal education, “flaggings” and symbols at the local level may be both varied and distinct. The symbols are often ranked and circulate selectively: a symbol of prior importance in Gandzaqar may be not the same as that which is valued in Koti or Nerqin Bazmaberd. Overall, everything is concerned with what M. Billig has formulated as follows: “*Every day they (US, France, Britain) reproduce themselves as nations, and their citizens as representatives of those nations.*” These nations are reproduced in the broader world of nations. Armenia and the Armenians are not exclusive, but it is worth noting that their civic and ethnic perceptions either intersect or are indefinitely demarcated<sup>32</sup> exactly as explained or professed by Fenton and May: the “*salience of, and balance between, ethnic and civic dimensions within any given nationalism will inevitably vary*” (2002, 7).

This must be amended with the situation of conflict observed

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<sup>32</sup>Craig Calhoun differentiates the terms “civic nationalism” and “ethnic nationalism” by interpreting them as two types of perceptions of the nation. In his opinion, the civic approach to national identity originates from loyalty to the polity/state, including the definition of that allegiance as primarily composed of citizens’ political identity. In the case of the second term, national identity is defined based on cultural or ethnic distinctiveness, which are different from the political (Calhoun 2006, 180).

in the previous chapters, i.e., the unsettled relations with neighboring Azerbaijan and Turkey, which supports the more uncompromising expressions of the matter. If the world of nations is to be reproduced, according to M. Billig, then nationhood must be imagined, communicated, believed in, and remembered (Billig 1995, 17).

It is clear that in general, education and the educational system are important in the context of development of everyday nationalism. In his classic work, Eugene Weber describes the important role of the universal curriculum and visual educational materials in forming people's civic national consciousness in 19th-century France. Secondary education is generally viewed as an agency of public socialization, securing unitary, popular, and mass culture (Smith 1991, 11). Louis Althusser (1971) lists educational institutions among the "apparatus of state ideology." Thomas Eriksen points out the imperative role of unitary and mass education in the development of ethnic identity (*Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (1993)). He observes that a "uniform educational system covering large areas greatly facilitates the development of abstract identifications with a category of people whom one will never meet" (1993, 92). Large groups of people in schools not only learn the ethnic group to which they belong but also study the cultural features of that group, thus largely supporting the culture's standardized objectifications (Eriksen 1993, 92). Teun van Dijk's book (*Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach* (1998)) discusses the institutions that organize, distribute and manage cognitive acts/processes,

mutual influences and group relations. One of those institutions is the school that either creates or reproduces them (*Van Dijk 1998, 186*). Similar points of view have guided many authors through observations of the role of general education in the dissemination of ideologies and values. Different perspectives – particularly related to history teaching – have been highlighted (*Voronkov, Korpenko and Osipova 2008; Shnirelman 2003; Shnirelman 2003, 1998; Rumyantsev 2008, Zolyan and Zaqaryan 2008. Chikovani 2008; Mkrtchyan 2007, Iskandaryan and Arutyunyan 1999; Anchabadze 1999*).

However, general education does not consist solely of state curricula. Together with educational policy, they are led by not only official but also unofficial practices and numerous everyday conditions. Therefore, when researching the ideological impact of education, it is important not to overlook the unofficial context. Beyond the official, prescribed curricula and authorized textbooks, it is also necessary to examine everyday life in schools: ritual, festive and ceremonial situations, as along with the contents of the iconography available in schools, showcased in classrooms, halls and corridors. Deal and Peterson (*“Shaping School Culture: the Heart of Leadership” (1999)*) have already discussed this ritual and ceremonial constituent of school life in the American context, comparing it to a spiritual fuel that the schools need to function (1999, 33). As they remark, *“Throughout the year rituals and traditions fortify the core values of the school... Rituals, traditions, and ceremonies make the routines of schools symbolize what is important, valued, and significant”*

(Deal and Peterson 1999, 45). Certain issues of ritualism in Armenian schools have interested Gohar Stepanyan, who has observed the ceremony-performance of the “Last Ring” at the end of school year as a festival and a contemporary rite of initiation. She argues that modern observance of the “*Last Ring*” has both ritual and festive components (Stepanyan 2007). Passing over the same aspect, Deal and Peterson reveal many symbols and icons common to schools<sup>33</sup> that are spread over the classrooms, halls, and meeting places, noting their functional role in merging groups and creating both unanimity and pride (Deal and Peterson 1999, 45). They study these facts from the vantage point of school identity, culture and unanimity in the United States. In our opinion, this approach may cover much broader sets of identities, coalitions and friendships, particularly with respect to the state/civil nexus.

In posing a question about understanding how (and what type of) images, icons, ideas and formulations of nationhood, nationality and ethnicity are elaborated through schooling, we must start our journey from the schoolyard. What “reminders” may be found and what type of ““flags”” flutter in the school, over the ground of education and in the content of school instruction? A school that features iconography, ritual and ceremonial patterns,

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<sup>33</sup> The role of nonverbal, iconographic communication in the context of Armenian national identity was addressed in Harutyun Marutyan’s book “Iconography of Armenian Identity” (2009) The iconographic channels of communication in the Soviet power-related context were the subject of Victoria Bonnell’s analysis in the book “Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin” (1998).



textbooks, tutorial instructions and unique practices may be a site of both day-to-day reminding and flagging. The school of the sampled village of Koti may serve as one case for closer observation.

Before moving on to describe the school and its symbols, we must briefly introduce Armenia's educational system. It now follows the 12-year elementary (1-4), secondary (5-9) and high school (10-12) programs. It is important to understand the general framework and legal field in which a particular school operates, along with which governmental regulations and instructions it is obliged to follow. Thus, the Republic of Armenia's Law on Education proclaims the following: "The foundation of state policy in the educational field is the national ['azgayin'] school, the main goal of which is to develop a person of proper professional abilities, broad competence, taught in spirit of *patriotism, loyalty to state* and humanism." (RA Law on Education 1999). A similar paragraph in the RA Law on General Education (2009) says that the goal of general education is the mental, spiritual, physical and social development of the student and the *formation of the person as a future citizen*, prepared for individual life, professional orientation and education. In organizational terms, state policy in the field of education is framed by the state program for development of education, submitted by the Government of the Republic of Armenia for the approval of the National Assembly. According to the RA's National Program of Education, the perspective of educational development in Armenia must be viewed in the context of the country's general development and the fol-

lowing primary goals of national and state security with respect to realizing educational principles: a) *strengthening of the sovereign statehood and development of civil society*; b) overcoming poverty and securing higher standards of living; c) ensuring sustainable economic development and competitiveness; d) *preservation of Armenianness* [one word in Arm.: *hayapahpanutyun*]; and e) international and regional cooperation (the RA Law on Approval of the National Program of Development of Education in 2011-2015).

The analysis of educational system's targets/aims that are reflected in these three important documents of the state policy from a vantage point of nationhood/ethnicity/citizenry highlights how the issues of the formation of future citizens and preservation of Armenianness can be paired (Mkrtchyan, Polyushkevich, Sanina 2012).

The school that we sampled is on the edge of the village. The place was selected to account for not only the possibility of expanding on one side but also the availability of an agricultural plot of land (i.e., a garden) on the other. A stone wall separates it from adjacent dwellings and manors. It is a standard school consisting of three buildings constructed during the Soviet years, decade after decade meeting the requirements of enlargement and dependent on increasing numbers of pupils (in its best years, the 1960s and 1970s, the number of pupils, including the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> grade students from the nearby village of Barekamavan, approached one thousand). Today, the number of pupils has experienced a threefold reduction (today, there are 281 pupils).

The inner schoolyard has trees and a lawn. The first striking element of the landscape is a scene like its elevation, where part of the “Last Ring” ceremonies have been celebrated in recent years. The platform is “decorated” with handmade bells fitted together and a large iron cross, reminding the students and visitors of their Christian identity. One of the school’s side-walls is also a testimony, showing that some years ago the building was regularly under fire. This wall, along with the stories and conversations in the village both about shootings experienced the school and about school in general, are important to our observations of everyday life and daily nationalism. The school also figures in the context of stories about the early 1990s as an exclusive phenomenon because due to the efforts of its principal, teachers and parents, *“the work was not interrupted during the shootings” (“unlike elsewhere in the county”)*. The story about this determined schooling period has become a constant element of the village’s self-presentation narrative (Mkrtchyan, Field-notes 2014). It appears in storytelling that the village mayor (head of local administration) interpreted *“in view of holding the life-force and unbroken soul under the shelling of the village”* in interviews given to this research group and to TV programs. For example, village head Felix Melikyan recalled the same story in a program dedicated to Koti in a series about “Armenian Power” on the “Erkir Media” channel (2013) as follows: *“In those years, when the village was periodically shelled from enemy positions and the school was directly in the line of fire, the school never ceased working; the pupils were evacuated from the buildings*

*and classes were organized in households in the rear of the village. Our sense was not merely to study lessons but to hold on to that soul, the impossibility of breaking it even in wartime, even under shelling the school was operational. It was very impressive to see how teachers with registers under their arms were moving from house to house to teach their lessons.”* The same episode is presented in the chapter “School Epic” in I. Mamyán’s documentary novel “The Militant Mountainside” (2006), which tells of the 1991-1994 defense of the Koti. It notes the following: “*The school building on the hill was open to frequent shelling. We selected houses that were relatively safe, hidden from bombardment and spacious and in those houses, education continued*” (Mamyán 2006, 250-253). The author views this community action in the context of the traditional importance of education to the Kotians, noticing that for them, locking the school “*would be equivalent to defeat in that war of self-defense; the persistence of the school was the same as the persistence of the village.*”

It is interesting to view the above-cited book because of the role that it has played in forming a series of stories, assertions and reproductions of memories. The publication of the book was initiated and sponsored by Marat Janvelyan, a businessman of Koti descent. There are 1,700 copies for village dwellers and community members residing outside of the village; these copies are not for sale. In the “Foreword,” the author speaks about the book’s aim as follows: “*... the images not to wear out over time, the dust of oblivion not to cover the rebellious and wonderful epic of the struggling highlands*” (Mamyán 2006, 5). Thus, the

book creates an option for transforming collective memory into historical memory. In sourcing the perceptions that create local, village-wide identity, it also acts as an option for transmitting narratives. This feature of the book is especially obvious in conversations with the village's pupils and students, who were either too young or not yet born in the early the 1990s and therefore either have no personal memories of those years or their memories are blurred and fragmentary. They frequently recall the book as their source of information, inspiring their thoughts about the village's past and about the tough protection of its borders as the price of its valiant and selfless struggle for survival. Indeed, in addition to the book stories, they mention "the stories heard," i.e., the stories that are either transmitted from parents and grandparents or – given the permanence and the everyday nature of the corresponding community discourse – the stories that have become a part of their personal knowledge.

Let us continue the imagined tour of the school. The local variant of the so-called "State Corner" next to the entrance is a national/civil symbol. The space allocated to the schools' "State Corners" are situated on walls in the most populous and visible area. These "State Corners" suggest a vast variety of realizations in schools not only in their contents but also in their creative approaches. Nonetheless, three national symbols – the flag of the RA, the coat of arms and the text of the anthem – were constantly present, with images of the contemporary Catholicos of All Armenians and the President of RA always included. Sometimes one may encounter passages from the Constitution of the RA and

less frequently, the Lord's Prayer (fieldwork of 2012-2014). The appearance of "State Corners" is usually linked with the approval of the RA Law on State Symbols in 2006. The symbolic trio – flag, coat of arms and anthem – may be encountered not only in the State Corner but also in other school halls, corridors and classrooms. The handmade streamer displaying the motto "We serve the Homeland" is posted on the wall in one of the school corridors, showing villagers in military service along with maxims and quotations about the importance of the army and participation in the defense of the Fatherland's borders. The streamer is tricolored, like the Armenian state flag (Pic. 1). The same three colors are used for the text of the national anthem, which is attached to another wall of the school (Pic. 2).

**"The Victims of the Adversity":** One of school's walls is reserved for the images and personal names of Koti villagers who were lost at various times. First, the observer sees the photos of Kotian policemen killed in neighboring Voskepar (1991), followed by a separate board with replicas of medals, regalia and certificates of honor awarded to the villagers. Next, we see the board titled "The Victims of the Adversity," which contains thirty-four photos of the villagers who suffered during the Armenian-Azerbaijani fights of the early 1990s, either from other shootings or from participating in self-defense. Among them are the Kotian policemen Sos Mantashyan and Armen Azizbetyan, shot

on May 6, 1991, in neighboring Voskepar.<sup>34</sup> The title selected for the board – “*The Victims of the Adversity*” – is interesting because it allows for the recollection of all people, men and women, who were killed, who suffered or who were wounded in the course of self-defense. No less interestingly, the selected title does not focus on an enemy image but instead uses the word “adversity” (“Arhvirq” in Armenian), which describes the state of affairs<sup>35</sup>.

Another streamer in the corner of the same wall exhibits photos and letter-sized texts under the following titles: “Tragedy of Voskepar,” “Tragedy in Voskepar,” and “101 Days in Loopsof Hell” (Pic. 4). The corner has photos of the war in Artsakh along with photos of and texts about the victim policemen in Voskepar.

We may see the echoes and reminiscences of events called “adversity” in the school’s discursive rituals and ceremonial constituents. The example suggested here is the “Last Ring” cere-

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<sup>34</sup>Sos Mantashyan and Armen Azizbekyan were policemen in the Noyemberyan county police office who were dispatched with a group of colleagues to the village of Voskepar. According to Ignat Mamyan, they were aware that the situation in that village was dangerous. They were attempting to rescue others who were blockaded there. Before their arrival, their bus was ambushed by the Soviet Army airborne regiment and all were shot to death. (Mamyan 2006, 175-176).

<sup>35</sup>In S. Malkhasyan’s “Semantic Dictionary of Armenian Language,” the word is explained as “*enormous events, catastrophes, slaughter, death which are awful*” (Malkhasyants 1944, 272). In the Semantic Dictionary of Modern Armenian, the word is defined as “*Awful event, awful occasion, catastrophe*” (1969: 228).

mony (of the 2006-2007 year).<sup>36</sup> At the end of the official part of the ceremony, the graduates and their teachers visit the village cemetery to lay flowers on the graves of their classmates' fathers. The teacher's speech over the graves makes it clear that in 1994, when their fathers died, the children were only eight years old. Her words are addressed to the pupils, all of whom look both sorrowful and excited. The teacher's speech was marked with messages such as "*nobody is forgotten,*" "*the fathers have sacrificed their lives for the continuation of lives of their children,*" and "*life must go on, and the merry days must be lived properly.*"<sup>37</sup>

Our observations and interviews also confirmed that in the course of schooling, the narratives in the unitary curriculum and textbooks are amended by, mixed into and enriched with a local narrative. Thus, in explaining the lessons on late modern Armenian history, the teachers tie their village experience into the contents of corresponding chapters in the textbooks. One such episode figures in the celebration of "Victory Day" – May 9 – in the village. On the day of the national Day of Victory and Peace (RA

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<sup>36</sup> The structure, actors in the ceremony the elements of national identity in the discourse of the "Last Ring" ritual in Yerevan's schools are thoroughly analyzed in Mkrtchyan 2013, 42-48.

<sup>37</sup> "*Your joyfulness today may be shadowed because we have come to this cemetery keeping in our minds that 'Nobody is forgotten.' Yes, nobody is forgotten, ... and ... [addressing to two pupils – S.M.] hide your tears deep in your souls because you can be grateful to your classmates sharing your grief with you in this joyful day for all of you and I beg pardon from this cemetery silence and ask you all to go now and continue your fun. They have died for your fun, for your better life*" (message of the senior teacher to pupils, video recorded in May 25, 2007, v. Koti).



Law on Festivals and Memorial Days, 2001), which according to public opinion is also a day to commemorate war victims, concerned village and community members add a local dimension by commemorating the two compatriot policemen shot in Voskepar by the Soviet Army on May 6, 1991. Many concerned people – taught by their teachers, relatives of pupils, or neighbors or friends – share personal stories and individual memories. Thus, individual and family experiences surround and appear in the instruction process, permeating and editing the textbooks<sup>38</sup>.

**“April 24, 1915,” “Nobody is Forgotten and Will Not Be Forgotten,” “The Lists of the Patriotic [War],” “The Spitak Earthquake”**: A large poster titled “April 24, 1915” is attached to a wall in the school hall. The photos affixed to it were taken from the Armenian Genocide memorial complex in Tsitsernakaberd, Yerevan: *views and documents related to the genocide years, depicting the hanged people, piled skulls in the desert, hungry and exhausted people, and brief informational materials on different aspects of the genocide* (Pic. 5).

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<sup>38</sup>“Those guys were killed in May 6, on that date a larger event is being held in Noyemberyan, and she—Zemfira Harutyunyan [teacher of Russian language – S.M.] – goes there, but the day of their funeral is May 9. We talk about them in school, but not to the first-year pupils. In the first class I have said that men from our village were among the victims. Now the granddaughter of one of them comes to school and I have spoken about her grandfather, how he sacrificed his life for our village. So we tell them about this, but it is already known, we have a corner in the school where we light candles that day. The day is celebrated, we have to speak. They have their corner.” (an elementary-school teacher, 2014).

One of the sections of the streamer is titled “Nobody is Forgotten or Will Be Forgotten” and contains documentary materials and descriptive texts about the genocide, including photos of the Koti villagers killed in the war of 1941-1945 and a photo of Marshall Hovhannes Baghramyan that has hung in the school since the Soviet era (Pic. 6).

The story of Baghramyan’s parents being natives of Koti who moved to Gharabagh is a well-known constituent of the local narratives about the marshall. People also remember his visit to the village, during which he said “*As a hundred years ago, the Koti villager Bayramyan became the Chardakhlou villager Baghramyan, so today the Chardakhlou villager Baghramyan becomes the Koti villager Bayramyan.*” This episode looks like a competition for a “copyright” to attach H. Baghramyan as a renowned and valiant compatriot to a particular village.

The next streamer of this type is dedicated to the Great Patriotic War (Pic. 7).<sup>39</sup> Local parlance refers to the streamer as “the lists of the Patriotic.” The primary source of this streamer and in particular, of the lists, is the book “Petriified Tears,” which was authored by a native villager, a long-time vice-principal of the Seryozha Veranyan school. Four hundred copies of the book were published in 2008. Like the previous book “The Struggling Mountainside,” this book was funded by co-villagers. As the author notes, “*the book is dedicated to the vivid memory of all Koti villagers, victims of native land and independence at all times.*”

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<sup>39</sup> In local texts, it may also be referred to without the adjective “Great” – for example, “The Patriotic War” or “The Patriotic.”

The part of this school interior that we have described is an example of the unique blend of what in terms suggested by Maurice Halbwachs may be called historical memory (memory of the Armenian genocide) and collective memory (memory of the Great Patriotic War). Both of these events also have pan-Armenian dimensions, but the local combination is itself interesting. Thus, the local narrative features neither personal nor family lived stories of the Armenian genocide, whereas documented stories about villagers' participation in the Great Patriotic War are present. Some of that war's veterans still live in the village.

Variants in local place names also provide interesting clues for analyzing and understanding predominant narratives. The former name of the village, "Shavarshavan," did not survive and is absent from the school's discourse. In the fieldwork, we have not encountered this name in a single unprovoked way. There are innumerable notes about the above-mentioned "Petrified Fountains," particularly on the first page: "*The book has the character of a homeland study [Arm.: "Hayrenagitutyun"]. It is primarily dedicated to the participation of Koti's villagers (Shavarshavan in 1964-1989) in the Great Patriotic War and the self-defense of the 1990s.*" The use of the term "homeland studies" is interesting as a means of shaping the idea of a "small homeland," in seeing the village as homeland. In this regard, the context is one of leaving the homeland and "the struggle for native land," along with notes about the self-defense of the 1990s (long before the present time); it incorporates notions that are completely relevant to the 20th century, including the Soviet era. The division of the book

into chapters such as “Village Koti in the Great Patriotic War” and “In the Trenches of Self-Defense” also speaks to the parallelism of dimensions or certain types of identification of these particular historical periods.

The latter dimensions of the village history were observable throughout the research in Koti and persist as sources of local narratives and stories. In each of the three communities included in the research, we personally met other authors of local narratives: they are teachers, amateur local researchers, and simply natives interested in their village histories. One such notable author in Koti is the country-style poet and musician-singer Ludwig Bablumyan, who is also known beyond the village and whose songs are not only unique stories addressed to internal village audiences but also narrations of village stories with the goal of popularizing local nationalism. His most popular songs, which praise the native village, unsurprisingly represent the village over the nationwide panorama. Conversely, these songs now reassert themselves in other context, linking the deeds of the Koti villagers in the Great Patriotic War’s battlefields with their descendants’ actions in defense of their native villages (just as with the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan). These links and parallelism are obvious in the story of one of L. Bablumyan’s songs, “Monuments with Precious Stones.” The song is dedicated to the memory of victims of the Great Patriotic War, but has become newly popular in mourning practices associated with Koti’s victims in the 1990s. Interestingly, the remembrance of not only the soldiers of Artsakh and the wars of self-defense but also the

Great Patriotic War are also twinned in local narratives. These peer memories may also be traced in the local monthly, “Young Koti,” and seemingly engage in unique conduct both to overcome the ambivalent nature of the local narrative and to include local history. The notions accompanying this parallelism are concurrently clarified and crystallized. This is the case with the attribution of the Armenian word for “freedom fighters” (“azatamartik”) to participants in the later war, whereas the soldiers of earlier epochs are known as “veterans.” In the frame of the Day of Victory and Peace on May 9, these two groups are ordinarily united.

In the continuation of this series of collective traumatic memories and those arranged under the slogan “*Nobody is Forgotten, Nobody Will be Forgotten,*” we may also observe the didactic streamer that addresses the Spitak earthquake of December 7, 1988, and is composed of descriptive texts and photographs. The textual elements are partially handwritten; partially excerpted from journals and books; and (with respect to photos) copied from newspapers and journals. The latter are mostly documentary photos of the earthquake’s consequences.

The same hall contains another corner for mourning and spiritual practices, in front of which (specifically on April 24, the Day of Commemoration of the victims of the Armenian Genocide) are lit candles. The same is done on May 9 to memorize the victims of the Artsakh and the Great Patriotic wars in accordance with the above-mentioned parallelism (Pic. 9).

April 24th is a holiday in Armenia and naturally, schools and administrative offices are closed. However, the school participates in that day's public events as a collective entity. The commemoration ceremonies have even gone beyond the boundaries of a school event and have engaged both community employees and other villagers. As expressed in our field notes, in collective commemorations, the school – represented by the personnel and pupils of higher classes – participates, along with employees of the village administration and kindergarten, war veterans, and other people who may want to join. Since its consecration, the church has become an expected participant in commemorations, holidays, wedding and mourning rituals: “*On April 24, we visit the church to light candles and to lay flowers, we go to the war victims’ monument, and then we walk up to the khachqar (cross-stone),*” explains the school principal, adding that either on the eve or the day of April 24, he collects older pupils either in the school or in the village club to tell them once again about the genocide, to converse and to remember. Interestingly, we have also recorded this “sparing manner” of transmitting knowledge about the genocide to elementary-school children in Yerevan’s schools.<sup>40</sup> The textbooks for these classes are similarly terse (Mkrtchyan 2013) and refrain from including direct notes, alt-

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<sup>40</sup> Of course, the picture would be more reliable if it were based on data from a nationwide poll of Armenian elementary-school teachers. However, the series of interviews with representatives of this group in the context of S. Mkrtchyan’s Ph.D. dissertation in 2010-2011 shows that these ideas and corresponding practices were widespread (see details in Mkrtchyan, Ph.D. thesis, p. 70-73).

though the duration, texts and final extent to which the issue is introduced to pupils depends on the personal opinions of each school's teachers. The Armenian Genocide is an important constituent of Armenian identity (Abrahamian 2001, 2006, 2007; Dudwick 1989; Marutyan 2006, 2006a, 2008, 2009, Panossian 2006), and April 24 is officially recognized as a commemorative holiday and is a permanent fixture in the mass media that day(s). Therefore, it is impossible to completely avoid discussing the event with children. In interviews, many teachers insisted that it should be their responsibility to select and apply a strategy of communicating with children in accordance with their age, psychology and worldview. In the capital city, the children usually visit the Tsitsernakaberd memorial complex with their parents; nonetheless, on the day before or after, one might witness visits by entire classes, including classes from elementary schools (Mkrtchyan, Field-notes, 2011-2014).

**“Champions of Education,” “Equal Rights”:** School corridors have allocated corners dedicated to school life, graduates and pupils, marked with streamers titled “Champions of Education,” a board with awards won by pupils in various competitions, and a display of handworks, embroidery and pupils’ pictures (Pic. 10). A portion of these objects is grouped under the theme “Equal Rights” and is accompanied by an informational streamer about people with limited abilities. Teachers and pupils participate in decorating the school not only by making hand-made items, pictures and streamers but also by participating in the building’s floral design and caring for its plants (Pic. 11).

### **“Our Achievements” and “Armenian Olympic Champions ... Heroes of Chess”:**

Copies of certificates and awards won by the pupils of Koti’s village school in different contests are displayed on a wall under the title “*Our Achievements*” (Pic. 12). The majority of those certificates and awards commemorate achievements in sport. This section seems to be headed by the title “*Armenian Olympic Champions*” (Pic. 13). The episode as a whole both exposes the opposition of two levels of identity – the local “Kotian” versus the broader Armenian – and pairs them: the local aside or in the context of the national. The theme of sport is continued on the printed posters about chess and famous chess players in front of the classroom-cabinet of the unitarily introduced (in 2014) chess lessons in elementary schools. One of the posters is titled “*Armenian Heroes of Chess*” and the other is titled “*Chess World Champions.*” Tigran Petrosyan is represented on both posters; in the latter poster, his portrait is in the center and much larger than in the first poster (Pic. 14).

**“My birthplace – Koti”:** There is a poster titled “*My birthplace – Koti*” in one of the school hallways. The poster is a combination of photographs and annotated texts (Pic.15). The photographs of the “Eagle column” by Koti’s entrance, the castle of Gag and St. Sargis Church are pasted in the center. The poster’s description of the church was identical to the narratives that we have encountered during our field research and public discourse examinations. The poster reads as follows: “*In the past, the name of the village of Koti was inseparable from the name of St.*



*Sargis's church of Gag. According to medieval historians, the church was founded by Mesrop Mashtots. In a discussion of the domains of Vahram of Gag, V. Areveltsi (1201-1271) says that he received Gavarzin, Taush and the famed fortress of Gag (where a renowned saint was located) for obeying the Mongols."*

The other photographs contained village scenes in which Mount Paytasar is clearly outlined. As local symbols of Koti, the church and the mountain are also encountered in interviews, in villagers' self-introductory variants, and in the book "Struggling Mountainside." They are also necessarily present in the texts of school events and in the songs of locally famous "bards" (gusans) that are always a component of family and community rites and celebrations ("...*Your land is vast, border long, from the Kholni Stone to Mount of Paytasar*" – chorus of L. Bablumyan's song "Village of Koti" ("Koti gyugh").<sup>41</sup> Excerpts from local bards' songs can also be seen on the school's "My birthplace – Koti" poster. The annotation on the poster also discusses the origins and etymology of the village's name, the village's history as a dwelling place, and the school's history ("*The school of the village of Koti was officially established in 1893...*"). The aforementioned descriptions of Koti can also be seen in the school's ritual discourse. In this context, it is becoming very important to notice the mutual connection of general (Armenia's, the Armenians') and local measurements. A closer examination of secondary-school programs revealed that local, residential or – even

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<sup>41</sup>L. Bablumyan's song "Village of Koti" ("Koti gyugh") is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbiKT-dCcEg> (accessed 04.30.2015).

more broadly – regional viewpoints are expressed more weakly (Mkrtchyan 2013) than are general viewpoints (i.e., those of Armenia and the Armenians). This situation leaves only a limited area to local and regional elements that primarily involves individually acknowledging and filling that gap – specifically in subjects such as “Homeland Studies” (“Hayrenagitutyun”) (fifth grade) and the lesser “Me and the Surrounding World” (fourth grade), which devotes several class periods to gathering and examining information about the residential area/village.

In public discourse, we have also registered a formula that separated and focused on the local identity, while enclosing the local into the broader circle of Armenian identity. For instance, consider the speech of the school’s headmaster directed to the graduates during an event of “Last Ring” (2007): *“Dear tenth-graders, I wish for you that before facing life at its fullest, always remember that you are sons of a legendary people, which gave Narekatsi and Shnorhali, Charents and Sevak, Komitas and Tumanyan to the world. I want you to always remember that you are heirs of a village, the name of which was written down in golden letters in the history of the Armenian nation. Wherever you may be, I want you to always uphold and take pride in that name, the name of an Armenian, the name of a Kotian. I wish you health, long life and, of course, I wish you pride for being **Armenian and Kotian**. Thank you.”*

Another example of public discourse in which local identity is simultaneously asserted and set into the broader context may be observed on the poster titled “*21 Years of Independence*,” located

in a school hallway. The white background is densely covered with photos and materials dedicated to the twenty-first anniversary of the RA together with panoramic pictures of Koti: the Eagle column, passages and photos from the book “Militant Mountainside,” and reminders of self-defense and the Artsakh War. The poster may also be viewed as an expression of “statehood” or of the “civil” dimension of national identity.

Not only this board but also our conversations with the villagers have rendered the practical features of many notions clear and meaningful. For example, the term “homeland” as birthplace was obviously more actively and frequently used than “homeland” in its broader sense. The birthplace is Koti, the native village. As such, it is strictly separated from the more general, larger homeland – Armenia. The collective “Us” is identified with a tiny, minor space, a unique “miniature homeland.” The importance of the notion of a “small homeland” is generally recognized in modern socio-anthropological and socio-psychological studies because of its direct relatedness to daily nationalism and the opportunities it suggests for understanding how local symbols are legitimized in the contexts of school education and daily life. For example, in her “Book about the Homeland” (Книга о Родине, 2001), Irina Sandomirskaya discusses the development and patterns of the constructed homeland in Russian discourse. More specifically, she has noticed that the term itself (малая родина) originated in the Soviet age, namely, during Khrushchev’s “Thaw,” when Soviet intellectuals were permitted to “search their roots” but could not go further than into a venue

that was “close and acceptable in a class sense,” that is, into the rural environment. In her opinion, this is the origin of the “village prose” (“pochvenniki”) genre in Soviet literature. Khrushchev’s rule was more favorable towards the peasantry than was Stalin’s regime. This difference was expressed both in belles-lettres and in literature: the small homeland was noticed and often “created” as a place ruled by the humanism of simple people, realness and truth. That author has also touched on the odd ideological and political meanings of the concept of the small homeland, in particular, of its hidden alternative nature in view of the predominant official ideology of a socialist homeland, and thus affection for “home, sweet home” has substituted for both proletarian internationalism and Soviet patriotism. Village prose was perceived by readers as a tacit critique of human progress and the unintelligibly mechanical logic of history versus individual fate (Sandomirskaya 2001, 160).

Something close to this, or, to be precise, the perception of the homeland-birthplace as a more sustainable asset, is also underlined in our research materials and observations. Unlike citizenship, it cannot be alienated or changed; it does not count either space or time. The primary condition for this perception of homeland in regard to daily nationalism is the individual consciousness of being Kotian. This formula and symbolic thinking guide the villagers of Koti, Gandzaqar and Nerqin Bazmaberd to the acknowledgement or maintenance of certain symbols of and opportunities for self-identification, construed as a type of commonness with other villagers. As a rule, they are similarly cordial

when reminded of the fields, rivers and forests of their native village of their common childhood. Unsurprisingly, the same is true for those who have left the village during various periods and under different circumstances. These latter, who have departed from the village but preserved the pan-Kotian identity, are called the “diaspora of Koti” and are especially appreciated when they invest in the community (e.g., building churches, making donations, supporting public events, supporting, participating or engaging in organizational efforts related to the self-defense of the 1990s).

The theme of birthplace burns brighter and shows its contours when associated with the themes of Armenianness, ethnicity, and affiliations with the land. As revealed in the field materials, the dimensions of ethnicity, birthplace and other associated perceptions are predominant in the words and consciousness of the elderly community members, in whose everyday life daily nationalism obviously prevails in view of the near-to-total absence of civil and social discernments. In special cases, when we attempted to bring the latter discernments to the fore by asking direct questions about them, we received no clear and informed answer concerning, for example, Armenian citizenship or personal civil rights and obligations toward the state. Instead, the materials highlight another nuanced feature of people’s attitudes toward their birthplace: individually, there were various senses either of owing something or having obligations to it. In our given perspective on daily nationalism, we find important the formula that unites these obligations or the sense of depth to “*their*

*own blood shed ...*,” that is always recalled as an additional mandate “*to stay and to rebuild the place where the blood was shed.*”<sup>42</sup> Alternatively, as noted by a high-school girl, stories about the defense of the village inspired her to be proud both of being a Kotian and of the heroic deeds of her co-villagers (“*they have managed to protect their village, therefore I love my village, my birthplace very much*”).

Returning to ethnic-civic dimensions and proportionality in the national identity, it is worthwhile to note a consistent pattern in the textbooks used in the middle and higher grades: perceptions of nationalism and about the nation are constructed with the use of ethnic constituents and the characteristic features of ethnicity. The models and “exhortations” of group solidarity and mutual affiliations in the textbooks are also predominantly constructed around ethnicity: i.e., that of Armenianness and Armenian people. Conversely, the civil perspective on the Republic of Armenia, its citizens’ rights and obligations to it as a sovereign, constitutional and democratic state, is scarcely presented. In particular, that perspective is almost completely absent in the Arme-

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<sup>42</sup> The following interpretation of citizenship was recorded in the focus group discussion with the village youth (i.e., pupils in the higher grades): “As a citizen of Armenia, I see no future for me in my country, and I think that it will be better to depart to live and work abroad. As a citizen of Armenia, I do not love anyone, I hate them all, and I am unhappy. Of course, this is too extreme, a humorous exaggeration, but speaking as an Armenian, the first thought that comes to my mind is the idea of my birthplace—Koti—where I was born and brought up, and the blood our people have shed for Koti and for the rest. This comes first and then comes the sense of duty to live and build the place for which the blood was shed” (field work, 2014).

nian Literature and Armenian History curricula for all grades (Mkrtchyan 2007, Mkrtchyan 2013, Zolyan and Zakaryan 2008, and the guides for the named subjects for 2012-2013). Elementary-school pupils may find notions such as “homeland” or “Armenia – our home” in their textbooks. The notion of “homeland,” notwithstanding its cultural nature, is represented by a combination of various elements: the origin myth (Hayk and Bel); geographical constituents (e.g., the mountains of Ararat and Aragats, the Arax River, Lake Sevan); nature, flora and fauna (e.g., trout from Lake Sevan, tilapia from Lake Van, apricots); the alphabet created by Mesrop Mashtots and the mother tongue; historical archaeological monuments, mostly paired with religious identity (e.g., temples, cross stones, fortifications); food (e.g., lavash); history and historical figures. There are extremely underrepresented concepts, stories, pictures and ideas that treat the Republic of Armenia as a sovereign and democratic state that invests its citizens not only with legal relations but also with legitimate care/protection from and responsibility toward the state. In the given perspective, the flag, the coat of arms, and the anthem represented as “symbols of statehood” and the texts urging students to know/learn them may be noted as relatively civilian in nature. Also present are notions of the importance of the army for the state and boys’ duty of military service to the homeland. The context of heroism is densely populated with the notion of “duty to the homeland,” sometimes along with “duty to sacrifice one’s life for the homeland,” but the plane of images and texts in the textbook is nearly devoid of any idea about affiliation with the

state through daily rights and responsibilities. There are a few noteworthy episodes related to the propagated notion of heroism; these are connected to some daily obligations such as “*studying hard means to become a hero,*” “*take care of the environment and thus be a hero,*” and “*love the village, town where one lives.*” Thus, the taught ethnic aspect of national identity obviously overwhelms the civic aspect (Mkrtchyan 2013, 2012). The latter topic, namely, the theme of relatedness to a civil entity, appears in the curricula only at the basic level of the school, both integrated into various subjects and forming the content and plan of such courses or subjects as “Social Science” or “Basic Law,” which are taught either in the high middle classes (8-9 grades) or in the high school (10-12 grades) (Social Science subject guide for 2012-2013).

**“Hero,” “National hero”:** We now examine the official form obtained by the perceptions of hero and national hero since independence. “The Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Supreme Award of “National Hero of Armenia,” approved in 1994, claims that “the supreme award of ‘National Hero of Armenia’ is awarded for outstanding services of national scale to the Republic of Armenia in the fields of defense and legal order of the country and in the creation of significant values.” It was once awarded to citizens of the RA.<sup>43</sup> Currently, there is another Law

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<sup>43</sup>“The Law of the Republic of Armenia on the Supreme Award of ‘National Hero of Armenia’” is available at: <http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=1412&lang=arm&nc=utf8> (accessed 04.30.2015).



on State Awards and Honorary Titles, (Chapter 2), according to which the award may be granted to both citizens and non-citizens.<sup>44</sup> To date, the title of “National Hero of Armenia” has been awarded to 15 persons, 9 of whom were granted the title posthumously. The iconographical design of the school also includes two printed posters of “National Heroes of Armenia” and “Heroes of Artsakh,” which are affixed next to each other on the same wall in one of corridors. The former poster contained annotated photos of the persons<sup>45</sup> awarded the title of “National Hero of Armenia.”<sup>46</sup>

Comparing the discourse of heroism, heroes and national heroes as represented in the textbooks for grades one through five (Mkrtchyan 2013, 66-70), the field data of this research shows how some elements of the discourse of “national hero” in text-

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<sup>44</sup> The RA Law on State Awards and Honorary Titles, accepted on 06.21.2014 is available at:

<http://www.parliament.am/legislation.php?sel=show&ID=5029#2> (accessed 04.20.2015).

The recipients include H.H.C.S.S. Vazgen I, Catholicos of All Armenians (28.07.1994), Victor Hamazasp Hambardzumyan (11. 10.1994), Alek Manukyan (14.10.1994), Movses Gevorg Gorgisyan (20.09.1996), Geghaznik Armenak Miqayelyan (20.09.1996), Monte Charles Melqonyan (20.09.1996), Tatul Zhorzhik Krpeyan (20.09.1996), Vitya Vorosh Ayvazyan (20.09.1996), Jivan Zaven Abrahamyan (20.09.1996), Yura Vagharshak Poghosyan (20.09.1996), Karen Serob Demirchyan (27.12.1999), Vazgen Zaven Sargsyan (27.12.1999), Kirk Kirkoryan (27.05.2004), and Charles Aznavour (27.05.2004). We note that the poster was printed before the title was awarded to Nikolay Ivan Rizhkov (05.12.2008), and therefore his photo is not included.

<sup>46</sup>The award was granted for after the catastrophic earthquake of 1988 in Armenia for remarkable personal contributions to reconstructing affected area and for exceptional moral support to the Armenian people (see details in:<http://www.president.am/hy/decrees/item/121/>).

books coincide with the official discourse, whereas others differ. We may see that the scope of the textbooks is much broader at the expense of history, expanding to include the myth of descent and Hayk the Progenitor. Taken at face value, the textbooks' discourse evolves to address the military, soldiering and defense, courage and fortitude, and thus has a narrower scope than suggested by the official or legally approved principles of heroism. In this regard, in addition to defense, the corresponding Law implies the fields of strengthening public order and creating significant national assets. Persons who appear on the list of national heroes deserved the award for defending the country, whereas others deserved it for strengthening the legal order, and still others received the title for creating national values. It is also interesting to compare village discourse with the aforementioned legislative and official directives-approaches in educational policy. The village discourse, which we have attempted to delineate by both analyzing the interviews and school events and observing the school's corridor iconography, symbolically merges the officially approved, reflected-in-the-textbook approaches with the decoration of the school interior. This discourse has obviously re-edited the formulations and perceptions of "national heroism" in terms of both expansion and new assertions. Here, we find Monte Melkonyan, Vazgen Sargsyan, Tatul Krpeyan, Andranik, Gevorg Chavush – any person remaining alive and active in the border village – who "*stay in the village even under continuous*

shooting, and living here they guard the border, enhancing the rear of soldiers in positions.”<sup>47</sup> On the one hand, this not only asserts dedication and selfless love of the homeland (nation, country, birthplace, land) but also stresses the principle of sacrificing (giving) one’s life<sup>48</sup>. On the other hand, it proclaims that it is not only the military that has the alleged “right” to be decorated as hero but also persons with economic, legal and other motives. Heroism is performed not only on the battlefield but also in everyday life in the border areas and/or by doing good on a daily basis<sup>49</sup> (“We are the heroes, who else?,” “Heroism may be a dai-

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<sup>47</sup> “*Hero for me is neither the war hero, although he deserves great respect, nor the Hero of Socialist Work, as in Communist times. For me, a hero is the person, who quietly and calmly does his own job. If that man does his job normally and well, if a villager at the border wakes up every morning, takes his cow to water, then takes that same cow to grazing meadows, then comes back home to do other jobs and never complains, that man does this everything at the border—he is truly a hero, and deserves a corresponding respect ... Man deserves respect for his job, but respect should not be something verbal. It is the authorities’ attitude toward their subordinates, their people* (fieldwork, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> “...the person who selflessly loves his homeland, his nation, ready for everything, even to sacrifice his life ...,” “so as those who gave their lives, struggled in the most severe, unsafe conditions to protect the honor of their nation, to repair their loss, standing alone against five, against ten, but committed to their aim,” “let it be through fighting, through sacrificing their lives, with their regiment under fire ...” (fieldwork materials, 2014).

<sup>49</sup> “Let it be not me, but someone strange, because to protect being an Armenian is also heroism. I consider it heroism if someone saves another person or helps someone, takes the hand of an aged woman, gives some bread to someone starving, I can surely say that heroism is not only in the battlefield, we can engage in it every day. So, I have said that all of you are heroes because you live on the border, you guard that border. You are the champions among the heroes because you have not run away. Do your best to go and come back” (elementary-school teacher, 2014).

ly affair ...,” “You all [teacher addresses the pupils – S.M.] are heroes, you live at the border, you keep the border!”).

“... **Hero Village of Koti**”: The stock formulae and perceptions of the local public discourse may be found in the text of L. Bablumyan’s song “Koti,” constructed around the axis of the heroic nature of the village: “*marching from centuries to centuries ... hero village of Koti*” with broad territory, and borders stretching “*from the Kholni Stone to Mount of Paytasar.*” Next, the song says, “*Your brave sons have kept the border ..., Your present generation stepped the way of our brave ancestors and became as heroes, deserved their glory and honor ... hero village of Koti.*”<sup>50</sup>

**Guerilla Movements (“Haydukayin Sharzhumner”)**: On a wall on the second floor of the school under a common title, one may see a printed poster consisting of five sections under separate headers: “Guerilla Movements,” “Khanasar Expedition – 1996,” “Aghbyur Serob,” “The Fight in St. Araquelots Monastery at Mush” (Pic. 15). Each of these sections contains a brief text and detailed map depicting the arena of the event. The poster shows individual and group photos of the guerillas. The printed poster also includes not only pencil portraits of Aghbyur Serob, Mother Sose, Gevorg Chavush and Hrayr Dzhoghq but also an oil portrait of General Andranik (Pic. 16).

**Religion**: The school space is not void of religious themes and iconographical symbols. We have already mentioned the pic-

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<sup>50</sup>L. Bablumyan’s song “Village of Koti” (“Koti gyugh”) is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbiKT-dCcEg> (accessed 04.30.2015).

ture of Catholocos in the so-called “State Corner” near the national anthem and over the Armenian tricolor background (Pic. 17). On another wall, one may see a handmade poster titled “Armenian Churches,” which contains a broad selection of photos of Armenian churches in the territory of modern Armenia and in modern Turkey, both medieval and recently built (Pic. 18). Interestingly, one photo depicts the pre-Christian temple of Garni (dated to the 1st century A.D.). The same building may be found in elementary-school textbooks’ illustrations both as a symbol of pre-Christian Armenian identity and as a cultural monument (Mkrtchyan 2013, 57). Another sign of religious identity was noted earlier – there is a cross of iron rods on the platform in the schoolyard.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE TASTES AND SMELLS OF ARMENIANNES

*“Haiutiun (Armenianness) was everywhere: in personal relations, in bargaining at the market, in bureaucratic inefficiency, in the tastiness of the fruit.”*

*R.G. Suny*

*“After March 2, the Armenian tolma will be known all over the world”*: the news exploded in the Armenian media in 2015. The media were regularly reporting an important business project of Armenian businessmen who had decided to export one of the best-known and appreciated foods in the Armenian traditional cultural context – tolma<sup>51</sup> – in a precooked variant. The context of the coverage was much less inclined to prioritize the details of this business project than to emphasize the national, pan-Armenian importance of a private initiative. *“Representation of tolma as a native Armenian food, we can say, is urgently necessary because our neighbors do not cease their attempts to deem it their own. For Sargis Tarverdyan, it is also imperative to achieve the same recognition for tolma as was achieved in the case of UNESCO’s recognition of lavash as Armenian.”*<sup>52</sup> *The*

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<sup>51</sup>In Armenia, tolma is prepared by rolling small pieces of mincemeat with rice and spices into cabbage, vines and a few other types of leaves.

<sup>52</sup>Earlier, in November 2014, lavash was nominated by the Republic of Armenia: “Lavash, the preparation, meaning and appearance of traditional bread as an expression of culture in Armenia” was included in UNESCO’s “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.” The media

*businessman stresses, that for him, as for a soldier, this will be a small victory for the fatherland in our shared cause.”*<sup>53</sup>.

Since 2011, during the “Golden Apricot” international film festival, Armenia has held a festival of tolma, “Uduli.” S. Mamulyan, one of the tolma festival’s organizers, has noted that the festival’s “goal is to popularize traditional Armenian dishes and to assert Armenian cuisine, which is considered to be one of intangible cultural values. Additionally, it presents tolma as an Armenian dish, disproving the misinformation that tolma has Turkish roots” (Mkrtchyan, 2011). The organizers were convinced of the ripeness of the problem when the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliiev,<sup>54</sup> opined that tolma had Turkic or Azerbaijani origins, but “There is no comeback since CNN broadcast the news about the festival of tolma: in sports language, they are knocked out” (Tolma is Armenian 2011).

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actively celebrated the national “culinary” victory, primarily framing the discussion in the context of national identity. More details are available in “Media places lavash on a pedestal”: <http://media.am/en/Lavash-on-UNESCO-list-of-intangible-cultural-heritage-media-coverage>.

<sup>53</sup><http://blognews.am/arm/news/242347/erb-hamynknum-en-azgayin-u-masnavor-shahery-marti-2-ic-haykakan-tolman-ksksi-artaahanvel-arterkir.html>.

<sup>54</sup> On April 27, 2011, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliiev delivered a speech at the Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan that addressed certain expectations and directives to scholars, especially in the field of humanities and history. Passing over cultural issues, Aliiev mentioned that “Armenians shamelessly rob our music. They also privatize dishes of our national cuisine. In different ways, they present them as Armenian dishes, notwithstanding that their names are Azerbaijani. If you ask an Armenian what is dolma, he cannot explain. We must defend our national cultural heritage”:

<http://ru.president.az/articles/2055/>.

Why “uduli,” why “tolma,” why do these seemingly mundane things such as food acquire such huge symbolic “burden,” “flatter” ethnicity and nationalism, become tools of inclusion or exclusion, symbols of policy and power, why do people do not forget about their “blood and affiliation”? These questions run like threads through the chapters of this book. In this chapter, we attempt to present everyday nationhood and ethnicity, approaching Armenian cuisine, the perceptions of which comprise the matrix of food nationhood from the position of the anthropology of food and applauding M. Billings’s statement that “*An identity is to be found in the embodied habits of social life.*” (Billig 1995, 8).

National tastes and aromas in the context of everyday life are discussed below with due attention to the broader public context.

Food and national cuisine often perform as tools or pitched spaces directly affecting the processes of construction, manifestation and transformation of the national identity. The topic of the mutual relatedness of food and ethnicity or nationalism has been discussed in recent anthropological and sociological studies (among others, Anderson, 2005; Appadurai, 1988; Abarca, 2004; Searles, 2002; Mintz and Du Bois, 2002; Desoucey, 2010; Wilk, 2002). Responding to an interview question about the role of food in the context of national identity, an active participant in various international programs mentioned that the “*display of ethnic identity is not as important to Western Europeans. It is important to us. Only nations like us can introduce themselves through food,*” thus approving the thesis that “*Everyone has origins and ancestors, but not everyone performs them through*



*food*” (Holtzman, 2006:366). The interviewee then immediately moved on to recount the number of constituents enacted in youth projects’ representations of the country: “*The landscape is seen through various maps and pictures, the national flag, other state symbols. However, because national cuisine is also important, I chose photos of khorovats, tolma, lavash, I thought about adding apricots and pomegranates. I found proper pictures in “Vernissage” with pomegranates and vine grapes depicted as Armenian symbols, naturally over the background of Ararat. In addition, I found various pictures with scenes of Yerevan, Sevan Lake, and churches to explain that Armenia is a country of one thousand and one churches. Of course, I mentioned that we are the first Christian nation. After some hesitation, the picture of the 1915 Genocide memorial complex was also added..*” This short quotation suitably highlights V. Shnirelman’s observation of history as a selective process of construction, in which “*History emerges as a selective process, leading to the disentanglement and disappearance of certain events, whereas others sustain and become symbols of identity*” (Phillips 1989:4).

In recent years, Armenian cuisine as a comprehensive system has frequently been engaged in public discourses as something guaranteeing the continuity of national identity, as a testimony of ancient culture, and as an opportunity for tourism development. State policies related to culture, tourism and the economy also rely on the national cuisine. Many relevant studies have argued that the colonial past is one reasons to activate the national culinary discourse as something that can inspire national mobiliza-

tion, especially in the context of anxiety around the national identity, given that “*the aspirations to revive one’s own cultural authenticity are characteristic of post-colonial societies.*” (Remnyev, 2011:177).

The examination of public discourse around Armenian cuisine has also revealed the contours of more substantial narratives of Armenian identity and history. In addition, one of the tasks targeted in this research involved determining the extent to which the activation of national and ethnicity-related discourses at the official level affects the public’s everyday perceptions. Therefore, remaining engaged with this question, we have adopted a multilayered approach and observed everyday discernments about the nationality of food, its necessity and its role as an ethnic marker for both the public and the media.<sup>55</sup> In recent years, daily discussions of the nationality of Armenia’s food have permeated several environments: cyberspace and media circles, the business sphere, restaurants, the production and promotion of ethnic or ethnically branded foods, and the organization of events dedicated to ethnic cuisine.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> The official political discourse around the national cuisine was discussed in the results of Ruzanna Tsaturyan’s fellowship “Food, politics and conflict: Fights for national cuisines,” which was part of the 2012 Regional Scholarship Program for Social Scientists, Heinrich Böll Foundation South Caucasus: <http://ge.boell.org/en/person/ruzanna-tsaturyan>.

<sup>56</sup> Discussions of national cuisine in political practices are not suggested here because the topic has already been covered in detail in a forthcoming (Russian-language) article by Ruzanna Tsaturyan titled “Politics, conflict and toлма/dolma: enemy at the gates of national cuisine.”

Researchers have already noticed that the “*symbolic capital*” of cultural identity, termed as such by P. Bourdieu, is one of the most important political instruments in the field of the cultural identity of indigenous societies. In this regard, the national cuisine becomes a bio-political tool “*of which our ignorance is explosively dangerous.*” (Abarca, 2004:2).

Future-related anxieties among the people of post-Soviet Armenia, living in a state of de-facto war, radical economic transformations, and social and ideological changes appeared bounded together in the public appeal to find both common roots and allegiance to those roots. The modern identity policy is paradoxical because it requires the investment of the notion of “traditional culture” into the debate about its origins. Even more frequently in these types of communities, the actors themselves apply essentialist approaches to both cultural authenticity and efforts to create a unified and unitary narrative of national culture: “*One dominant narrative is suggested, which often covers the entire public field.*” (Davydov 2006:11).

The majority of researchers believe that the tendency toward such traditionalism is more characteristic of undemocratic societies and elites. It can be observed in societies in transition, especially in post-Soviet states: the public discourse is filled with myths and narratives of traditions, heroes, ancestors, and exclusivity, including the uniqueness of the national cuisine.

This total longing for traditionalism both formats and re-formats the public discourse with “traditional” narratives, other items and phenomena, resulting in an “*invention of tradition*” on

the level of everyday life. This phenomenon has been well known ever since it was discussed in the edited volume of E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, "Inventing Traditions" (1983), in which it is assumed as "*formalization and ritualization, characterized by references to the past, if only by imposing repetition.*" Hobsbawm and Ranger explain that "*we should expect it to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions have been designed, producing new ones to which they were applicable, or when such old traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently flexible and adaptable.*" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 5).

Exploring the processes of the admission/replacement/revival of culinary traditions in transitional societies with a Soviet background requires due consideration of the Soviet past, when policies guided by ideas of women's emancipation and industrial modernization spearheaded the exemption of women from the kitchen and their recruitment into cohorts of builders of a bright socialist future. Under these conditions traditional meals, which are usually time-consuming, were gradually excluded from both the family lifestyle and public advertising. However, the research allows us to identify several levels of sensitivities related to the nationality of food: (1) public discourse, represented in various public discussions, (2) societal initiatives, ranking specifically pan-national, "*one nation, one cuisine*"-type aspirations in first place, and (3) the local level, permeated by community or family narratives and much more diversified and discernible.

## We Are What We Eat: Patriotic Cuisine

Public anxiety around the revival and recreation of national cuisine began to take material form in Armenia in 2007 upon the founding of the first NGO for the “Maintenance and Development of Armenian Culinary Traditions,” which deployed from the outset the principles of culinary nationalism or patriotism.<sup>57</sup> The organization’s primary mission is to collect traditional Armenian recipes and to present and publicize Armenian cuisine. The organization’s leader is Sedrak Mamulyan, who defines and presents the main contents of its activity, simultaneously assuming several positions: chief of the “Ararat Hall” restaurant, anchorman of the TV program “Araratian cuisine,” initiator and organizer of various festivals and events (festivals centered on barbecue and *tolma*, presentations of ritual dishes, and so on), also actively participating in media discussions, press conferences and interviews. Similar to his answers in our expert interview, so many media discussions Mamulyan has explained his consistent motivation for engaging in his NGO activities: “*The*

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<sup>57</sup> A similar organization exists in Azerbaijan: the “Azerbaijani national culinary center,” which was founded in 1991 and is active both inside that country and abroad. Its leader is Tahir Amiraslanov. The anti-Armenian rhetoric of this organization is very prominent; it publishes multilingual materials about the development and definition of Azerbaijani cuisine, its genealogical issues and its relationship to Armenian cuisine. This organization is worthy of notice as a counter agent, inspiring gastronationalist discussions in Armenia. Therefore, in conflict situations, the kitchen has become another battlefield where defensive and offensive weaponry is elaborated in a field as banal as that constructed along the dimensions of national cuisine.

*breakthrough happened in 1985: I was employed in the ‘Geghard’ restaurant and dispatched to Kiev for a training course. The lecturer was showing slides titled, ‘New Assortment of Soviet Dishes.’ First appeared the brandies – ‘Aghdam’ and ‘Moldovian’ – and when he finished, I was surprised: Is this the end? Then, some new dishes were presented. Out of the blue appeared a slide with a familiar dish, titled ‘Georgian national dish – khashi.’ The lecturer said that everybody knows that it is an Armenian dish, but you have not registered it on your list of national food. I was very upset, but then the national revival started and along with some colleagues, we created this organization.”* Both for Mamulyan and for the entire Armenian culinary discourse, the thesis of “*national cuisine as a factor of preservation of national identity*” is axial. How do national cuisines develop? As A. Appadurai, a renowned researcher in this field, has noticed, the answer is that it develops through tantalization of the culinary (Appadurai 1988). Cookbooks, postcards, albums and other published material serve as resources for creation, visualization and transformation of the previously oral culinary narratives.

### **What to Eat and How? The Official Text of National Cuisine**

Discussing the issues of national cuisine, R. Wilk has argued that more nationalist practices were engaged in during the colonial period, especially with respect to food preparation (*Wilk*

2002:68). The latter was valued and popularized as an indicator of national identity as early as the Soviet period: since the late 1960s, strictly adhering to the logic of or shielded by the formula of “*national in form, socialist in essence*,” popular writings were dedicated to the national cuisines of various Soviet nationalities, which, as a rule, in addition to presenting recipes for national dishes, contained introductory sketches about the evolution of the subject matter that naturally followed essentialist approaches. As noted in articles about Soviet cuisine: “*All areas of life in the Soviet age are politicized; totalitarian ideology penetrated all social spheres. Various directives, orders, and instructions regulated human behavior in all spheres of life, even permeating such seemingly mundane subjects as cuisine.*” (Mikhaylova 2008, 1).

Soviet Armenia could not evade the collectivity context of Soviet cultural policy and therefore, the inclusion of Armenian cuisine in various Soviet culinary, tourist, advertising and other literature should be considered quite natural.<sup>58</sup> Descriptions of national cuisines in all these publications have a common narrative pattern, emphasizing their continuity and antiquity, and necessarily including in the text the main phases and episodes of histories of the nations associated with certain cuisines: “*Armenian cuisine is one of the oldest in the world*” (Tityunnik and Novo-zhenov 1981, 116), or “*Armenian cuisine is a poem, each line of*

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<sup>58</sup> Examples of such publications include “Dishes of Armenian Cuisine,” Postcards’ box series of “Dishes of National Cuisine,” 1973; Tityunnik and Novo-zhenov 1981, Encyclopaedia for Travellers 1990, Pokhlebkin 1978, Piruzyan 1960.

*which has a unique taste and reminds one of innumerable feasts of monks and herdsmen, princes and citizens, of ancient recipes of the East and the Greeks ...” (Encyclopaedia for Travellers 1990, 310).*

To be more precise, the volume “Armenian Cuisine” appeared in Armenia in 1960 to refine the context of gastronationalist policy (Piruzyan 1960). Such cookbooks have long attracted the attention of anthropologists,<sup>59</sup> as noted by Kapkan: “*Recipe books not only reflect the culinary situation of each epoch but shape these epochs, refine the system of standards and vectors of development of the gastronomic culture, and consequently become a significant factor of definitions or perceptions about what food must be.*” (Kapkan 2009).

The volume “Armenian Cuisine” was exceptionally popular in Soviet Armenia. It suffices to notice that in the four editions of this 272-page book, 305,000 copies were printed, 60,000 of which were in Armenian and the rest of which were in Russian (Toomre 1997). In the context of Soviet food policy, the volume successfully visualized and restored Armenian cuisine, suggesting its general features, history, basic dishes and foodstuffs.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> First, we must mention the classical work of Arjun Appadurai that describes the principles of the formation of India’s national cuisine in the post-colonial period: *How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India*, Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Jan., 1988), pp. 3-24

<sup>60</sup> The book’s author is Aram Piruzyan, who was the prime minister of Soviet Armenia from 1937-1943. Discussing the history of “Armenian Cuisine” in his memoirs, Piruzyan writes, “*Once I was in a meeting with A. Mikoyan. He suggested that I create the book ‘Armenian Cuisine.’ I replied that it would be*



The cookbook was a part of the libraries of many Armenian families; it surely included both the visual and textual documentation of family cuisine narratives and the creation of an official, approved image of pan-Armenian cuisine beyond the borders of the family.

My theoretical calculations related to the wide availability and popularity of the cookbook are reinforced by family experience: when I decided to prepare “basturma,” a salted pressed beef, its successfully tested family recipe was obtained from one of our relatives, who had borrowed it from another person, a repatriate to Soviet Armenia who was considered the best basturma expert.<sup>61</sup> We asked for that famous recipe. My relative brought the handwritten recipe with accurate instructions of measures and how to prepare the dish. Then, as an anthropologist of food, I decided to investigate the origins of the recipe. My relative was quite honest and brief in referring to “Armenian Cuisine.” Thus, the tested and successful family recipe with at least a decade-long history was replaced by an official culinary text as the more convincing and preferred variant.

For several decades, “Armenian Cuisine” was the basic text and affected the discourse of the Armenian national cuisine.

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*difficult and that I was not the best candidate to write a book.”* At Mikoyan’s insistence, Aram Piruzyan finally undertook the job of representing Armenian cuisine. He then describes how a team of specialists was organized “to be dispatched to villages and towns of Armenia, to record the old recipes of the Armenian cuisine.” Simultaneously, Matenadaran’s archive was screened and numerous interesting pieces were found. (Piruzyan 1995).

<sup>61</sup>The cultural and lifestyle-related innovations introduced by repatriates into Soviet Armenia are discussed in Stepanyan 2010.

Even in the post-Soviet years, it was not replaced by anything more influential simply because its contents have happily coincided with the principal axis of the national narratives. The book uses cuisine and recipes to demonstrate such important features of national history as the antiquity of Armenians, the long history of their agricultural traditions, the assumption of the sedentary nature of the Armenian people, and the permanence and continuity of their history. Planned under Soviet conditions as an official text for elucidating Armenian cuisine, the book necessarily reflects sensitive historical incidents. In 1985, the volume was amended with a new chapter “From the Heritage of Armenian Cuisine,” which states, “*Many Armenian dishes were sentenced to oblivion in the course of the tragic events of the history of the Armenian people, whose material and spiritual culture has developed under conditions of unremitting distress and calamities. In periods of peace the people have again revived their material culture and created anew.*” (Piruzyan 1985, 175). The Soviet power, pretending to be committed to the revival of material culture that had been interrupted by the genocide, was actually attempting to interpret both history and its own policy through cuisine, which inevitably affected everyday practices in its own right.

### **“To eat and to be Armenian”: Local Narratives**

An 80-year-old grandmother in Gandzaqar responded quite positively to my question about any significance cuisine or food

might have to being Armenian: “*Yes, why not? Let them eat and be Armenian.*” Food and cuisine, especially the national cuisine, are perceived as a field of inclusive and exclusive symbols that draw borders between “Us” and “Them.” In this case, the collectivity of “Us” involves several levels of perception: pan-Armenian (including the Diaspora), nationwide and local, including its narrower contexts of place-relevant identity. If compared to the definite textual forms of narratives that have created the pan-Armenian “Us,” the local culinary narratives are more muted and subordinated to narratives that are more general. Sidney Mintz has stated that “*National cuisines are a ‘common, shared subject of dialogue,’ people all believe and care that they believe, that they know what [their cuisine] consists of, how it is made, and how it should taste.*” (Mintz 1996, 96). As reflected in the modified and reproduced narratives, this constructed knowledge has never ceased being both an object and a subject of creation. In the course of this continuous creative process, it may be possible to identify the participants that circulate the knowledge. Everyday sounds in kitchens are usually made by women. Under these conditions, the answers to questions about issues related to the national cuisine were readdressed to the elderly women. In many interviews, concerns and arguments were recorded, such as in the following explanation: “*If there is an elder in the household, a grandmother, the national dishes are being prepared and thus transmitted to those younger.*” In this regard, studies of the anthropology of food emphasize the role of memory both when certain truths are transmitted through com-

munication and when they refer to the past and perpetuate the present. Our interviews attribute to those same grandmothers the role of mediators in this communication of tradition and memory (Holtzman, 2006: 370).

In one such interview, in response to questions about national cuisine, our interlocutor from Gandzaqar stated, *“Once, my elder daughter called me from Yerevan and asked me to name some national dishes of the Tavoush region for her friend’s thesis about our region. However, she warned me not to name tolma, all Armenian regions have that, say something else. I said, let me call grandmother. We decided that the ‘nazuk’ we bake may be something particular and then, based on my opinion, we wrote ‘khashil.’ Yeah, we have not preserved many things, do not cook, do not use.”* Even this small fragment enables some observation of the variety of codes and symbols that bound together history, culture, memory and transformation.

Except in the media, the collective “Us” of discussions about the national cuisine penetrates into the everyday life via the educational system. One of best examples is the story of a village teacher from the Tavoush region describing how she explained the textbook chapter on lavash to her pupils, given that its baking is not present in the local culture: *“Our people here traditionally do not have lavash and naturally, its baking tradition is unknown. I have told that it’s truly Armenian bread, that it is not present in other nations, that it is resistant to spoilage, which was especially important in wartime, when they were besieged for whole year, and it has saved from hunger. It has helped in the*

*survival of our people...*” The local “Us” in this example uses the ideas of the collective “Us,” creating both the similarity and the variance that distinguish the local and collective “Us” from “Them.” The research materials also revealed differences in the culinary narratives of indigenous and resettled communities. In Gandzaqar and Koti, which are Eastern Armenian villages, the people reacted to local and national cuisines quite predictably, whereas in Nerqin Bazmaberd, the same questions caused a much more emotional reaction. As genocide survivors, the people of Nerqin Bazmaberd were sensitive to the role of “Ergir” cuisine in their Sasounian identity. We were told either mythical or real stories about how the few first resettled families revived native (to them) cultivation of radishes by planting seeds saved from “Ergir” or how they continued to seed and harvest the “girik” or “glgel” (a type of barley also commonly planted in Sasoun). Family albums also demonstrated the significance of the taste and aroma of “Ergir” in the memories and identity formulae of the Sasounians, for example, when exhibiting among the old, worn photos a picture of Mamo Yeghso, resettled from Sasoun to Nerqin Bazmaberd, with a probably dried herb over her head that in her opinion, was “khavrtzil” from “Ergir.” They also remembered “*Our dishes, our traditions*” served or celebrated on “*Our days*” – certain occasions that render local perceptions of food symbolism more sensible.<sup>62</sup> The “Ergir” squash with liquid yo-

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<sup>62</sup>According to the fieldwork materials, until recently certain holidays on the folk-state calendar were celebrated in Nerqin Bazmaberd with a delay of 13 days pursuant to the “old calendar.” In particular, elderly people, speaking

gurt, porridge and butter, the radish, the porridge, the “dolt” layer cake and many other dishes (both festive and ordinary) are clearly marked in the identity formulae of the people of Nerqin Bazmaberd. Indeed, this phenomenon is worthy of more thorough research, but as a preliminary impression, we must note that memories related either to food or (in a broader context) to cultural capital usually become more visible and necessary in conditions of higher-than-average concerns about self-representation. In this particular case, Western Armenians and their descendants alienated from their native natural and cultural environment (“Ergir”) either consciously or subconsciously feel or rationalize certain needs to revive their past and to demonstrate “Ego” with an aim to adopt their new environment, on the one hand, and to maintain a sense of continuity of history and memory in everyday life, performing and re-living the time when they were still “complete” and “at home,” on the other hand. As discussed by R. Barthes, food participates in this performance, becoming a system of communication and a marker linked to family, community and the social order (Barthes 2003, 200). Accordingly, the reproduction of symbolic food codes reproduces the complete, desired family relations, community interactions and individual positions

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about Christmas, for example, report “*on the 18th day of our month, we were cooking Harisa (porridge with poultry).*” The date and month were always corrected and in accordance with the old calendar, the month was often different than in the new calendar. One of our respondents explained how difficult it was for the elderly people to adopt the new calendar: “*For example, if the mates of my parents now ask us about the date, let’s say at the day 1 of a month, then replied as follows: ‘Yeah, so it is the first day of our month.’*”

of self in general, thus clearly reflecting the feeling of “past in present, present in past” that is the subject of a detailed discussion by the authors of the volume “Talking with Each Other” (Neizi and Kharatyan-Araqelyan 2010:36). That feeling (which was experienced by an American anthropologist, albeit one concerned with a much broader national scope of food-related perceptions and politics) may be cited here: “national feasting might manifest national well-being, whereas its scarcity or absence indicates the failure of national perspectives, causing frustration.” (Rosenberger 2007: 340).

In disposing of “Us” and “Them,” food actively figures in memories of interethnic relations. Such memories of everyday Armenian-Azerbaijani contacts pre-conflict were recalled in stories about shared food, common feasting, and the availability or abundance of foodstuffs. This is especially true for Koti and Gandzaqar, where the middle-aged inhabitants still remember free, unrestricted market trips to Ghazakh, their own or their parents’ “dosts” (Azerbaijani partners), talk with real nostalgia about the profusion of mutual support during those days, when they were purchasing large amounts of “*tomato, cucumber, sugar candies, fruits, outfit,*” or how the Ghazakhi Turk (Azerbaijani) asked the bus driver from Koti to bring some cheese because “*they cannot make it well*” and some pork because “*that man likes to eat it.*” Although the 80-year-old grandmother in Gandzaqar was decisive – “*if the Turk has stabbed the belly of our pregnant woman, they are my enemies*” – she continues to talk about the unique attention and care she experienced in the

edizode with the Azerbaijani “dost” of her son when the head of their family was hospitalized: *“They came to visit my husband after hearing about the illness of their ‘dost’s’ father. That is their attitude; I have seen it myself, darling. They opened their bags, pulled out everything ... fruits, bakery, brandy and vodka, what one may need in the hospital, and above all a present. They brought this stuff, ate and drank together, then gave it to the guardsmen, it was so lavish, later the guardsmen were waiting for them to come again. ... So, that was their attitude, and then they left.”* Afterwards, she thoughtfully added, *“This chaos began, and we did not see them any more, nor did they see us.”* There were many other stories about how the Armenians visited, stayed overnight and ate in the houses of Azerbaijanis. Some of those stories emphasized security and safety: *“They have visited our weddings, we were hosted in houses of our ‘dosts,’ have called them occasionally to participate in ritual sacrifice, and so on.”* However, these respondents also noticed certain embarrassments and differences: *“Later I realized that they threw away the spoon that I used,”* or *“after getting into their kitchen I couldn’t eat,”* and so on. Usually these conversations about everyday food and life arrived at a preset ending with formulae such as the following: *“In those times our relations were fine ... but how can one respect the Turk now?”*

Further recalling the losses and changes in traditional Armenian cuisine in the context of the national “Us,” the people drew lines between “Then” and “Now” and as a rule, depicted the culinary past as ideal and complete: *“Then, there were our old famil-*



*iar dishes, who cooks them now?” or “then tolma, khorovats (barbecue) were usual for us, now salads are added, bakery, whereas in our time there was only gata (cake).”*

The questions about national food also highlighted the extent to which the national cuisine may be considered a constituent of the preservation of Armenianness. One woman in Koti responded to the direct question of “*Can you please, explain what is Armenianness for you?*” with the following answer: “*Our dishes, our taste and aroma, our water, our everything, language, culture, old traditions, our talks, our home relations.*” This formulation exactly matches the scope of our inquiry throughout the duration of our research. Our endless questioning about the national, about Armenianness rarely resulted in answers that contained such anxious expressions of food as something primary. As a rule, people attempt to step higher and remain at the level of mega-narrative discussions, which are considered more prestigious, serious and important.

### **National Cuisine and the TV Looking In**

Beyond the official political discourse, the national cuisine is found in the niche of the literally everyday when broadcast through various culinary programs, the impact of which on the culinary discourse, and on home kitchens is rather remarkable. As noted by Meredith Abarca, broadcasts dedicated to authentic national cuisine transform the anchorperson into “an expert, while I remain a passive viewer.” (Abarca 2004 :4). One of

the best-known programs on Armenian TV is “Araratian Cuisine” on the “Erkir Media” channel<sup>63</sup>; the program was created by S. Mamulyan. This program broadcasts and conforms to canonical forms of the most preferable public views of Armenian cuisine. The main approaches to and narratives about various national phenomena and symbols are also regularly reproduced during discussions in the kitchen studio. The title of the program also recalls the theme of Ararat, although the author has expressed his predilection for another variant: *“To be honest, at first I was inclined towards ‘Aratta’ (an ancient country in the Armenian Highland), but ‘Araratian’ was later selected as associated with Mount Ararat and the Araratian kingdom”* (a denomination of the ancient “Urartu”). The program recalls patriotism, respect for traditions and piety as its main values: *“Arartian cuisine is broadcast from Ararat Hall. Perhaps that is too much Ararat, but the more we have Ararat, the more Armenian we become”* (citation of the program); or *“We must be always proud of being Armenian, always develop our culture and lifestyle by adding to and developing the heritage of our ancestors”* (ibid.).

The content analysis of the series of broadcast programs highlighted a number of questions that seem to be central to the context of this research. This niche of the invention of culinary traditions on the air emphasizes not only recipes that are forgotten (but urgently waiting for revival) but also suggestions about how

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<sup>63</sup>“Erkir Media” is popularly known as a channel that represents or is associated with the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Its programs feature dedication to patriotic, national and cultural issues.

to improve. The creator of the program is convinced that Armenian dishes can be created by Armenian cooks both using provisions from the Armenian Highland and giving them Armenian names: *“Today we are going to cook pilaf with rice – ‘Ararat. Soon, I will describe the recipe, and some people may doubt its ethnic affiliation, but I will speak about that as well. Rice was grown in our territory B.C. A huge literature is available, so do not doubt that it is Armenian food.’<sup>64</sup>”* Or, as stated in another program: *“Dear compatriots, if you encounter blghur (cooked, dried and then grinded wheat) in any dish, you may insist that it is typically Armenian. All ground cereals were first processed by Armenians.”* (citations to the programs).

The anchor regularly invites other chiefs and encourages their pan-Armenian activity, also providing this instruction for the future: *“I address these words to chiefs: if you have exclusive dishes, give them Armenian names without hesitation and be resolute in doing so. If you are Armenian and you have invented a dish, be sure that it is Armenian, apply for our assistance and we will register it among the national dishes.”* In addition, the wordlist of new names for dishes mostly consists of geographical names from Western Armenia and serves to prove symbolic restitution of the lost heritage (e.g., “Mush,” also known as “Putuk”)<sup>65</sup>. The

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<sup>64</sup>The pilaf “Ararat” was presented in “Armenian Cuisine” and was considered a prestigious dish at holiday feasts during the Soviet years; however, it was forgotten in the post-Soviet period.

<sup>65</sup>This trend is becoming more visible in the case of other restaurants suggesting Armenian dishes and attempting to attract more customers by inclu-

broadcast recipes are increasingly accepted as constituents of Armenian cuisine that are involved in the creation of related traditions, for which, as many researchers know, it has become difficult to date the origins.

### **Selling ethnicity/nationalism in food markets**

Armenia's food and drink industry provides another example of packed and marketed ethnicity. After the fall of the USSR and with the appearance of free-market conditions, the production of a variety of commodities became possible and over the next several years, locally produced foodstuff and drinks began to occupy a special place in the Armenian market. Although the commodification of ethnicity and the "pack-and-sell" process of its historical and cultural legacy requires much broader study, here, we examine several of the most visible variants of traded ethnicity/nationhood.

Symbolic codes utilized in marketing strategies initially target consumers. In other words, *"Identity 'sells' well because the consumption of typical and authentic products gives a meaning to people who therefore are more than mere consumers"* (Muchnik 2005).

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ding Armenian geographical names in their menus, e.g., Mush, Ani, Cilicia, Bagaran, etc.

Here, we discuss the specific names of wines and cognacs (brandy) that show ethnicity, or Armenianness,<sup>66</sup> because these products are perceived as Armenian drinks both in public and in the market. The symbols of ethnic history on the labels of brandies, wines or confections accompany the human everyday at holidays, feasts, rituals and everyday occasions. Indeed, labels with such names also rank their products by price and prestige. The most expensive brandies/wines are usually named in honor of the most victorious and glorious figures and events celebrated in the historical narrative: Tigran the Great, Artavazd, Tiridates, Arshak II, Pap, Bagratids, Artsrunids. Accordingly, they exemplify the thesis that “*History in Armenia is not perceived as history ...*” (Minasyan 2009).

The proportion of place names is obviously the highest on the labels. The producers often prefer to name certain products after the geographical region of the origin of the raw materials/place of manufacturing, which, over time, becomes a brand and a marker of high quality. The best example is the range of wines bottled by different firms under the name “Areni” (denominating

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<sup>66</sup>The expression of Armenianness through ancientness is also widespread in the marketing of these commodities, mostly in TV clips. For example, a clip for “Ararat” beer is a mini-historical movie about the visit of Greek historian and general Xenophon to Armenia, where he discovered the beer: “Grief of defeat ... our torturous way laid through a wonderful country called Armenia, the people there were brewing an amazing drink from barley, about which we haven’t heard before” (Araratbeercommercial <http://www.youtube.Com/watch?v=szze7kEgARk:>).

More details about the relationship of the ideal homeland and the market in Armenianness are discussed in: Melqumyan 2014.

both a type of vine and a village that is the traditional center of Armenian viniculture: the vineyards that grow this particular type of grape are both very limited and obviously insufficient for the “produced” amount). Simultaneously, the number of geographical denominations with use of place names that have a symbolic meaning in the narrative of national history are increasing. The roots of this phenomenon are deep in the Soviet period, when the names of selected Armenian cognacs were dedicated to certain localities, i.e., capitals or important cities of historical Armenia. In relation to more recent production, brandies are named after various references to the symbolic landscape of national identity. Geographical examples include Ararat, Masis, Arax, Sevan, and Sipan; examples related to historical architectural monuments include Zvartnots, Garni, Gladzor, Noravanq; and examples related to famous Armenian cities include Kars, Vagharshapat, Shoushi, Dvin, Ani, Armavir, and Gyumri. The incessant reproduction of selected events in the narrative of national history through such channels as textbooks, the media, and official policies eventually creates a corresponding public demand/order, in the face of which the nomenclature of wine and cognacs dedicated to various historical events gradually expands. Essentially, it replicates the principles of the official periodization of Armenia’s long history in terms of referring to prehistoric polities in the Armenian Highland, genealogical theories of Armenian ethnic origins and development, and crucial events in Armenian history. In this range, the nomenclature of place and heroes or deities of Urartu is deemed especially fitting for

“Urartu,” “Arin-berd,” “Menua” and “Arame” cognacs and “Erebuni” and “Tushpa” wines. One of the ancient Armenian polities – “Nairi,” discovered and described in the historiography of Soviet Armenia – achieved much greater popularity than other such polities because of the cognac bearing its name. The same trend succeeded in later-produced brandies, such as “Hayasa” and “Hayq.” Mythic events of prehistorical times that recall the axial narratives of ethnic history are also used as proof of the aging nature of brandies: “Hayk the Progenitor,” “Noah’s Myth,” “Progenitor’s Blessing,” “Armenica,” “Armenia,” “Armenian Cognac,” and “Fatherland” (the names are translated from Armenian to reproduce the semantics). These bottled products, obviously aimed at “selling” nostalgia and patriotism, further condense the colors of banal nationalism: in everyday activities and communications, the relentless approval and reproduction of the national and of national identity become important, occasionally even predominant (Billig 1995).

Christianity as a part of Armenian identity is also reflected in names of wines and brandies. Paradoxically, these names parallel those of products named after pre-Christian myths and heroes, which is also a representative trend in the narrative of Armenia’s cultural legacy. Thus, wines dedicated to King Trdat (Tiridates), who adopted Christianity in Armenia, and St. Gayane, one of first Armenian martyrs, may appear on the same shelf with wines and cognacs dedicated to the heathen deities Anahit, Noah, and Ara. The Armenian wine and brandy industry has even mirrored

Armenia's alphabetical identity by releasing products with Mashtots (the inventor of alphabet) and the Armenian alphabet.

In summary, it appears that even the production of national/local alcohol is not only an economic process but also a simultaneous option for the creation and repair of social and ethnic ties, mediated by the manufacturer to reproduce (in this case) some of the most important narratives of national identity.

### **Culinary Events and Recreation of the National Cuisine**

Another important feature of modern Armenian culinary discourse is the abundance of various events aiming to restore, maintain and publicize national culinary traditions. These events are initiated either by governmental policy or NGOs.

The state policy in this field is directed towards popularizing cuisine as an important element of national culture and as a contextual part of Armenians' self-preservation. Since 2007, the NGO "Maintenance and Development of Armenian Culinary Traditions" has organized festivals and presentations of "*khorovats*" (barbecue), *tolma*, and Armenian ritual dishes. Perhaps increasing interest in ethnic cuisine and tourism in a globalizing world will also fuel growth in the number of such events in Armenia. That said, these events are quite remarkable in their national and ethnic emphases and active agitation of pan-Armenian cuisine, which tend to move from the everyday context into the political field, thus affecting both the content and the agenda of state tourism policy. The places of many of these events are se-



lected with due consideration of their symbolic value, which is closely bound to historical and ethnic narratives. Thus, the festival of “*khorovats*” is traditionally held in the yard of St. Mary Godmother church in Akhtala, the festival of *tolma* is held in the territory of the memorial complex for the Battle of Sardarapat and the Museum of Ethnography and the National Liberation Struggle, and the exhibition of festival and ritual dishes is organized in the area of the Erebuni Historical-Archaeological Museum-Reserve.

The heroic nature of the distant past of the place selected for the *tolma* festival is explained as less important to that choice than, for example, the fact that “*This place has semantics of self-defense, and our cuisine is the same. This is a field in which we must develop our instinct for self-defense. Our cuisine is of one the most famous and ancient cuisines in the world, and has given dishes to all of its surrounding countries, which have used them. The cuisine of this region is Armenian. We have nothing to prove, we only have a problem in recognizing ourselves,*” as stated by an organizer of the festival in Sardarapat, S. Mamulyan (Mkrtchyan, 2011). Arguing about the name of the festival, the same person presents “*Tolma*” as born of the vine, and the Ararat Valley is the home of viticulture: therefore, they decided to organize the event in Sardarapat.

In addition, for many years, the discourse of cuisine has been enriched with an axial element, thus providing an etymological explanation of the Armenian roots of “*tolma*.” The controversy about Armenian “*tolma*” and Turkic “*dolma*” has continued for

many years and through various media. The Armenian side refers to etymology suggested by academician S. Yeremyan in the book “Armenian Cuisine”: “*The wild vine found in Armenia has the ethno-botanical name “toli” (related to the Urartian “uduli” – vine)*”(Yeremyan, 1960:21). The author then turns to food and tentatively adds the following: “*It is probable that earlier, when the cabbage was unknown in Armenia, the meat was rolled into vine leaves, which the Armenians were calling “toli.”*”(Ibid:27). By naming the festival “Uduli,” the organizers have targeted several issues: historical and cultural continuity (Urartu – Armenia), agricultural traditions, the resulting sedentarism (considered proof of indigenusness). These issues are referenced for academic opinions to convince people of their righteousness. The events are accompanied by traditional songs, traditional dance groups are invited, souvenirs with national designs and the exterior of the festival place and stalls are circulated. As a rule, these events attempt to host famous actors, media representatives, who make speeches and give interviews together with the organizers, participating in discussions and definitions about the importance of popularizing national cuisine and its dishes in the context of preserving national identity: “*Tolma has no other descent, all tolmas are Armenian*” (S. Mamulyan), or “*We, the Armenians begin building house from hearth, and therefore the barbecue is an Armenian phenomenon.*”<sup>67</sup> The media that report these events create more canonical narratives along lines such as the histori-

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<sup>67</sup><http://hyeforum.com/index.php?showtopic=23423>

ty of dishes and the symbolic character of the place. Usually, they continue by turning their eyes and cameras to national songs and dances and either citing the speeches or interviewing the patriotically spirited stars in situ: “*The aim of the festival is to show foreigners that Armenians have preserved this dish for centuries*” (actor Azat Gasparyan), or “*As a jury member, I have only one judgment, and that is the judgment of traditional tolma*” (a repatriate singer Arsen Grigoryan).

The transformation of these events from culinary parties proper to public events to “flatter” nationality is accompanied by creation of the new and continuous reproduction of old narratives, which approve the theses of the unremitting construction of history.

Thus, it has occurred that the majority of Armenia’s native-cuisine-related events actually involve the participation of the NGO for the “Maintenance and Development of Armenian Culinary Traditions.”<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the primary emphases in Armenian culinary discussions are constantly repeated until it is impossible to distinguish among their contents: the Armenian flag and coat of arms, national songs, and certain symbolic pictures are used every year and essentially ritualize these events.

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<sup>68</sup> Different international organizations regularly held events that more or less partake of the local cuisine, which occasionally is more prominently featured than usual. For example, “Festival of Village Life and Traditions” (September 2014) organized by “Green Lane”; the competition for the title of “Women Heroes of Agricultural Products” (March 2015) organized by the Ministry of Agriculture of Armenia and the Mission of EU in Armenia; along with many other events target or encourage women and economic activity that are not directly linked to the discourse of national food.

Voluntary, abstract, and individual depictions and commentaries of the nation and national cuisine, as shaped through the media, various initiatives and events, and resources of mass culture are gradually permeating everyday practices and binding together the images of the desired homeland.

In various everyday mundane contexts – shopping, tourism, lessons in school, TV watching, participation in public events and daily cooking – the people make the “national world” both visible and sensible to themselves, simultaneously locating their unique place in the world of nations.

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