

THREE ARMENIAN SONGS AND THE ATTITUDE OF ADANA-MARA ARMENIANS TOWARDS THE TURKS (1891-1909)

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Before presenting our main topic, I find it useful to make an Outline of the subject of Armenians. As it is known, no disagreements were traced between Armenians and Turks until the second half of the nineteenth century. Besides, Armenians were the leading ethnic group among the non-Muslims which both got along and adjusted themselves to the Turkish nation exceptionally well. For this reason the Sublime Porte considered Armenians to be the most faithful group and gave them a lot of privileges. To put this subject across much better, I am of the opinion that it will be quite helpful if I quote – by simplifying – some sentences from the unpublished handwritings of the last Ottoman historian Abdurrahman IIIeref. In his writings, he states “... As Armenians were not aggressive and had nothing to do with arms they dealt with their own business, art and trade. Paying their taxes in time and carrying, out their responsibilities towards the state without fail, they never caused any problems. To be able to earn their living and deal with trade, they left the mountainous regions and migrated to almost every part of Anatolia and to some parts of Rumelia. Since they were good-natured and had a moderate lifestyle, they got accustomed to the Turkish way of life and characteristics easily.

They were so closely related that they became united with the Turkish people in the same country in benefit and in share. For this reason, the state believed and trusted in the Armenians. Owing to this confidence, the state not only appointed Armenians to the directorship of the state powder mills, which was regarded as the most important and distinguished job, but entrusted state finance,

banking and mint to them. Customs officials, market guards and mansion servants were also chosen among Armenians...”¹

Armenian author C. Oskanyan, in the book he wrote in 1857 corroborated what the Ottoman historian Abdurrahman IIIeref wrote about Armenians: “...Armenians had an important role in everyday life in Turkey. Turks left all the branches of industries to Armenians. In addition, Armenians and Turks shared the same emotions, benefits and traditions. They, therefore, adjusted themselves to the Turkish Society very well, gained then, confidence and became the most influential and the most privileged ethnic group. Almost every Turk – from villagers to generals – used to borrow money from Armenians. Turkish people could never do without Armenians ...”²

Having lived in peace for 700 or 800 years and having been united in the same country in benefit and in share, how did these two nations become enemies to each other? There is no doubt that it was neither Turks nor Armenians who caused this enmity. So there must be some other nations that should be blamed. If we closely investigate the source of this antagonism, first we come across England, then Christian missionaries. To take a close look at the documents in the Ottoman, American and European archives is enough to realize what we have been claiming is true.

Here is an example: the French ambassador to Istanbul, in a letter he wrote on 20 February 1894 said: “...in 1878, neither the Armenian nationalism nor the idea of independence had emerged. It was in 1885 that people started to mention the Armenian movements in Europe. The Armenians in Europe and in the United States of America united together for a common movement. National committees and newspapers were seen. ... The Armenians were well received in London. Gladstone gathered the Armenians, formed a group, disciplined them and pledged his support. Thus, the Armenian propaganda committee was settled in London. ... In a few years’ time, clandestine societies were organized and the ideas of national movement and independence began to spread among Armenians...”³

When Dr. George H. Hepworth of New York Herald, who came to Turkey in 1897, asked the causes of the events to an Armenian, he received the following reply: "Oh, we were leading a very happy life in the past. We were made to pay higher taxes, but we used to have a lot of profit through business. We were happy a lot, and also were wealthy. But for the Berlin Treaty and Britain's and Europe's interference with these affairs and with us, we would have had a nice future, but today I think that we are a condemned society".⁴

As it is seen, in the second half of the nineteenth century, due to the conditions which the Ottoman Empire and the world were in, an Armenian question was created by the Europeans as being a new phase of the Eastern question, later on they created social and political unrest among the Armenians living in the Eastern-Anatolia Region and in Adana-Maras area, which meant a rebellion against the Ottoman State and an adventure for the Armenians. Why were all these things done? All these were being practiced for so-called independent or autonomous Armenia. Was it possible to reach this goal? Were the objective conditions for an Armenia or Armenian Autonomous region available? In 1894, the French ambassador's reply to such questions was as follows:⁵ "... What sort of solutions can be claimed or suggested for the Armenian problems? An independent Armenia? We must not think of this, for Armenia does not constitute a country which is bordered naturally like Greece and Bulgaria of that is determined by a region inhabited by Armenians.

Armenians have scattered all over Turkey. They have lived together with Muslims throughout the area named Armenia. Armenia has already been broken to pieces by Turkey, Iran and, Russia. Although it is not very likely, when Europe proposes establishing an Armenian state at the end of a war, it will be almost impossible to determine the borders of the new state.

If they want to establish a privileged Armenian province making use of a half-autonomy, the same difficulty will appear again, for where Armenia begins and ends are unknown."

In fact, The French Yellow Book (Affaires Armeniennes, Project de Reforme dans l' Empire Ottoman) published in Paris, containing the information from 1893 to 1897, stated that geographical and demographic conditions did not allow establishing an Armenian state or an autonomous Armenian province in the Eastern-Anatolia or in Adana-Maras area.

To be more concrete, we find it useful to state the population statistics, only in Adana and Aleppo provinces, given in the French Yellow Book:

Province of Adana

Armenians	94.450
Muslims	158.000
Persians-Afghans	4.400
Arabs-Gypsies. etc.	72.050
Orthodox Greeks	46.200
Latins and Maronites	4.539
Syrian Orthodoxies	20.900
Total population	403.539

Province of Aleppo

Armenians	37.999
Muslims	797.449
Jews	20.000
Orthodox Greeks	23.725
Greeks (United)	24.815
Syrian (United)	20.913
Syrian Jacobites	26.812
Chaldeans (Non-united)	15.300
Maronites,	2.989
Latins	1.858
Protestants	11.033
Total population	995.758

So, this means that, according to the French sources there was an Armenian population of 97.450 in the Adana province and 37.999 in the province of Aleppo. The majority of them were in the Marash district. Thus, the Armenian population in the Adana district was 22.5% of the general population, and this was almost 4% in Aleppo. However, if we consider that the majority of the Armenian population was in the Marash district, we can assume that this 4% ratio may rise to 20 or 25% in this area. In any case, it is a reality that the Armenian population is in minority in the general or in the Muslim population. It is clear that this ratio is not enough for the Armenians to have an autonomous region or independent state.

So, the Armenians did not have two basic and concrete elements to form a state; that is, sufficient population and distinctive geographical and historical borders.

In spite of all these realities what did the Armenians do? The followings are, in short, what they did:

1. They had the support of Europe and of the public opinion in the West. The West has always given them this support and they are continuing to do so.

2. The Europeans joined and took part in all kinds of activities (political, administrative, commercial and cultural) to spoil Turkish-Armenian friendship.

3. The Europeans started all kinds of propaganda organizational activities against Turkey at home and abroad to form a state of Armenia in the Eastern Anatolia through cessation from the Ottoman Empire. Thus, they started to form a mutual anxiety, hesitation, unrest, discontent and no-confidence between the Turkish and Armenian societies.

4. Beginning from 1891, with the pioneering of Hinchak and Dashnak Committees, the rebellion attacks, sabotage and assassination acts which occurred in the Eastern-Anatolia, created the Turkish-Armenian hostility. Thus, an era of hostility, revenge and hatred between the two societies began. We can relate, here, to the

event which took place in Zeytun (Сцлеуманлы), town of Maraş Province, as an example according to the letter of (9 April 1891) French consul, Mr. T. Gilbert in Aleppo: “The Zeytun affair, as a summary, the movement which is provoked by a small group of people wanted by the official authorities, is encouraged and supported by the religious authorities of the region. A priest and a beautiful-voiced young woman sang religious and patriotic hymns in private meetings by touring in the locality. After a very short period of the events which took place in Istanbul and in other places, the troubles in Zeytun broke out. The rebels were promised to take Armenian assistance from Erzurum and Harput and war weapons from Adana very soon. A mass of population did not believe these deceiving promises. So, this resistance was confined to the monastery and a district of the town”.⁶

What happened in the end? The Armenians had nowhere to move in the Eastern Anatolia, because the Muslim population, tribes and Hamidiye regiments gave no chance to the Armenians. As a result of this, the Armenian committees looked for a better place in Anatolia. They found the Adana-Maraş area for this settlement. This region was very close to the sea, fertile and a place where the old Armenian Sis Kingdom had reigned. Thus, they would be able to enforce a strategic, economic, historical, political and moral superiority. So, the Armenians failing to found the Greater Armenia dreamed of founding the Smaller Armenia in Chukurova (Adana-Maraş) Region.

Paul Terzian, bishop of the Adana district, was the head of this imaginary Armenia. Terzian, sending a secret letter to French Minister of External Affairs, informs him that an Armenian state would be founded in Cilicia under the French domination.⁷ Thus, they started some new activities of propaganda, provocation and incitement against the Sublime Porte and the Muslim population in Chukurova and Maraş regions.

These sorts of behavior of Armenian *comitadjids* and men of religion caused to disturb the relationships of Turks and Armenians living around Adana and Marash. Whereas, according to the agreement made at the end of the Zeytun rebellion, which had started on 24 October 1895 and ended on 28 January 1896, the surroundings were looking as if to have been quiet.⁸ Even after this rebellion, in order to help the Armenian villages, a lot of American missionaries had come to Zeytun and to its surroundings. As for Turkish villages, they had remained in a destroyed state. In spite of this, Armenian comitadjis, taking courage from the physical and moral support of European countries and Christian missionaries, went on expanding their feelings of hatred and enmity against Turks and made preparations for the rebellion. So, the three songs we are going to discuss form the most concrete example of this. These three songs have been sent to Paris being translated into French by the French consul in Aleppo. Before giving comments on the songs, it will be useful to see what they say.

I Aleppo, 8 January 1892

Let's defend ourselves
against Turks sucking Our blood.
Let's defend hard
and let's save ourselves.

Europeans, protector of Bulgarians,
are merely spectators of our misery.
With the love of motherland
let Armenian mothers feed their children
and again with the feelings of love
for English Gladstone.

O, freedom which established itself in America!
Do not forget Mount Ararat; with this mount

do not forget the one who is from Haikos race
and also help him.⁹

II Aleppo, 22 January 1892

O, young Christians!
Do not sleep
take your weapons and
run for the help of your sisters
defend their soiled honesty.

O, you miserable Armenians!
Haven't you chosen the commanders yet?
Who will lead your children to victory?
If you haven't, blush with shame, blush with shame.¹⁰

III Maram, 17 January 1898

The end of my father became very shameful for us
Died in his bed without fighting with Turks.
As for me, I'm not worthy of the name Zeytunli.
As I've killed only three Turks
I do not want to die like this.
Without killing many Turks
I do not want to die, to die.¹¹

When these three songs were analyzed, it is possible to put
results into order as follows:

1. Armenian comitadjis, missionaries and poets, through songs
like these, want to suggest enmity against Turks into the minds of

Armenian people, and especially to the minds of the young generations.

2. They invite Armenians, on whom they have imposed hatred and enmity against Turks, to rebel against Muslim-Turkish people, against the Ottoman Empire and its laws.

3. It is realized that Armenian comitadjis are not sure of the result of the rebellion they attempted and they will attempt, for they do not confide in their own power and in their people. For this reason, they are calling out to America. They are in a psychosis as if they have been waiting for their help. Thus, they have been in contradiction exhibiting in timid attitude like challenging Turks on the one hand, and asking Europeans to save them as they once saved Bulgarians, on the other. This contradiction or dilemma gives Armenians away. That is to say, Armenians' aim was not only to engage an independence war against the Ottoman Empire, but by drawing Christian Europe's attention by means of rebellions and plots, to make Europeans establish an artificial Armenian state. That is why they have always provoked an incident. However, European states have hesitated to establish a state for Armenians, who have not been a nation so far, who did not reside in a certain region and whose population and geography were uncertain.

4. These songs show that Armenians do not have a conscience of state. They consider their love for Gladstone, a British prime minister, equal to their love for motherland. This also shows that they have been looking for a protector who will protect them and will establish a state for them. Besides, this love for Gladstone is important as it shows the share of England in the incidents which Armenians provoked.

5. We see that Armenians killed Turks but they were sorry for not killing enough of them. This also indicates that Armenians were not innocent.

6. It is also understood that Armenians did not have capable leaders or statesmen to carry them to victory. This is why they mostly remained within the limits of secret societies and tried to obtain

success in this way. History bitterly shows that this did not prove to be a good method for Armenians.

These songs or hymns sung by Armenians on the street or in churches and preparations of Armenian societies for rebellion caused a psychological tension between Turks and Armenians. The first result of this was the Zeytun rebellion in 1895-1896. After this rebellion, Armenians still went on with their activities. This time, they began to make better preparations. These preparations went on until 1890, and as a result, the Adana rebellion burst out. What were the Armenian preparations and activities? We can list them as follows:

- 1.Hinchak and Dashnak committees (in Adana-Maraş Cebel-i Bereket) speeded up their organizations and propaganda in the region.

- 2.Armenian clergymen and European and American missionaries incited Armenians to have sick feelings against Turks at schools or churches.

- 3.Money was required for preparations of rebellion. To help this goal, Armenians in America and Europe were collecting money and sending it to the committees in the region. Additionally, they were taking money from some rich Armenians in the Adana-Maraş region by brute force, and those who refused to give money were killed.

- 4.To increase the Armenian population especially in the Adana region, they were encouraging Armenian migration from other regions. They had even brought quite a number of them. Among these were some famous Armenian rebels, socialists, anarchists and nationalist Armenian leaders.

- 5.To settle these new-comers and to possess as much land as possible, they speeded up buying houses and land in Adana region.

Beginning from 1901, as Armenians were making these secret preparations, the Ottoman Empire was full of rebellions. The

Macedonian Rebellion, troubles in Arabia, secret activities against the regime were all gradually weakening the Empire. Finally, the actions of the Union and Progress Party to give an end to all these questions ended up with the declaration of the Second Constitution on 24 July 1908. On 5 October 1908, Bosnia-Herzegovina was invaded by Austria. Bulgaria declared her independence on 6 October 1908. Greece annexed Crete on 13 April 1909, the March the 31st Incident burst out. The following day, thinking that the right time had come, Armenians began a rebellion in Adana.

With the declaration of the Second Constitution on 24 July 1908, remarkable changes in the behavior and activities of the Armenians living around Adana were noticed. Taking an advantage of the concepts of peace and freedom, they began the following activities other than the five points mentioned above:

1. Armament: Actually, after the declaration of the Second Constitution, purchase of arms in Adana suddenly increased. Arms were being brought to the harbors of Mersin and Iskenderun from Europe and distributed to the merchants in the region. Also, heavy guns ammunition was secretly being brought and stored. Almost everyone was interested in carrying guns and firing them. The Muslim population who noticed this began to be armed, too.

2. Propaganda: Taking advantage of this freedom, Armenians began to write in the Armenian language on the doors of houses and some objects and draw some Armenian symbols – symbols of independence and rebellion. A lot of Armenian newspapers and brochures published either outside the country or in the region were being distributed and Armenian flags were being hoisted.

3. The Theatre Incident: On 29 March 1909, Armenians performed a play about Timurlenk (Tamerlane) and against Turks at the Ziya Bey's Cafe House in Mersin. The same play was also performed in Дюргюл fifteen days before that. This play worsened the present tension in the Turkish-Armenian relations. The theme of the play is briefly as follows:

The name of the play is “The Destruction of Sivas by Timurlenk”. The curtain opens; Timur comes on the stage and orders that all the Armenians be killed. War breaks out. The Armenian king, his daughter and servant are Timur’s captives, and they are put into a room. At that moment, two Armenians who have come out from their graves and an angel with a horn in hand, behind whom Armenian soldiers are standing up, come. This conversation takes place among them:

The two dead ones: (Addressing the king) we all died for your and Armenia’s sake.

Angel: Your Excellency, the reason of this captivity is the dispersal of Armenians. I have come to invite you to unity.

King: All the Armenians are killed. Who will you unite?

Angel: No one left?

King: Just daughter, my servant and I.

Angel: But you are all Armenians.

King: Yes.

Angel: Three of you are enough. Be united. You will be the king once again.

King: Alas?

Angel: Be sure of this. Soon, a star will shine. Sivas will be all in light and you will be the king of Armenia.

While conversation about kingdom and independence goes on, a star shines and it lightens the mountains and plains of Sivas on the Stage. At that point, there are cries of “Long Live Armenia, Long Live the Armenian King, Long Live Armenians.” And the curtain closes.

4. Activities of Mumeg, the bishop of Adana: Mumeg efendi, who was a distinguished person among the Armenian population, was visiting Adana and Cebel-i Bereket regions and urging his people to be ready saying “A disaster is being put into act against Armenians.” He was advising the Armenians to sell even their coats and buy guns, not to pay taxes, to buy land. He was also saying “You tried hard for

Armenia. Do not be afraid. Your patriots are sufficient for us. When necessary, we will receive contribution from foreigners. No matter when, but we will cut the throats of Muslims. Do not be frightened any longer. We cannot solve our problems unless there is bloodshed. Turks will never be refined.” With these words he was encouraging and provoking Armenians.¹²

As a result of these, both Turks and Armenians began to believe rumors against each other that each group would kill the other. After this, both groups began to treat each other with enmity. Some incidents of mutual killing were observed. Finally, incidents of Adana burst out on 24 April 1909, and Turks and Armenians began to fight with each other. Eleven days later, fights and quarrels were restricted within the limits of Adana.

From the account given above, it is clear that Armenians are the real cause of these problems. These activities of Armenians could not be stopped. Fights could not be prevented. Both groups fought against each other. The Armenian loss was more than the Turkish loss, for the Muslim population was over the Armenian one...

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See the **Manuscript** numbered 542 belonging to **Abdurrahman Sheref**, Department of Manuscripts, Turkish Society of History (Turk Tarih Kurumu).
2. **Kamuran Gurun**. Ermeni Dosyasi, Ankara, 1983, p. 65. And **C. Oskanyan**. Sultan Abdulhamid and His People, New York, 1857, pp. 353-354.
3. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères à Paris (Quai d'Orsay). Memoires et Documents, Livre Jaune Francais. No: 187, p. 11.
4. **Bayram Kodaman**. Sultan II Abdulhamid Devri Dogu Anadolu Politikasi (The Policy of Eastern Anatolia during the Reign of Sultan Abdulhamid the Second), Ankara, 1987. p. 133.
5. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères à Paris (Quai d'Orsay). Memoires et Documents, Livre Jaune Francais. No: 187, p. 12.

6. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères à Paris (Quai d'Orsay). Turquie, Correspondance politique des Consuls, Alep, 9 Avril 1891, volume 9.
7. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères à Paris (Quai d'Orsay). Turquie, Correspondance Politique et Commerciale, 1898-1899, volume 74, pp. 125-141. And **Bayram Kodaman**, Op. Cit., pp. 125-141.
8. Armenians of Zeytun claimed that Murad the Fourth, with an imperial firman, exempted them from the taxes. In sight, there isn't a firman like this. Yet, Armenians have been saying that it was consumed by fire. For this reason, Armenians of Zeytun have always refused to pay taxes and have rebelled against the Empire. On this subject, see **Kamuran Gurun**, Op. Cit., pp. 157-161.
9. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères à Paris (Quai d'Orsay). Correspondance des Consuls, volume 9.
10. Ibid.
11. Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères a Paris (Quai d'Orsay). Correspondance des Consuls, Turquie, volume 74, 1898-1899, p. 37.
12. **Abdurrahman Sheref**, Op. Cit.

Х ц л а с я

ЦЧ ЕРМЯНИ МАЩНЫСЫ ВЯ АДАНА-МАРАШ ЕРМЯНИЛЯРИНИН ТЦРКЛЯРЯ МЦНАСИБЯТИ (1891-1909)

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Дцнйадакы ермянипярэст даиряляр тяряфиндян «Ермани сойгырымы» кими гялямя верилян тарихи щадисялярин шярщ едилдийи бу мягальдя мцяллиф ясаян, 1891-1909-ъу иллярдя Тцркийянин Адана-Мараш бюлэясиндя йашайан ерманилярин тцркляря гаршы мцнасибятини тядгиг едир. Мягальянин йазылмасында мцяллиф Тцркийя вя Франсанын архивляриндя сахланан рясми сянядляр, щямчинин, о дюврцн ермани шифащи вя йазылы ядыбиййатына истинад едир.

Арашдырылан архив материалларына яасланан мцяллиф эюстярир ки, о дюврдя «Щынчак» вя «Дашнак» террорчу ермани тяшкилатларынын йарадылмасы вя онларын тцркляря гаршы дцшмянчилик фяалиййятинин йайылмасы, Османлы Империйасына гаршы дцшмян мювгедя дуран Авропа дювлятляри тяряфиндян щимайя едилмишдир.

Диэяр тяряфдян мцяллиф, Адана-Мараш бюлэясиндя йашайан ерманилярин о дювря аид ядыби ясярлярини арашдырмыш вя бу ясярлярдя тцркляря гаршы ачыг ядавятя вя дцшмянчилийя сясляйишин олдуъуну эюстярмишдир. Мясялян, мягальдя мцяллиф 1892-1898 иллярдя йазылмыш цч ермани шериндян бящс едир ки, онларын ццц дя ачыг-ашкар ерманиляри туркляри юлдцрмийя сясляйир.

Мцяллифя эюря, Адана-Мараш бюлэясиндя йашайан ерманиляр арасында тцркляря гаршы мящз беля бир ящвал-руциййянин олмасы вя бу йанашма тярзинин Османлы Империйасына дцшмян олан буюцк дювлятляр тяряфиндян йарадылмасы вя дястяклянмяси нятиъясиндя, ерманиляр рущланараг тцрк-мцялман ящалийя щцъум етмийя, онлары садяъя милли-дини

мянсубийятиня эюрэ юлдцрмаяя башлайырлар ки, бу да ики халг арасында ядавятин гызышмасына эятириб чыхарыр.