

Mamigonian : Long Draft Version for Conference Participants Only

An Overview of Armenian-American Publishing and Library Collections

in the Northeast U.S. (Through 1930)

by Marc Aram Mamigonian

When I was asked, some months ago, by James Russell to give a talk¹ at the symposium “The Armenians and the Book,” organized as an extension of the exhibition of the same name that was mounted at Harvard University in April 2012 and subsequently at the Armenian Library and Museum of America in Watertown, MA,² I did not realize that there has been so little substantial scholarly work done on the subject of Armenian-American publishing and Armenian-American library collections. The most significant treatment of the subject appeared 100 years ago and was authored by Teotig (Teodik) and included in his book *Tip u Tar*.³ Helpfully, Teotig’s short but useful essay, which is an important source for this presentation, was recently translated by Dr. Vartan Matiossian.⁴ But, still: it was written *a century ago*. There is also the very recent *Amerikahay Grki Patmutiwn* by Hovsep Nalbandian⁵ that appears to be a quite useful if incomplete effort to catalogue, if not study, Armenian-American publications. There are also the important *Hay Girkē* volumes published in Yerevan (1967, 1988, 1999), bibliographical works such as *Hayots’ Parberakan Mamulē* (Yerevan, 1934), *Hay Parberakan Mamuli Bibliografya* (Erevan, 1957), *Hay Parberakan Mamuli Matenagitutyun (1794-1967)* (Erevan, 1970), and *Hay Parberakan Mamuli: Matenagitakan Hamahavak Tsutsak (1794-1980)* (Erevan,

¹ This is a revised version of that talk. A condensed version will be presented at the UCLA conference “Port Cities and Printers.” This version is for participants in the conference and is not to be circulated without the author’s permission.

² “Symposium: The Armenians and the Book,” Sept. 15, 2012

³ Teodik [Teodoros Lapchinchean], *Tip u Tar* (Halep: Kilikia Gratun-Hratarakchatun-Tparan, 2006; reprint of 1912 ed., Kosdandnupolis, Vahramay ew Hracheu Ter-Nersesean), pp. —

⁴ Teotig, “Armenian Printing in America (1857-1912),” translated by Vartan Matiossian, *Armenian Weekly: Special Issue: Celebrating 500 Years of Armenian Printing*, Sept. 1, 2012, pp. 25-27

⁵ Hovsep Nalbandian. *Amerikahay Grki Patmutiwn* (Los Angeles: Tparan Erewan, 2011)

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1986), and several good accounts of the early years of the Armenian press in America. So there is, at least, a limited foundation on which to build.

Unfortunately, the limited state of learning on this subject is indicative of the neglect in general of the history and culture of the Armenian-American community. We are fortunate to have such outstanding work as Robert Mirak's *Torn Between Two Lands*,⁶ which covers the pre-World War I era, and Martin Deranian's *Worcester Is America*⁷, as well as other histories, of variable quality, of other Armenian-American communities such as Fresno, Syracuse, Rhode Island, etc. We have Ben Alexander's dissertation *Armenian and American: The Changing Face of Ethnic Identity and Diasporic Nationalism, 1915-1955*,⁸ Anny Bakalian's *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian*,⁹ Michael Bobelian's *Children of Armenia*.¹⁰ In short, we have a little of this and a little of that, but not enough; and certainly not enough of the kind of comprehensive work undertaken by Mirak now more than thirty years ago.

Neither should the state of affairs have been surprising in light of the fact that the serious study of the history of Armenian book culture *as a whole* is still in its infancy.

But enough, perhaps, of what we do not have. This paper will attempt to give a sense of what we *do* have, and to pose questions that might lead to a better understanding of what needs to be done to better understand the importance of the issue and magnitude of the work that lies ahead. And in attempting to give a general overview I will try also to zoom in on a few specific cases that are of particular interest.

Earliest Known Armenian-language Printed Books in the U.S.

⁶ Robert Mirak, *Torn Between Two Lands Armenians in America, 1890 to World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983)

⁷ Hagop Martin Deranian, *Worcester Is America: The Story of Worcester's Armenians: The Early Years* (Worcester, MA: Bennate Publishing, 1998)

⁸ City University of New York, 2005

⁹ Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993

¹⁰ New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009

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The earliest publications in America in the Armenian language appeared in the 1850s. According to Robert Hewsen, “the first example of Armenian type being used in this country was in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* in 1853.”¹¹ Though he does not specify the article, this must be the Rev. Harrison Gray Otis Dwight’s “Catalogue of All Works Known to Exist in the Armenian Language, of a Date Earlier than the Seventeenth Century,” appearing in volume 3 of the aforementioned journal.¹² [slide]

The year 1859 appears to mark the first Armenian book printed in the United States, the Bible in Western Armenian, issued in New York by the Bible Society. [slide] I say “appears” because Teotig claims that in 1857 the Bible Society printed *Apashkharats’oyts* (Atlas of the Repentant), a new edition of a book printed in 1839 in Smyrna.¹³ I say “claims” because I have found no proof of such a printing; so, for now, we will stick with 1859. The Bible translation had been overseen by the missionary Elias Riggs and was first printed in Smyrna in 1853. This is a subject well-covered by Barbara Merguerian in her detailed history of the Armenian-language press of the American missionaries in Smyrna published in Richard Hovannisian’s recent volume *Armenian Smyrna/Izmir*.¹⁴

Levon Avdoyan, in his recent catalogue of the Library of Congress’ Armenian book exhibition, also gives the date 1859 for the start of printing of “religious materials in Armenian” by the American Tract Society (Amerigayi Tetraki Enkerut‘ean), noting that these were intended

¹¹ Robert H. Hewsen, *Armenia: A Historical Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 200), p. 275

¹² pp. 241-288. Dwight notes that “This article has been printed under the care of Mr. Christopher D. Seropyan, a native Armenian, graduated at Yale College; and we are much indebted to him for many important corrections.”

¹³ Matiossian, p. 25

¹⁴ Barbara J. Merguerian, “The Missionary Armenian-Language Press of Smyrna, 1833-1853,” in Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Smyrna/Izmir: The Aegean Communities* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2012), pp. 127-152

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for missionary use.¹⁵ For, indeed, a publisher would not have done well to print materials in Armenian at this time for domestic consumption, unless bankruptcy was the goal. This first book was *Hawak'umn vkayut'eants' Surb Grots': k'erozich'neru ew dasatuneru ew ar hasarak bolor K'ristoneĩts' gortsatsut'eaně'hamar*.

The fact that these books had all previously been printed in Smyrna raises interesting questions: first and foremost, since the missionaries were printing books in Smyrna, why did they start printing books in New York that were only going to be sent back to Turkey? There is probably a simple explanation, and one supposes that—although it seems counterintuitive—it must have worked out to be cheaper to print the books in New York and send them across the Atlantic. But one would like to know just how this worked and why the decision was made.

Establishment of Armenian-American newspapers

As a prefatory comment to the (very useful) account of the Armenian-American press in the 1937 book *The Armenians in Massachusetts*, the Mekhitarist father M. Bodurian is quoted as saying, “Whenever a few Armenians find themselves in a foreign land their first thought is to publish a newspaper instead of opening a kindergarten.”¹⁶ (This must occur after the arrival of the proverbial lone Armenian who builds two churches, one to go to and the other one never to set foot in.) At any rate, there is little doubt that Armenian newspapers developed rapidly in the U.S. as the community grew from microscopically small prior to the 1880s to become more numerous into the 1890s and early 1900s. And it is here, really, and not with the volumes published from the 1850s on for missionary use overseas, that what we may properly call Armenian-American publishing begins.

¹⁵ Levon Avdoyan, *To Know Wisdom and Instruction: A Visual Survey of the Armenian Literary Tradition from the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C., 2012), p. 87

¹⁶ *The Armenians in Massachusetts*, written and compiled by the Federal Writers' project of the Works Progress Administration for the State of Massachusetts (Boston: The Armenian Historical Society, 1937)

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There is no controversy over the starting point of Armenian newspaper publishing or the person who started it. Haygag Ēginean (Haykak Ēkinean)¹⁷ [slide] carries the honorific “the father of the Armenian-American press,” having established the first newspaper, *Arekag* (*Aregak*, “Sunlight”) in Jersey City in May 1888, at a time when even if each Armenian in America had bought the paper the circulation would have been minute. Mirak writes that *Arekag* lasted for “about a dozen issues.”¹⁸ Copies of the newspaper must be exceptionally scarce; I do not know anyone who has ever seen it. However, some copies are supposed to be held at the Vienna Mkhitarist library, so hope remains alive.

Mirak explains that Eginian had “imported Armenian type from the ... Mkhitarist monastery in Venice” to print the paper, and an account of the early Armenian-American press informs us that *Arekag* contained local and national news and argued against emigration from the motherland.¹⁹

A biographical sketch of Eginian, published in the 1912 publication *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ĕ* (*Amerikahay Tarets ‘oyts ‘ĕ*, American-Armenian Yearbook) informs us that he was born in Dikranagerd (Tigranakert) in 1865 to a well-to-do family, originally from Agn (Akn) or Egin, and came to the U.S. in 1883. He became a contributor to Constantinople papers at the encouragement of *Arewelk’* editor Arp‘iar Arp‘iarian. After *Arekag*’s brief gleaming he published a series of other unsuccessful newspapers in New York and New Jersey, such as *Surhantag* (*Surhandak*, Messenger), *Azadut ‘iwn* (*Azatut ‘iwn*, Liberty), and *Dikris* (*Tigris*). [slide] This latter was co-edited with future first editor of the *Hayrenik’* Tovmas Charshafjian.

¹⁷ Generally speaking, Western Armenian names and titles are transliterated as such, with standard LOC transliterations given parenthetically. The author begs the reader’s indulgence for any inconsistencies of transliteration and use of diacritics.

¹⁸ Mirak, p. 248.

¹⁹ Arsen-Tiran, “Amerikahay Mamulĕ,” in Mushegh Serobeian, ed., *Amerikahay Tarets ‘oyts ‘ĕ A. Tari* (Poston: Kilikia Tparan, 1913), pp. 8-9

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Eginian moved to Fresno in 1899 and started the papers *K'aghak'ats'i* (Citizen) and later *Nor Geank'* (*Nor Keank'*, New Life).²⁰

But while still in the New York area, Eginian also undertook the publication of a number of books in addition to newspapers—these seem to be the first Armenian books printed for consumption by other Armenians in America. Teotig lists *Gsgts'ank'* (*Kskts'ank'*, Sorrow) [slide] and *Taylaylig* (*Daylaylik*, Warbling) from 1890; in the same year there is also Giragos Paragean's (Kirakos Barakean) *Loys ew Khawar* (Light and Darkness). [slide] Eginian also published collections *Nor Yerkanan Azkayin* (*Nor Ergaran Azgayin*, 1892) and [slide] *Srink Nor Yerkanan Azkayin* (*Sring Nor Ergaran Azgayin*, 1899), among other books.

The longest-surviving of the first wave of newspapers was the New York-based *Hayk'*, [slide] edited by Dr. M. S. Gabrieleian (Kaprielean). [slide] As editor, Gabrielian was highly critical of the Armenian revolutionaries who, in turn, denounced Gabrielian. He was a successful man of medicine as well as a writer whose books covered both medical and political topics. [slide] *Haygagan Chknazhamn ew Veradznut'iwn* (*Haykakan Chgnazhamn ew Veratsnunt'iwn*, The Armenian Crisis and Renaissance, Poston: Adlandean tparan, 1905) [slide] is an example of the latter, while *Seṛayin Aroghjabanut'iwn* (*Seṛayin Aroghjabanut'iwn*, Sexual Hygiene, New York: Amerikahay Gratun, 1915) stands for the former.

Independent—that is to say, unaffiliated with a political party—newspapers and periodicals such as *Hayk*, the short-lived *Ep'rad* (*Ep'rat*), [slide] a semi-weekly newspaper published by Sarkis G. Shaghalian in Worcester in 1897-1898, or the Cambridge-based *Loys* (1901-1907), [slide] came and went in these early years. Some would come and stay for a long time, such as *Gotchnag* (*Kochnak*), [slide] which began publishing in 1900 and continued until

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 268-269. My thanks to Vartan Matiossian for translating.

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1968; or the Philadelphia-based independent newspaper [slide] *Groong* (*Krunk*), published by Karnig Kevorkian from 1919 into the 1960s.

A relative latecomer as a U.S.-based newspaper but an interesting case study was *Rahniwma*, [slide] an Armeno-Turkish (Turkish language written in Armenian alphabet). *Rahniwma* was edited by Rev. H. K. Krikorian and published from 1910 to 1933, first in Istanbul by the (Evangelical Protestant) Bible House as a weekly and, later, in New York City as a bi-weekly. According to Joseph K. Greene, Krikorian, formerly a professor at Central Turkey College in Aintab, started the paper in order “to meet the wishes of the Turkish-speaking Protestants and further the cause of Christ in Turkey.”²¹

Generally speaking, though, the most enduring and influential newspapers were those that became party organs.

The history of Armenian-American newspapers, book publishing, and political parties are inseparable from one another, so a short digression is necessary here. The Armenian political parties began to develop in the 1880s in the wake of the failure to implement reforms in Western Armenia following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.²² Of those that endured long enough to have an impact on the Armenian-American scene, the Social Democrat Hnchakian Party was “the first Armenian party with a national and international structure and detailed political program.”²³ It was established in Geneva in 1887. Mirak writes that they set up branches “in New York, Providence, Worcester, Boston, Lowell, Lawrence, Lynn, Malden, and Nashua” in the early 1890s and held a national convention in 1894. The Dashnaktsutiwn or Dashnak Party

²¹ *Leavening the Levant* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1916), p. __

²² There is no space here for a detailed review of the history. See Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *The Armenian People, From Ancient to Modern Times*, vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), pp. 212ff.; Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: the Development of Armenian Political Parties Through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1963); Mirak, pp. 241ff.; et al.

²³ Hovannisian, vol. 2, p. 214

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or ARF was established in Tiflis in 1890, held its first world congress in 1892, and became more of a visible presence in America after 1895. The Hnchaks, because of various crises, not the least of which being the massive massacres of the 1895-96 and the absence of any meaningful intervention by the Great Powers, split, with the Verakazmeal or Reformed Hnchaks forming in Alexandria in 1898 but with their “chief base ... in the United States.”²⁴ An attempt at reunification in 1902 only led to a deeper divide, bloodshed, and undoubtedly an increase in the popularity of the ARF and the creation of the more moderate Armenian Constitutional Democratic Party or Ramkavars in 1908.

With the establishing of bases in the U.S. party papers followed, such as the Dashnak *Hayrenik* ‘ (Fatherland, 1899), the Hnchak *Eridasart Hayasdan* (*Eritasard Hayastan*, Young Armenia, 1903), Ramkavar *Azk* (*Azg*, Nation, 1907) and *Bayk ‘ar* (*Payk ‘ar*, Struggle, 1922). [slide] *Hayrenik* ‘, the most durable of these, began in New York before moving to Boston where it has remained ever since, eventually evolving into a weekly and spawning a long-running monthly magazine (*Hayrenik ‘ Amsagir*) and English-language weekly.²⁵ [slide] *Eridasart Hayasdan*, organ of the Hnchak party, founded by Sapah-Kulean in 1903, was considerably more mobile, moving from New York to Boston to Providence to Chicago to New York and so forth. [slide] *Tzayn Hayreneats* ‘ started out in New York in 1899, moved to Worcester, then Boston, became the official organ of the Reformed Hnchaks, and moved, with its editor Suren Partevean, to Constantinople in the giddy aftermath of the 1908 revolution. [slide] *Bahag* (*Pahak*) was started in Providence in 1910, also as a paper of the Reformed Hnchaks.

²⁴ Mirak, p. 230

²⁵ For which see Rubina Perroomian, “Hairenik: A Periodical in the Heart of New England,” in Marc Mamigonian, ed., *The Armenians of New England* (Belmont, MA: Armenian Heritage Press, 2004).

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I show with some pleasure [slides] a photograph taken at my great grandfather's house in Lawrence around 1911 (my great-grandfather is the jacketless man on the far left and my grandfather is the boy on the left) in which, if you zoom in, it is clear that several men are holding up newspapers, including *Bahag* and *Azadamard* (*Azatamart*). Clearly it was important to them to do so, and one supposes that the newspapers they read formed important markers of their identities as Armenians.

Bahag moved to Boston where it appeared until 1921, when it merged with the Boston-based, Ramkavar outlet *Azk*. [slides] In 1923 it was rechristened as *Bayk'ar*, [slide] which in turn also produced an English-language weekly that continues today, the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*. The Reformed Hnchaks also briefly printed a rather fancy weekly magazine called *Arakadz* (*Aragats*) [slide] in 1910-11 which, Teotig informs us, ceased when the press burned.

The parties established publishing houses in addition to newspapers, and indeed two of them, *Hayrenik'* and *Bayk'ar*, continue to this day. As publishers one might say that the number one task was the dissemination of political material relating to the overall mission of the party; but in fact *Hayrenik'*, *Bayk'ar*, and the now defunct *Azk*, *Bahag*, *Eridasart Hayasdan*, *Tzayn Hayreneats* presses published a wide variety of material beyond what one might call the strictly political. Many notable poets and novelists were published by these presses, such as for example *Siamanto* [slide] who was published by the *Hayrenik'*—but, of course, *Siamanto* had been the editor of the *Hayrenik* newspaper. [slide]

It is also true that even among the literary publications there was often a political angle. [slide] For instance, among the early novels translated into English and published in the U.S. were *Andrōnikē: Hunakan Heghapokhutan Herosuhin* by S. T'. Ks'ēnos (*Hayrenik'*, 1905) and *Ludzin Dag* (*Lutsin Tak*) by Ivan Vazof (*Tzayn Hayreneats'*, 1906). The latter was translated by

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I. A. Eran (Yeran), about whom more anon. *Andrōnikē* had been translated into English in 1899 and published as *Andronike: The Heroine of the Greek Revolution*. The English translator, Edwin A. Grosvenor, writes:

This book is a romance of love and adventure with its scene laid in Greece. As the plot develops, the reader seems treading Greek soil, breathing Greek air, and living among the Greeks. Though Andronike the heroine, Thrasyboulos her lover, and the renegade Barthakas, the evil genius of the story, are actors in the Greek revolution of 1821, they might be reckoned characters of to-day. That revolution, with its mingled heroism and shame, does not differ greatly from this last war, itself an episode in the ceaseless struggle between the Christian and the Mussulman, the Greek and the Turk. This story is a succession of instantaneous photographs, revealing, with photographic accuracy, phases of life in the Balkan peninsula. No other book in so realistic manner describes the birth throes of modern Greece. No other portrays more vividly the political and moral medley and chaos of the East.

It seems clear enough that the translation of this romance of the Greek revolution was intended to inspire similar sentiments in the Armenian readership of the twentieth century.

Likewise, Bulgarian author Ivan Vazov's 1893 novel *Pod Igoto* (Under the Yoke), translated as *Ludzin Dag*, had earlier been translated into English (1893) and similarly tells a story of resistance to the Ottoman Turks. Vazov was considered the preeminent Bulgarian writer of his time, "the patriarch of Bulgarian culture...the architect of new Bulgarian literature."²⁶ The novel takes place (we are told by Edmund Gosse in his introduction)

in the years 1875 and 1876, and the scene is laid in that corner of Bulgaria which was not until 1886 completely freed from Turkish rule — the north-west part of Thrace — overshadowed by the Balkan on the north, and then forming part of the anomalous suzerainty of Eastern Roumelia...The whole story is the chronicle of one of those abortive attempts which were made throughout Bulgaria and Roumelia forty years ago, under the hope of help from Russia, to throw off the intolerable Turkish yoke of tyranny.

²⁶ R. B. Pynsent and S. I. Kanikova, eds., *The Everyman Companion to East European Literature* (London, 1993), s.v. Vazov, Ivan

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The tale ends tragically, with the failure of the particular and partial insurrection described, and the martyrdom of the leading patriots who took a part in it. (1912 ed., v)

Interestingly, the novel is described in *The Everyman Companion to East European Literature* as “widely understood as patriotic, but containing one of the most precise, if somewhat ironical, analyses of the National Revival.”²⁷ Perhaps we can assume that the Armenian translation was meant to highlight the patriotism more than the irony.

So, plainly, even literature was not entirely free from political considerations. It would be fascinating to know how widely such novels were read and what the response was. Did they have the desired effect? Naturally, explicitly political works are also present in abundance, such as [slide] Sapah-Giwlean’s 1916 *Sots’ializm ew Hayrenik*‘, published in Providence by Eritasart Hayasdan, or Hayrenik’s translation of the noted Socialist John Spargo’s *Ĕngervarut‘ean Ĕut‘iwně* (*Ĕnkervarut‘ean Ĕut‘iwně*, *The Essence of Socialism*, 1912). Note that the latter’s back cover is adorned by a helpful listing of Hayrenik‘ publications, [slide] very useful information if you are trying to get a sense of what was published and when.

Above beyond the literary output of the publishing houses, there was also a significant number of literary magazines established during this period—some of brief duration, some long lasting, some with political affiliations, some independent.²⁸

Establishment of Armenian-American publishing houses

From the brief treatment of the political party presses I would like to move to look at independent publishers. As we saw in the earlier section on the pioneers Eginian and Gabrielian,

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ See Marc Nichanian, “Armenian Writers and Literary Publications in New England” in *The Armenians of New England* for a very helpful overview.

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independent—i.e., non-affiliated with political parties—publishers sometimes also were involved in newspaper publishing, but this was not necessarily the case.

From what I have been able to observe, the focus of these presses, especially in the early period, focused on practical and popular books. Early examples are several titles by New York's Elias Khalafew Ęng. (Elias Khalaf & Co.), such as *Bidani Kidelik'ner* (*Pitani Gitelik'ner*, Useful Knowledge, 1897) [slide] and *Ink'nusuts'ich' Anklieren Lezui* (*Ink'nusuts'ich' Anglieren Lezui*, A Self-Instructor in the English Language, 1898) [slide] both by Bedros R. T'orosean (Petros R. T'orosean). [slide] The former of these includes, for instance, sample dialogue such as a newly arrived immigrant might have at Ellis Island. T'orosean was also the author and publisher of the similarly practical [slide] *Inchbēs Gareli Ę Ęllal Miats'eal Nahanknerun Amerigean K'aghak'ats'i* (*Inchpēs Kareli Ę Ęllal Miats'eal Nahangnerun Amerikean K'aghak'ats'i*, How To Become an American Citizen, West Hoboken, 1912), the contents of which are more or less self-explanatory.

But for my money, supreme among the early publishers stands Yeran Press in Boston, [slide] the fruit of the labor of the seemingly indefatigable I. A. or E. A. or Edward Arakel Yeran, about whom I know only that he was born in 1876, presumably in Ottoman Armenia, that he was translating books into English in the early 1900s (such as the aforementioned *Andrōnikē*), and that by circa 1910 he was publishing books and would continue to do so until approximately 1930. One would like to know much more. But in that period of some twenty years, Yeran published a wide array of books some of which, based on the number of copies which have come to the NAASR library as part of donated collections (admittedly not a scientific method of calculation, but one available to me), were very popular, if not iconic in their time. They include but are not limited to:

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Reference works such as the [slide] *Nor Krbani Pararan* (*Nor Grpani Bararan*, first published around 1900, which likely makes it the first Armenian-English dictionary published in the U.S., and reprinted innumerable times); [slide] Prof. H[arutiwn]. H. Chakmakjian's (Ch'akmakch'ean/Ch'agmagch'ean) English-Armenian Dictionary (*Ĕntartzag Pararan, Ankl.-Hay*, 1922 and many reprints); [slide] Chakmakjian's *Badmut 'iwn Hayots'* (*Patmutiwn Hayots'* (1917), a general history; practical books for the new immigrant such as [slide] Chakmakjian's *Amerigahay Namagner* or Armeno-American Letter Writer (*Amerikahay Namakner*, 1914); [slide] *Badgerazart Zruts 'adrutiwn Hayeren Anklieren* (*Padkerazard Zrutsatrutiwn Hayeren-Anglieren*, 1910 and many reprintings) or Armenian-English Conversation Illustrated: the same book appeared as Turkish-English Conversation Illustrated and was written in Armeno-Turkish; literary works such as [slide] translations of Moliere (*Sk 'ap 'ēni Ch 'arachchi Hnaramtut 'iwnnerě*, *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, 1914) and Nasreddin Hoja (ca. 1910?); popular works such as [slide] the *Zhoghovrtayin Erkaran* (*Zhoghovrdayin Ergaran*, *Popular Song Book*, ca. 1912); and health and medical works such as [slide] *Kordznagan Aroghjapanut 'iwn* (*Gortsnakan Aroghjabanutiwn*, *Practical Hygiene*, 1911), [slide] *Badgerazart Adamnapuzhut 'iwn* (*Patkerazard Atamnabuzhutiwn*, *Illustrated Dental Care*, 1924), and [slide] the invaluable *Bntut 'iwn ew Anor Tarmaně* (*Pndutiwn ew Anor Darmane*, *Constipation and Its Remedy*, 1915). It gives me great relief to inform you that there are no illustrations for the last of these.

Most of these books can seem terribly dry and uninteresting to the modern reader. Still, unexpected moments of insight shine out. For instance, [slides] in Eran's Armenian-English Conversation book, immediately following a delightful dialogue pertaining to the purchase of a hat, we are presented with this, under the heading "Hayerě," and which I read almost in its

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entirety since I find it strangely powerful and actually quite moving and almost a prose poem unto itself:

Are you an Armenian?
Yes, sir, I am an Armenian.
What do you think of the Armenian people?
The Armenians are of a dark complexion.
They have black eyes and black hair.
They belong to the Aryan race.
The Armenians are a good people.
They are thrifty, and intelligent people.
They are the first people to accept Christianity.
For centuries they have suffered martyrdom for Christianity and civilization.
They are good, law abiding citizens.
The Armenians are one of the oldest races on the face of the earth.
Their history dates back to two thousand years before Christ.
They have survived all their contemporaries, such as Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, etc.
They are honest, well-meaning people.
Of course, there are few degenerated Armenians, but they are exceptions.
I believe that the good qualities are not the monopoly of any race.
Man is the direct product of his environment.
The good and bad, the honest and the dishonest, the moral and the immoral could be found in all the countries of the globe.
The rose has its bush, the wheat its chaff.
The Armenians have been subjected to Mohammedan rule for five centuries.
But we are glad that Turkey is a constitutional government now.
We hope there will be no more massacres hereafter.

Yeran also published the potentially rich, but little known, *Baduoy Kirk': P'rgut'ean Hankanagut'ean Hayots' Amerigayi 1920-1921 (Patuoy Girk': P'rkut'ean Hanganakut'ean Hayots' Amerikayi 1920-1921, 1921)*, which presents documents relating to the effort spearheaded by General Antranig (Andranik) to raise funds in the U.S. for the Republic of Armenia. The bulk of the volume consists of lists of donors, grouped by American city of residence. Many of these lists also provide the Old Country city or town of origin of the donor. It is a remarkable snapshot of Armenian-American existence shortly after the Genocide.

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I have little doubt that when the real history of Armenian-American publishing is written, Edward Arakel Yeran will occupy a prominent place. And in a better world, there would be a statue of Mr. Yeran in the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston in recognition of his superhuman efforts to help the Armenian-American be healthy and wise, if not necessarily wealthy.

Establishment of Armenian-American Bookstores and Libraries

So now that we know a little bit about who was publishing what and where and when, other questions arise, such as: how did people get the books to read them? Here we enter into murkier territory. We can safely say that it does not seem likely that mainstream American bookstores in this period carried Armenian-language books; and, for that matter, I would doubt that most public libraries had Armenian language books (although I know for certain there were exceptions because in a few cases some of these books eventually found their way to the NAASR library).

There were, however, definitely Armenian bookstores and book sellers. There were also innumerable small Armenian libraries in many cities and towns where Armenians settled in any numbers. Exactly how many of either bookstores or libraries is not known; and as far as I know there has been no attempt to list them. For myself, I mostly know about them from having encountered their book stamps in hundreds, perhaps thousands, of books in NAASR's library; and I got curious about them and what they can tell us about the journey the books have made to get where they are now.

At any rate, a very partial list would include:

[slide] Hairenik Bookstore (Hayrenik Kradun) in Boston; **[slide]** Ardziv Book Store in Boston; **[slide]** Berberian Bookstore in Boston; **[slides]** Armenia Book Store in Boston; **[slide]** Arax Book Store in Waverley, Mass.—was this the same as the Arax Book Store in Chelsea; **[slide]**

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the Foreign Book Store in Boston; [slide] the Paykar in Boston; [slide] Karents Bookstore in Cranston, RI; [slide] M. K. Boyajian Book Store in New Britain, Conn.; [slide] Cilicia Book Store in New York; [slide] Masis Book Store in New York City; [slides] Armeno-American Book Store in New York; [slide] the Bookstore of the Armenian Educational Foundation in New York; [slide] Azad Book Store in Philadelphia; [slides] and Armenian libraries in Manchester, NH; Nashua, NH; Salem, MA; Newburyport; Worcester; Watertown; Cambridge; Boston, etc., as well as political clubs such as those of the ARF and the ADL or the efforts of the AGBU. The limited information I have indicates that these were established in the 1890s and early 1900s—but for the most part, heaven only knows how long they endured.

Let's look at one book as an example. [slide] This is a book that came to NAASR just this past summer: it had belonged to the late Mr. Hagop Atamian of Watertown. It is a copy of Raffi's *Tachkahayk*, published in Tiflis in 1895. The first page of the book bears the stamp of the Armenian National Library of East Cambridge [slide] (Azkayin Krataran Ist'-Kēmrichi), about which I know nothing, and the date 1898; the title page has the stamp of the Armenian National Library of Boston (Azkayin Krataran Bostoni) and the date 1903. [slides] Inside the front cover is a stamp for Armenian Library, 401 Shawmut Ave., [slide] and a brief record of circulation from the 1920s and 1930s, as well as another stamp of the Armenian Library at 9 Appleton Street. Who used these libraries? How large were they? How long did they last? These and other questions remain unanswered for now.

What Comes Next?

It is my hope to have provided some basic background information about Armenian-American printing in the first period of Armenian-American existence. I am acutely aware that, at best, this is the most I have been able to achieve here. So, to conclude, I would like to pose a

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series of questions for which I do not have answers—but I think they are good questions, if nothing else.

How can we write this history? What and where are the necessary materials? How can we understand how these works were read and how can we gauge the impact of newspapers and books published 100 years ago? These are indeed challenging questions, but if it is possible to undertake a history of early modern Armenian reading, then surely it is altogether an easier task—if still a large one—to approach late 19th and early 20th century Armenian-American reading. There has developed in recent decades a substantial body of general scholarship and theoretical work, as well as specific studies, in the history of reading and it is not a case of the wheel needing to be invented. What is needed is the time and the skills to seek and find the information, which means poring over newspapers, archives, libraries, catalogues, yearbooks, etc. This can be done and it is worth doing, and it will greatly increase our understanding of Armenian-American history—which is *our* history.

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