

**Babeş-Bolyai University**

**Doctoral School of International Relations And Security Studies**

**Doctoral Thesis**

**The Impact of the Genocide On The Armenian Community**

**In Interwar Romania**

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## Introduction

### Argument

The outbreak of the First World War represented not only a change of European political paradigm, but also a consequence of the social and economic shifts that occurred at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The war, that was planned and prepared for it to last a semester, became a much longer conflict and brought about the modification of not only thought mechanisms, but also of the instruments of violence. The time of big isolated and controlled battles had passed and in its place armed conflict emerged, that was based on the results of technological advancements and ad-hoc strategies elaborated on the battlefield. In this uncertain context, marked by the lack of experience and of control mechanisms, the degeneration of the conflict and its extension onto multiple dimensions became inevitable. The second battle of Ypres or the disembarking in Gallipoli represented more than simple military operations, they offered moral legitimacy for military and political actions which left deep marks in the history of war and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe.

The events in the Ottoman Empire, which targeted the Armenian community and later became known as the “Armenian genocide”, cannot be treated outside of this context, however the general framework of the events cannot be used to justify the unfolding of the tragic events. The present research does not wish to be an apology or a study detached from the historic context, but more of an approach, an analysis of a phenomenon that led not only to a social change, but created, on the basis of tragic events, a solid pillar of identity that can be sensed even after a century of political and social evolution. During the evolution of internal politics and the dynamics of the war, in the background the leaders of the Ottoman Empire were looking for more or less real and efficient solutions meant to maintain the structure of the state, which was becoming ever unstable. Turning to the existence of a common enemy became a viable option, however the mechanisms meant to eradicate this threat overstep the limit of tolerance of violence of the society. The deportation and the annihilation of the Armenians from the Ottoman Empire is considered to be a disproportionate gesture by the foreign diplomats and other elements of Ottoman society even from the very first moment that this policy was implemented. That is why they, as much as possible, intervene to save the lives of those targeted by the Ottoman Government’s policies.

From this perspective, the research focuses on **a more indirect dimension of the events, that defined by the psychological, historical and social framework, which lead to the consolidation of Armenian communities in exile**, because of these tragic events. Understanding and contextualizing of the genocidal phenomenon represent important elements in the analysis process of the genocides consequences on the Armenian community. **The genocide and its effects have marked the evolution of the Armenian community in Romania, which mobilized in 1915 and then in the two decades of the interwar period** to help and integrate the victims and the survivors of the events in the Ottoman Empire.

## Research method

The present study is structured on two dimensions of analysis, which, although uneven as far as volume, are necessary and offer an overview of the problem addressed in the research. The first of these addresses the general context of the events, especially the socio-political dimension that permitted the outbreak and the finalizing of the processes which will later become known as the Armenian genocide. The second dimension addresses the evolution and the dynamic of **the Armenian community in Romania in the interwar period, a community that, due to favorable conjuncture, was involved in the saving and improving of the lives of the genocide survivors.**

The two dimensions are studied in a double perspective, that of the primary and direct sources and that of the secondary ones. This approach needs increased attention however, due to the fact that the analysis of the events and the evolution of the context is not always reflected correctly and identically in the two sources. Unfortunately, in the case of many of the secondary sources a serious discrepancy between reality and that reported by the source can be observed. The romanticizing or embellishing of the events of persons is present in a relatively large measure, which is why the present research used these sources in a critical manner.

## Bibliographic essay

The study of the issue of the interwar Armenian community is complex and is based on the multidisciplinary of the historical, economic and social analysis. All of these dimensions of everyday life have defined the evolution and the existence of Armenians in Romania. The historical heritage, the context of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the events of the interwar period require an integration into the historical context of the time. The main sources are the archival and journalistic materials pertaining to the interwar period, which together with the edited materials create the framework of analysis for the different issues and social developments.

In order to study of the impact of the genocide on the Armenian community in Romania and the dynamic recorded by the ethno-cultural group in the interwar period, I have selected a bibliography composed of primary and secondary sources, which allow an analysis and a historical contextualization of the phenomena and the events subject to the present research.

As far as the issue of the Armenian genocide I have used primary sources consisting of collections of texts, dispatches and official letters of the different legacies and ministries of external affairs involved in the situation developing in the Balkans and in Asia Minor, as well as memoirs of foreign diplomats who at that time were on the territory of the Ottoman Empire (Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*), reports of foreign diplomatic attachés who found themselves in the Ottoman Empire during the massacre presented by the volume *The Armenian Genocide. Evidence from the German Foreign Office Archives 1915-1916* (edit. Wolfgang Gust) and who had access to a direct and unaltered flow of information regarding the



discussed events. On the other hand, the memoirs of Armenians who survived the massacre, through their subjectivity, offer a clear image on the mental stage of the refugees, victims and survivors (Donald E. Miller, Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*). Of course these sources and certain elements of them are correlated with historiographical material in order to extract most precisely the objective elements and to correlate these with the rest of the materials used. Alternatively, the use of works of different researchers from diverse fields who have dealt with this subject was necessary due to the fact that the issue of the genocide, of the social dynamic of the interwar period or the dynamic of an ethnic group cannot be reduced solely to a one-dimensional analysis. Thus, I have consulted primary and secondary sources which dealt with the presentation and defining of the genocide, such as: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, Donald Bloxham, Dirk A. Moses, *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, Israel W. Charny (ed), *Enciclopedia of Genocide*, Adam Jones, *Genocide: a comprehensive introduction*, Steven Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context, volume 1: The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age*, Payam Akhavan, *Reducing Genocide to Law. Definition, Meaning, and the Ultimate Crime* etc. Also, for a better understanding of the causes which lead to this violent event, I have consulted the works of researchers from different fields and who have different approaches: international relations, history, psychology, political sciences. Of the works utilized in this part of the paper we note: James E. Waller, *Becoming Evil: how ordinary people commit genocide and mass killing*, Ervin Staub, "The Genocide of the Armenians: Psychological and Cultural Roots and the Impact on Survivors", in the journal *Armenian Review*, Martin Shaw, *Genocide and International Relations: Changing Patterns in the Transitions of the Late Modern World*, Samantha Power, "A problem from hell" *America and the Age of Genocide*, Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State, volume 1 The Meaning of Genocide*, Richard G. Hovannisian, *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide*, Irving Louis Horowitz, *Genocide: State Power and Mass Murder* etc. In order to see the context in which the genocide occurred and the state in which the Ottoman Empire found itself in the dissolution period I have consulted general works about the Ottoman Empire, such as Robert Mantran, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, Erol Koroglu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity. Literature in Turkey during World War I*, Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building. From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* etc.

For the part dedicated to the incursion into the history of the Armenian community in Romania I have used works such as: Lucian Nastașă, *Armenii din Nord-Vestul Transilvaniei în anii instaurării comunismului (1945-1953). Mărturii documentare [Armenians in the North-Vest of Transylvania in the years of the establishment of the communist regime (1945-1953). Documentary evidence]*, Sergiu Stelian, *Schiță istorică a comunității armene din România [Historical sketch of the Armenian community in Romania]*, official censuses: Sabin Manuila, *Recensământul general al populației României din 19 decembrie 1930 [The general census of the Romanian population of 19th December 1930]*, as well as censuses done by the Armenian

community in that period and published in the community's periodical, Ararat, or other statistics used by the members of the community in studies published at that time, such as: H. Dj. Siruni, *Armenii în Viața Economică a Țărilor Române* [Armenians in the Economy of the Romanian Lands]. Also, I have used archival material: The Bucharest National Archives, the "Front of Armenia" Organization as well as the memoirs of the daughter of Armenag Manissalian, Lizzete Georgescu Manissalian, in which she presents the role of the lobbying of the Armenian community in Romania in the accepting of refugees by the Romanian state. In order to show the Romanian public opinion as it pertains to what was happening in the Ottoman Empire I have consulted journalistic sources of the period, such as the Adevărul [The Truth] newspaper.

Regarding the sources used in the subchapter dedicated to the legal framework which permitted Armenian refugees to settle in Romania and which regulated their rights and obligations, I primarily used primary sources such as the laws passed in the interwar period which pertained to the question at hand and memoirs of the members of the community who had lived in the mentioned period, as well as archival documents which referred to the subject. Of the utilized archival materials we mention: Archives of the External Archives Ministry Bucharest, Fond 71/România, dossier 373 Minorități [Minorities] (general), 1931-1937; Fond 71, 1914-1924, E. 1, vol.1; Fond 71, 1920-1944, Dosare Speciale [Special Files], vol. 1, dossier 6; Dosare Personale [Personal Files], Manissalian; Bucharest National Archives, fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Poliție [Regional Police Inspectorates], dossier no. 673, dossier no. 487; National Archives, Cluj County Service, *Comisariatul de Poliție Gherla* [Gherla Police Commissariat], dos. 17, Archives of the Armenian Apostolic Diocese, Bucharest. Other important sources for our approach were: the Official Gazettes of the period and the pandects published, such as the C. Hamagiu Collection, *Codul General al României, Coduri, legi, decrete-legi și regulamente* [General Code of Romania, Codes, laws, decrees and regulations], C. Hamangiu, *Codex Romaniae*, Gheorghe C. Iotta, *Călăuza Naturalizării* [Guide to naturalization] etc. Another important source for the analysis of the statute of Armenian refugees in the adoptive country was Louise W. Holborn's article "The legal status of political refugees, 1920-1938", published in 1938 in *The American Journal of International Law*, article which defines the international legal framework that regulated the situation of refugees. Also, the large number of articles published in the Ararat Armenian periodical, the goal of which was the notification of the refugees regarding the bureaucratic proceedings that they had to fulfill in order to obtain the right to stay, to work etc. are an important source for the understanding of the hardships with which the members of the community had to deal with.

For the chapter dedicated to the Armenian-Gregorian Church of Romania and its role in the life of the community I have primarily used primary sources, such as the Archives of the Armenian Gregorian Diocese in Bucharest, uncatalogued; the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Fond 16 Biserici Străine în România [Foreign Churches in Romania], Dossier pertaining to Albanian Churches in Romania 1920-1930, Armenian Churches in Romania 1879-1944, Bucharest National Archives, fond Frontul Armeniei [Front of Armenia], dossier no. 15/1951;

the laws by which the cult was accepted and the conditions that it had to abide by were set, the regulations of the cult etc. published in the Official Gazette (e.g. Official Gazette no. 104, Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1930, 1<sup>st</sup> part) and in the collections of laws from that period (G. Alexianu, C. St. Stoicescu, *Codul General al României, (Codurile, Legile și Regulamentele uzuale în Vigoare) 1856-1932* [General Code of Romania (Codes, Laws and Usual Regulations In Force], vol. XIX, *Legi uzuale cuprinzând întreaga legislațiune a anului 1931 cu indexe cronologice și alfabetice* [Laws encompassing the entire legislation of the year 1931 with chronological and alphabetical indexes]); articles referring to the Armenian Gregorian Church of Romania, to its congresses and the divergences between the different members of the leading forums, published in the Ararat and Bahag Armenian periodicals. Also, as an edited source I have used the work of Edvard Jeamgocian, *Catedrala Armeană din București* [The Armenian Cathedral in Bucharest], which offers complex information pertaining to the history of the Armenian Gregorian Church, but which has to be used in a critical manner, as there are some differences between the information found in the archival and published sources and that reported by the author.

Regarding the life of the Armenian community in interwar Romania, its organization into different associations (relief, artistic, cultural, politic) as well as its cultural life, the sources used are archival and journalistic, as well as memoirs correlated with edited sources. The Armenian publications Ararat and Ani have mirrored the life of the community in that period, publishing news on every aspect of everyday life. Of the archival sources used we mention: Bucharest National Archives, fond Inspectoratele Regionale de Poliție [Regional Police Inspectorates], dossier 477 Rapoarte, note, invitații ș.a. referitoare la activitatea Asociației Culturale Armene „Raffi” din Constanța [Reports, notes, invitations etc. referring to the activity of the “Raffi” Armenian Cultural Association in Constanta], fond Ministerul de Interne [Ministry of Internal Affairs], dossier no. 433 Mișcarea minorităților. Armeni [Movement of minorities. Armenians], “Front of Armenia” Organization, Fond 43, fond 2980 Asociația pentru Ajutorarea Armeniei [Association for Aiding Armenia], the Archives of the Armenian Gregorian Diocese etc. Also, we have used interviews of members of the community who have lived in the period, such as: the memories of Agop Arakelian about the period in which he was a pupil of the Armenian school in Bucharest, article published in the Ararat periodical in 2014, interview of Agop Cividian, a member of the community by Zoltan Rostas, published on the website memoria.ro. Another important source for this part of the research were journals. As such, the memoirs of Levon Harutiunian, published in the form of a book, *Siberia dus- întors* [Round trip to Siberia], represents a valuable source regarding the identifying of formal and informal leaders of the Armenian community in Romania in the interwar period, as well as regarding the political life and the turmoil inside the political circles during the interwar, due to the fact that the author was a member of these circles, where he was in close relations with many outstanding personalities of the community. The memoirs of Eliza Diradurian, published in the book *Amintiri ale unei profesoare și directoare de la Școala Armeană din București (1950-1955)* [The memoirs of a teacher and headmistress of the Armenian School in Bucharest (1950-1955)] represents a

relevant source as it pertains to the composition of the teaching staff of the teaching institution. Of the edited works, we mention: Edvard Jeamgocian, *Armenii din Bazargicul de altădată* [Armenians in the Bazargic of yore], Vartan Mestugean, *Istoria Armenilor* [History of the Armenians], vol. II. *De la căderea regatului până în zilele noastre* [From the fall of the kingdom until nowadays], volume published in 1926, H. Dj.Siruni, *Armenii în Viața Economică a Țărilor Române* [Armenians in the economic life of the Romanian lands], etc. Also, for information on outstanding members of the Armenian community in the interwar, besides the articles in the time's Armenian newspapers and the appearances in the Official Gazette, an important source were the works of Simion Tavitian, *Armenii dobrogeni în istoria și civilizație românilor* [The Armenians of Dobrogea in Romanian history and civilization] și *Armeni de seamă din România* [Outstanding Armenians in Romania].

### **The structure of the thesis**

The present research is structured into nine distinct chapters, which address a segment of the whole of the subject at hand. These chapters have a independent analysis structure, however the elements addressed in each are complementary.

The second chapter focuses on the definition of the theoretic, that is social and political framework of the genocide, the framework in which the events at hand took place. Through the theoretical analysis of the genocide a definition of the parameters and the general motives that define the research itself is attempted, also focusing on the general framework regarding the motives, progress and effects of the genocide. Here we may observe that there is no generally accepted theoretical framework, and the issue of the genocide is seen through diverse perspectives and using different instruments of analysis, thus they also cover a specific segment of the general issue.

The third chapter delimits the theoretical framework and introduces a localizing and specificity element to the post-genocide processes/problems. Thus, the definition of the historic, social, politic and economic context on the level of the Romanian Kingdom from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represents a significant element in the understanding of the post-genocide dynamics. On the other hand, in this chapter the legal framework of the Armenians' migration from Ottoman to Romanian territory is addressed, at the same time a framework for analysis is created for the subsequent elements of the study, which derive from the problems addressed in this chapter. Here the underlined element is the drawing of the fragile legal framework that guarantees access and stay to the Armenian refugees on Romanian territory. The issue of the Nansen passports, of the residency card or of the booklet for exercise of profession represents the main issues dealt with in this chapter.

The fourth chapter is a contextual study of the role of the Church in the evolution and coagulation of the Armenian community on Romanian territory. The issue of the forming of the Armenian Gregorian Diocese of Romania is studied, as well as its organization and its activity in

the Armenian community and the Romanian society. A large spectrum of issues and conflicts is presented, which have coagulated or divided the community throughout the two interwar decades.

Chapter five centers around the community's efforts directed towards the aiding of refugees and increasing their living standards. In this context, a study and analysis is conducted of the UAR, the orphanage in Strunga, the societies for helping those in need, the nursing homes and the public health establishments.

Chapter six focuses on the role of associations, of the legal entities from the community, which contributed to the evolution of the cultural, artistic and sports sphere of the old and new members of the Armenian ethno-cultural group in interwar Romania. Here the following are underlined: Erevan Artistic Society, "Arax" Society, "Komitas" Society, Union for Physical Education, Armenian Cultural Foundation. Their study is a part of the basic assembly of this chapter and the next (chapter seven), where the role and evolution of the educational pillar of the community and the evolution of the Armenian schools in interwar Romania is presented.

Chapter eight is based on the evolution of Armenian political trends and parties (from the diaspora and motherland), which have played a significant role in the dynamic of the community. These trends and parties, even though they lacked a distinct legal personality in Romania, played a significant role in the everyday lives of the different Armenian communities in the European and other diaspora. Armenakan, Dashnak, Hanceag, Ramgavar, HOG or Raffi are the main formal structures around which members of the community rallied directly or indirectly, legitimizing their participation and actions in the community's public sphere.

Chapter nine brings a biographic contribution more so than an analytic one, however it offers not only information, but also coherence in the process of comprehension of the developments described in the preceding chapters.

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