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THE RETURNING HERO AND THE EXILED VILLAIN: THE IMAGE OF THE ARMENIAN IN OTTOMAN SOCIETY, 1908-1916[1]

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Abstract: This essay explores the evolution of photographic constructions of Armenian identity and the place of Armenians within Ottoman society through a comparison of images made in the aftermath of the revolution of 1908 with those produced during the 1915-16 period. In the earlier period, recurring motifs of return and reconciliation can be discerned, with there being pictured a new, inclusive Ottoman society. While Armenians were depicted as a vital element within post-revolutionary society, the photographic medium simultaneously identified those that that were thought not to belong and was complicit in their social exclusion. During the Armenian Genocide, photography was employed in a similar visual strategy, with Armenians finding themselves in a changed position, being targeted by the lens and marked as lying outside of a reconceptualised Ottoman society.

The manner in which the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP, also referred to as the Unionists, or the Young Turks) mounted their revolution of July 1908 is noteworthy, for it was by telegram that they warned Sultan Abdülhamid II that failure to restore the suspended constitution would be met with an armed response. The event presents a challenge to the conventional conceptualisation of technology as an instrument of the state by demonstrating how it could be turned against centralised authority by actors on the peripheries. Power, as Roderic H Davison observes, 'could emanate from either end of the telegraph line', and such a claim might equally be made with regards to the photography of the era.[2] Accepting this principle of multivalence, this essay examines the contrasting sides of photography and the divergent uses to which the medium was put. It specifically addresses the manner in which Ottoman Armenians were presented photographically and charts the evolution of images from the time of the revolution to the Armenian Genocide of 1915-16.

1. This work is partially the product of research undertaken at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, Yerevan, as a Raphael Lemkin Scholar in 2012. I would like to thank all colleagues and staff at AGMI, especially Gevorg Vardanyan and Arevik Avetisyan. The essay further develops sections from my PhD thesis 'Framing the Armenian Genocide: Photography and the Revisualisation of the Ottoman Empire, 1878-1923' (The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2015), for which I wish to thank Shulamith Behr, Gabriel Koureas, James Ryan and the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. My thanks also to Benedetta Guerzoni and those that commented on this essay in draft form. Translations are my own, except for those from Ottoman Turkish which are by Yaşar Tolga Cora.

2. Roderic H Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (London: Saqi Books, 1990), 156.

Having been associated with state surveillance and censorship during the repressive Hamidian era, photography became synonymous in the post-revolutionary period with new freedoms. The lifting of censorship brought about a marked rise in photographic practice amongst 'ordinary' Ottoman subjects and a great proliferation of images by way of illustrated magazines and picture postcards. The first part of this essay examines some of these photographic offerings, in particular those that appeared in one of the key publications of the era *Resimli Kitab* (Illustrated Book), as part of a consideration of the new individual and collective narratives propagated by the lens. Prominent motifs of return, reconciliation and fraternity can be discerned, with Armenians positioned as an integral part of a new, inclusive Ottoman society.

However, the new vision of empire did not embrace all. The very first days of the new constitutional regime saw the publication of images depicting 'enemies' of the state, a clear indication that photography could speak of exclusion as well as inclusion, and be used to denigrate as much as celebrate. The practice reached its apex during the First World War and the Armenian Genocide, when photography once again served the interests of the state. The second part of this essay considers photographic albums produced by the Ottoman authorities during this time, addressing these as some of the central photographic products of an era in which censorship and state control had once again been imposed. The albums, concerned with justifying state actions against the Armenians, can be read as enacting a reversal of the previous discourse of fraternity and inclusivity, thereby constructing an image of Armenians as a seditious element of which Ottoman society needed to be purged.

Photography

During its earliest days, photography's principal originators outlined their vision of an image-making practice with a unique relationship to the physical world. Frenchman Louis Daguerre stated that the new instrument gave nature 'the power to reproduce herself', while William Henry Fox Talbot, Daguerre's British counterpart, suggested something similar, not least by naming his first book of photographs *The Pencil of Nature* (1844-46).[3] Photography, based upon the registering and fixing of the reflected rays of the sun, was perceived in natural terms, its products regarded as 'imprints' of the physical world. Thought to elide the human element to produce direct and unmediated images of pre-existing physical reality, the medium gained its 'evidentiary' quality and its currency as a 'truthful' witness. Perhaps most memorable of all in this regard is Roland Barthes's later invocation of the 'That-has-been'. 'I can never deny that *the thing has been there*', he asserted of the photographic referent, 'the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens'. Therein was seen to lie photography's unique authority, with 'the power of authentication' exceeding 'the power of representation'.[4]

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3. Mary Warner Marien, *Photography: A Cultural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 23, 30-32.

4. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 76-7, 89.

Taking this as his point of embarkation, John Tagg argues that photography 'is not the inflection of a prior … reality, as Barthes would have us believe, but the production of a new and specific reality. 'Barthes's position is far more complex than simply the 'That-has-been', for photographs in his work are always wrapped up in wider associations, but he provides as useful opponent for Tagg's denunciation of the 'realist' position. Shifting the discussion from the 'magical' to the material, Tagg lays out the photograph in stark terms as 'a material product of a material apparatus set to work in specific contexts, by specific forces, for more or less defined purposes.'[5]The 'truth' of photography, from this perspective, is constructed; photographs are representations deployed with certain agendas and made meaningful within particular discursive frameworks. Spurred by the work of Michael Foucault, Tagg identifies institutionalised observation productive of social categorisation and control as the key defining context of photography.

This is an area also examined by Allan Sekula, but his theorisation is notable for positioning photographs as controlling instruments of power within a wider range of photographic activity. Sekula outlines a double system of representation in which photographs function 'both *honorifically* and *repressively*. In other words, the photograph might speak either for or against its subject. Sekula places bourgeois portraiture and the criminal archive in relation to one another, identifying them as two opposing ends of photographic practice and discourse in which 'every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police'.[6] These different photographic modes are described in terms of a certain symbiotic relationship, fortogether they outline the shape of society. This reading of photography as a medium productive of not only castes but society at large invites the possibility of charting the journey of Armenians from one side of the social and photographic spectrum to the other.

Visualising Revolution

The revolution of July 1908 brought about the restoration of the constitution, the transference of power away from the sultan, and the relaxation of limits on freedoms of association, assembly and the press, with one consequence being a press boom and an immediate increase in the presence of photography in Ottoman life.[7] Significantly, photographers were for the first time allowed at the weekly *selamlık*, the procession of the sultan and his entourage to Friday prayers at the Yıldız Hamidiye Mosque, as British witness Charles Roden Buxton recounts:

The first week after the Constitution (that is the way they describe what is almost a new era in chronology) the photographers were admitted to the court of the mosque, and one of

5. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 3.

6. Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3-63 (original emphasis).

7. Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 25-50; Erol Baykal, *The Ottoman Press, 1908-1923* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2013), 29-44.

them secured the finest snapshot of His Majesty that has ever been taken. It is all a terrible profanation ... But I do not think the Sultan can complain. A snapshot is better than a bomb.[8]

The 'new era' was thus inaugurated photographically, with the camera prising open the previously hidden world of Ottoman power. Henceforward, photography would have a role to play in the proceedings of the new empire, participating in a public realm characterised by openness and visibility. Indeed, it became something of a motif of the time, with the new figure of the public photographer evident in the foreground ofone of the many illustrated postcards marking the restoration of the constitution (figure 1). The scene depicted is typical of the era, featuring celebrants coming together as a cohesive mass in order to usher in a new epoch. The card's message of 'Long Live the Constitution; Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' suggests not only political change but also, in being presented in Armenian, Greek, Ottoman Turkish, French and Ladino, social progress. Image and text thus combine to demonstrate succinctly the ostensible central principles of revolutionary thought that aspired to an inclusive, collaborative 'nation' comprised of the different Ottoman ethnic communities and based upon the enlightened beliefs that had underpinned the French Revolution.[9] Meanwhile, on the peripheries of the scene the role of the photographer is ambiguous; simultaneously a part of the crowd and apart from the crowd, he occupies a liminal position between observation and participation, between visibility and invisibility.

Figure 1
Photographer Unknown, "Proclamation de la constitution le 24. Juillet 1908.," Hayk Demoyan, Haykakan sporty ev marmnakrtutyuny osmanyan kaysrutyunum [Armenian Sport and Physical Gymnastics in the Ottoman Empire] (Yerevan: AGMI, 2015), 10.

8. Charles Roden Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), 152.

9. Erik J Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, 2010), 57-58.

After the censorship of the Hamidian era, the public presence of the photographer in the constitutional era was seen as a remarkable indication of new freedoms, as suggested by Charles Roden Buxton's description of the *selamlık*. That account is also interesting in its linking of photography with the prospect of a new political and social settlement, with his comment about photographs replacing bombs appearing to allude to the occasion in 1905 when the *selamlık* was the scene of a Dashnak attempt on Abdülhamid's life. In a sign of the great sea change, three years after that event revolutionaries were invited to participate in the new constitutional politics, with the Dashnak activist and *Droschak* journalist Aknuni describing his return to Constantinople to his colleagues in Geneva:

> You cannot imagine how happy I am to be able to write you from this city without the slightest censorship or control. After thirty-two years of silence, the city is chanting "Freedom"; the crowds are drunk with joy.[10]

The letter succinctly communicates a distinct historical moment that saw the unleashing of pent-up emotions as people revelled *en masse* in newly restored freedoms. Indeed, the crowd became the motif *par excellence* of the day, with the flood of new illustrated periodicals offering abundant images of street celebrations and 'public manifestations'. *Resimli Kitab* contains fine examples of this phenomenon, with its first issue alone containing 15 such scenes, including an image of the first post-revolutionary *selamlık* ceremony, as if to share in Buxton's view of it as a foundational event.[11]A further scene depicts celebrations outside the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Péra (figure 2), a setting that would seem to suggest an emphasis upon the re-emergence of the Ottoman Armenian community after a period of oppression.[12]However, the church itself is not visible, and the scene is instead dominated by a crowd gathered beneath Ottoman flags on the Grande Rue de Péra. In short, the image is concerned with communal identity and public solidarity, and by locating the Armenians within a wider collective it suggests not simply the re-emergence of this marginalised group but its reintegration into the social body.

Resimli Kitab balanced these broad images of mass events with portrait photographs that specifically located the revolution and its values in the bodies of a number of individual actors. Notable amongst these was Enver Bey, the Young Turk 'hero of liberty' who had spearheaded the movement to restore the constitution and who recognised in the camera a means of sculpting a public persona.[13] The raising of Enver to the status of 'national' figure was greatly aided by his willingness to pose for the lens and the dissemination of the resulting images by way of illustrated magazines and picture postcards, affordable, compact and mobile formats that allowed photographic images to be increasingly woven into the daily fabric of Ottoman life.[14] The new 'heroes' were not re-

10. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 53.
11. *Resimli Kitab*, 1 (September 1908): 40.
12. *Resimli Kitab*, 1(September 1908): 60.
13. *Resimli Kitab*, 1 (September 1908): 17; 2 (October 1908): 158; 10 (July 1909): 974.
14. Edhem Eldem, "The Dissemination and Impact of Photography in the Ottoman Empire, 1870–1914"

Figure 2
Photographer Unknown, 'Demonstrations outside the Armenian Church in Péra', Resimli Kitab, 1(September 1908): 60

stricted to the ranks of the CUP, however, for there existed a strong strain of rhetoric dedicated to saluting those that had previously opposed the government. Armenian revolutionaries emerged from hiding to be ceremoniously welcomed by Armenians and Turks alike and, as Raymond Kévorkian describes the turn of events, these 'militants, villains only yesterday, were suddenly being celebrated as heroes'.[15] Similar scenes were played out across the empire with fighters from various ethno-religious groups, and readers of *Resimli Kitab* were presented with portraits of Greek, Albanian and Macedonian fighters, the latter praised for having 'made common cause with the Turks in order to call for the constitution'.[16]

Enver's utilisation of the camera for the theatrical staging of political and social identity was nothing new, as shown by the images that revolutionary organisations had produced over decades of anti-Ottoman agitation.[17] The creation of such scenes continued after July 1908, and yet clearly the new era had brought about a seismic shift in the connotations attached to the image of the *fedayi*, with that figure morphing from a shadowy, seditious enemy to a public, patriotic ally, while the broad and varying aims of disparate revolutionary

in *Camera Ottoman: Photography and Modernity in the Ottoman Empire 1840-1914,* ed. Zeynep Çelik & Edhem Eldem (Istanbul: Koç University Publications, 2015), 106-153.

15. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 53.

16. *Resimli Kitab*, 2 (October 1908): 124-125.

17. See, for example, Martina Baleva, "Revolution in the Darkroom: Nineteenth-Century Portrait Photography as a Visual Discourse of Authenticity in Historiography," *Hungarian Historical Review* 3:2 (2014): 363-390.

groups were happily subsumed within the narrative of a unified struggle for constitutional politics. Perhaps nowhere is this better seen than in *Resimli Kitab*'s coverage of the ongoing revolution in neighbouring Persia, a country seen as having similarly suffered by the hands of both domestic despotism and foreign imperialism.[18] One of the visual focal points of a 1910 report is Yeprem Khan, the Persian-Armenian Dashnak who had previously operated in Ottoman lands and been part of the famous Googoonian expedition.[19] Now dubbing him a 'warrior of freedom', *Resimli Kitab* hailed Yeprem Khan's 'extraordinary sacrifices in the making of the Persian Revolution' in texts accompanying numerous heroic images of him and his revolutionary colleagues.[20] It is, above all, his own solo portrait adopting the established *mise-en-scène* of the *fedayi* photograph that provides compelling evidence of the extent to which images and philosophies of the sort once restricted to the underground revolutionary presses had found a place within popular, mainstream illustrated magazines.

Such image rehabilitation occurred not simply among *fedayin* but within a wider circle of dissidents and outcasts. Myriad returning exiles were honoured by *Resimli Kitab*, with Patriarch Madteos II Izmirlian providing Armenians with perhaps their most powerful symbol of return and reconciliation.[21] The first edition reproduced his portrait to mark his arrival back from Jerusalem, a city to which he had been banished by Abdülhamid in 1896 for protesting against the massacres of that time.[22] Izmirlian returned bearing a wreath given to him by the Jerusalem branch of the CUP, and the second edition of *Resimli Kitab* carried an image of a ceremonial procession to the cemetery at Şişli for it to be laid in memory of the Armenian victims of the massacres (figure 3).[23] It is a scene in which the Patriarch himself is barely distinguishable amidst a throng of people made up, as the caption describing joint endeavour suggests, of both Armenians and Turks. Through a symbolic renunciation of the Hamidian past and its imposed social divisions, emphasis is again laid on collective identity and reintegration into the Ottoman fold. The image stands as a prime example of what Michelle U Campos terms the 'theatrical production of revolutionary brotherhood', for it consciously enacts, through a visual rhetoric of kinship and solidarity, a vision of a society in which citizens would stand as equals.[24] It can be identified as part of the dominant discourse of the day, with the themes of return, reconciliation, fraternity and the 'Unity of the Elements', based upon a

18. Palmira Brummett, "Image and Imperialism," 91-96.

19. AGS, "General Yeprem Khan," *Armenia* 5:12 (July 1912): 359-361.

20. *Resimli Kitab*, 21 (June 1910): 760-785.

21. Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 32-35.

22. *Resimli Kitab*, 1 (September 1908): 32.

23. *Resimli Kitab*, 2 (October 1908): 176.

24. Michelle U Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 74-81.

Figure 3
Photographer Unknown, 'The wreath sent by the Armenian and Turkish Committee of Jerusalem to the Armenian Cemetery of Şişli', Resimli Kitab, 2 (October 1908): 176

shared Ottoman citizenship of the different communities, being at the fore.[25] In this way, the revolution was staged not only on the streets but also within the pages of the press.

However, the source of such rhetoric and the precise nature of these events is unclear. Bedross Der Matossian hints at their inherent contradictions, for while 'some of the revolutionary festivals were spontaneous, they all entailed a certain level of organization and planning'.[26] Of the cemetery visits Raymond Kévorkian poses the blunt question: 'How are we to interpret the display of mutual respect ... in a capital in which a little more than ten years earlier thousands of Armenians had been publicly disembowelled?'[27] It is difficult to state with any certainty whether these events were staged productions or organic expressions of newfound freedoms, and as such they occupy a vague, indistinct zone between the actions and rhetoric of the political parties and those of the general public. These ambiguities were similarly carried by the print culture of the day. The illustrated press presented itself, according to Palmira Brummett, as a 'forum for the voices of the "people", as if voices, somehow snatched from the air … had suddenly metamorphosed directly onto the printed page'. However, it was not free from influence, being regularly utilised by political parties in order 'to mobilize support, influence public opinion, and even spread rumours'.[28]

25. Erik J Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 57-60.
26. Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, 37.
27. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide,* 54.
28. Palmira Brummett, "Image and Imperialism," 53.

The source of photographs was sometimes unknown, for many carried no credit lines or indications of authorship. However, the mention of a photographer's name below an image or the reproduction of their signature within the frame was becoming increasingly common. With this growing suggestion of human agency at work in photography, the photographer emerged into public life. *Resimli Kitab* gave prime billing to its main photographic contributors, the new studios of Apollon, run by Aşil Samancı, and Kenan Bey, crediting them alongside the editor and thus affording their roles similar stature.[29] On at least one occasion, Kenan Bey found his portrait featured in *Resimli Kitab*'s pantheon of honoured faces, while amateur image-makers also found a home within the magazine upon the advent of its photography competition.[30] There can be little doubt that image-making was enjoying a period of unprecedented freedom and, as photographic practice flourished, the photographer began to take on a role in Ottoman Society that was at once more prominent and more visible.

Not all photographers prospered, however, and within the pages of *Resimli Kitab* can also be found a portrait of Ali Sami, a former military photographer close to the sultan's court, reproduced beneath the words 'former ministers and spies of *l'ancien régime*'.[31] The portrait formed part of a collection of *personae non gratae*, those deemed too closely associated with Hamidian power to have a place in the new society of the constitutional era. This rogues' gallery served to delineate a Hamidian space for public edification, projecting the idea that responsibility for the internal conflicts and international failures that had brought about imperial decline was confined to a small circle, and that the empire, apparently unburdened by inherent structural failings, was at liberty to begin anew. Enacted was a process of social ostracism that mirrored political and physical exile, with this in Ali Sami's case taking the form of his being stripped of his rank and removed from the capital by way of an administrative posting to Alexandretta.[32] Images of the empire's *personae non gratae* were but another way in which the new era was signalled, appearing in the first issue of *Resimli Kitab* along with portraits of those returned from exile. Acting as counterpoints to one another, those admitted into the imperial body are weighed against those expelled in a reciprocal motion, with the process speaking of the social and political reconfiguration of the empire. Created is what Allan Sekula writes of as the 'shadow archive', a photographic hierarchy of the social terrain in which portraits contribute to the conceptualisation of the social body by identifying and demarcating its 'heroes' and 'villains'.[33]

Ali Sami had proudly posed with his imperial medals, thus projecting a relationship to state power. The portrait was clearly produced for honorific purposes, and indeed would

29. Ibid., 36.

30. *Resimli Kitab*, 14 (December 1909): 119; 2 (October 1908): 288-292.

31. *Resimli Kitab*, 1 (September 1908): 62.

32. Bahattin Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople: Pioneers, Studios and Artists from 19th Century Istanbul,* Volume 1 (Istanbul: Aygaz, 2003), 342.

33. Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 10.

be used by the photographer to advertise his studio.[34] However, in its reprinting the subject is inadvertently associated with a cruel form of power and accused of playing an unethical role on behalf of that power, thus standing damned by his own professed connections with *l'ancien régime*. This act of appropriation provides a lesson in the passage of photographic meaning, showing how the semantic fluidity of the medium allowed for the imposition of divergent connotations. As photographic historian Silvana Palma has observed, a caption 'influences perception to such an extent that it can reverse its interpretation' so that 'the same image can be taken equally well to portray an ally or a traitor'.[35] The example of Ali Sami also succinctly demonstrates Sekula's double system of representation within photography, with 'every proper portrait has its lurking, objectifying inverse in the files of the police'. His portrait made the transition from one side of the medium to the other, showing how images could be upturned, and with them reputation and social standing. Photography provided its subjects with a means of defining themselves and their places in society, but it also contained the potential for these to be given definition by others.

Seen here is the hand that photography had in crafting public personas and shaping the social landscape. Its role could be one of not only expressing solidarity but also asserting its limits, and this engagement in disciplinary modes was brought into sharper focus after the failed counter-revolution of April 1909.*Resimli Kitab*'s first issue after that event features images of chained prisoners and public executions, with such vilification interspersed amongst laudatory photographs of those who had taken action to defeat the counter-revolution. The magazine continues the use of dramatic image contrasts to describe the social and political terrain by presenting a photograph of a shackled and guarded 'reactionary' opposite one of new sultan Mehmed V, a juxtaposition that worked to characterise the latter as much as the former.[36] Although at first used by some to celebrate the reimplementation of the constitution (as evidenced by the picture postcard already discussed), the image of Abdülhamid had proved too firmly wedded to the negative connotations it had accrued over the years.[37] Rehabilitation of the sultan's image was only possible with Abdülhamid's removal and the accession of his brother, with Mehmed providing the Young Turks with a blank space upon which to project ideas of new beginnings and 'national' cohesion.[38]

1909 also saw shifts in the image of the Armenian in Ottoman society when massacres took place in Cilicia. The swirling of rumour played a part in the violence, and it is interesting to consider one particular accusation levelled at the bishop of Adana, Mushegh Seropian, namely that he had been photographed in the guise of an ancient Armenian king.

34. For a reproduction of the photograph in this context, see Bahattin Öztuncay, *The Photographers of Constantinople*, 341.

35. Silvana Palma, "The Seen, the Unseen, the Invented: Misrepresentations of African "Otherness" in the Making of a Colony. Eritrea, 1885-1896," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 45:177 (2005): 39-69.

36. *Resimli Kitab*, 8 (May 1909): 762-795.

37. Palmira Brummett, "Image and Imperialism," 121-123.

38. Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 73-94.

The photograph, in fact, depicted the bishop wearing ceremonial dress on the occasion of a feast day, but it was read by some as revealing the Cilician Armenian community's desire to establish an independent kingdom.[39] The incident is further evidence of how readily semantic migrations could occur with photographs, and the likelihood of such rereadings became heightened in charged environments in which changes to the social order threatened established power and privileges.

Fears concerning the loss of power only increased as the new Ottoman leaders failed to stem imperial decline, most notably with the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 reducing the empire's European holdings to a small toehold on that continent. The ensuing coup d'état completed the Unionist's seizure of the state and brought about a return to Hamidian forms of governance.[40] The reimplementation of censorship greatly contributed to the end of the press boom and the retreat of print culture, with *Resimli Kitab* producing its final edition in 1914.[41] The shallowness of their commitment to the constitution and the principle of the 'Unity of the Elements' exposed, it was clear, as Erik Zürcher explains, that the CUP 'identified themselves with the interests of the state … and of the Muslim majority. Their perceived enemy was as much an 'enemy within' as an 'enemy without''.[42] Only a few short years after the restoration of the constitution, Armenians were being presented as a people whose identities could not be reconciled with the new vision of the state. As Edhem Eldem states at the close of his essay that takes photography up to 1914, photography followed in the wake of the empire's darkening politics 'and soon abandoned its recently achieved freedom to become the instrument of violent ideologies and aggressive nation building.'[43]

Visualising Genocide

As it had been with the revolution, the genocide was in part founded upon the visual construction of identity. From the time of the disastrous Ottoman defeat at Sarikamiş in January 1915, the Unionists promoted an image of Armenians as traitors and fifth columnists.[44] This campaign took on a visual element after the Entente declaration of May that year that those responsible for the recent massacres of Armenians would be held to account, and Germany's own warnings to its Ottoman partner that a better 'presentational' job was needed in order to legitimise its acts to a world audience.[45] Production of a number of books, albums and

39. Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian Genocide*, 78.

40. Erik J. Zürcher, "The Young Turks - Children of the Borderlands?" *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9:1-2 (Summer 2003): 275-286.

41. Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey during World War I* (London & New York: IB Tauris, 2007), 11-14.

42. Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building,*, 69; See also Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, 170-176.

43. Edhem Eldem, "The Dissemination and Impact of Photography," 153.

44. Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 75-76.

45. Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1978-1918)* (New

pamphlets was overseen by *Polis Mecmuası* (Police Magazine), part of a slim press industry that was by this time not only censored but utilised for state propaganda.[46] The first publication to result was *Aspirations et Agissements Révolutionnaires des Comités Arméniens avant et après la Proclamation de la Constitution Ottoman* (1916/1917), a book, printed first in Ottoman Turkish and then in French, that contained substantial texts supported by a number of photographs.[47] This was followed by a photographic album in two volumes with texts in Ottoman Turkish, English, French and German (1916).[48] The range of languages in use in itself provides an indication of the intended audiences for the work.

The publications utilise both images made by Armenian groups and images created by the Ottoman authorities, deploying them in tandem in support of an official government version of events depicting Armenians as 'instruments of foreign governments'.[49] This narrative describes the good faith of the Young Turks during the constitutional era, for at 'all Armenian ceremonies, at the reception for the return from Jerusalem of Patriarch Izmirlian, as well as at the requiem at the cemetery of [Şişli] in memory of Armenians who died for the Constitution, one always saw at the forefront the most well-known figures from the CUP'.[50] However, 'while all Ottomans were fraternising and indulging in the joy that had very naturally arisen from the new era of freedom, Armenians piled up engines of destruction in all corners of the country'.[51] In this way, Armenians are presented as betraying the revolutionary ideal of Ottoman brotherhood and reconciliation. Not only is the discourse of 1908 invoked, but those very scenes and images through which it was staged, including the previously discussed visit of Patriarch Madteos II Izmirlian to Şişli. We thus see outlined the project of these albums, being the complete reversal of the former narrative of unity.

As has been observed by Benedetta Guerzoni, the characterisation of the Armenians as 'forever dedicated to conspiracy' had its roots in the state propaganda of the 1890s.[52] Therefore, the narrative of the 1916 albums should not be seen simply as an inversion of the discourse of 1908 but a reversion back to the dominant narratives of the Hamidian era. The discourse of the genocide years harked back to, and most likely consciously stirred memories of, the late nineteenth-century broad brush characterisation of the Armenians as a treacherous community. As in the past, revolutionaries were presented as drawing all

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Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 123-127.

46. Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, 79-82.

47. *Aspirations et agissements révolutionnaires des comités arméniens avant et après la proclamation de la constitution ottoman*[Constantinople: 1917](Ankara: Direction Général des Archives de l'Etat du Premier Ministre, 2001), hereafter *Aspirations et Agissements Révolutionnaires.*

48. *Ermenİ Âmâl ve Harekât-I İhtįlâlįyyesį Tesâir ve Vesâįk,* two volumes [1916] (Ankara: Ankara Matbaacılar Ciltçiler ve Sanatkarlar Odası Eğitim ve Kültür Yayınları, n.d.), hereafter *Ermenİ Âmâl*

49. *Aspirations et Agissements Révolutionnaires*, 8-12.

50. *Aspirations et Agissements Révolutionnaires*, 50.

51. *Aspirations et Agissements Révolutionnaires*, 67.

52. Benedetta Guerzoni, "Il "nemico armeno" nell'impero ottomano: le immagini," *Storicamente*, 1:6 (2005), www.storicamente.org/guerzoni (accessed 7 September 2016).

Armenians into their conspiratorial web. They are described, for example, as promoting revolution, independence and nationalism in schools, instilling 'hatred against the Turks and all things Turkish, poisoning the minds of children'.[53] The restoration of the Armenian revolutionary to the former role asbogey man of the empire is further evidenced by the reprinting of *fedayi* portraits, including those of Andranik, Murad of Sebastia and Keri. While this again shows continuity with the Hamidian era, it is difficult not to dwell on the stark contrast with the stories of recent years when one reads references to Keri's activities alongside Yeprem Khan. This 'incriminating' connection to a man once celebrated as a hero of the constitutional era demonstrates how the image of the *fedayi* had evolved once more.[54]

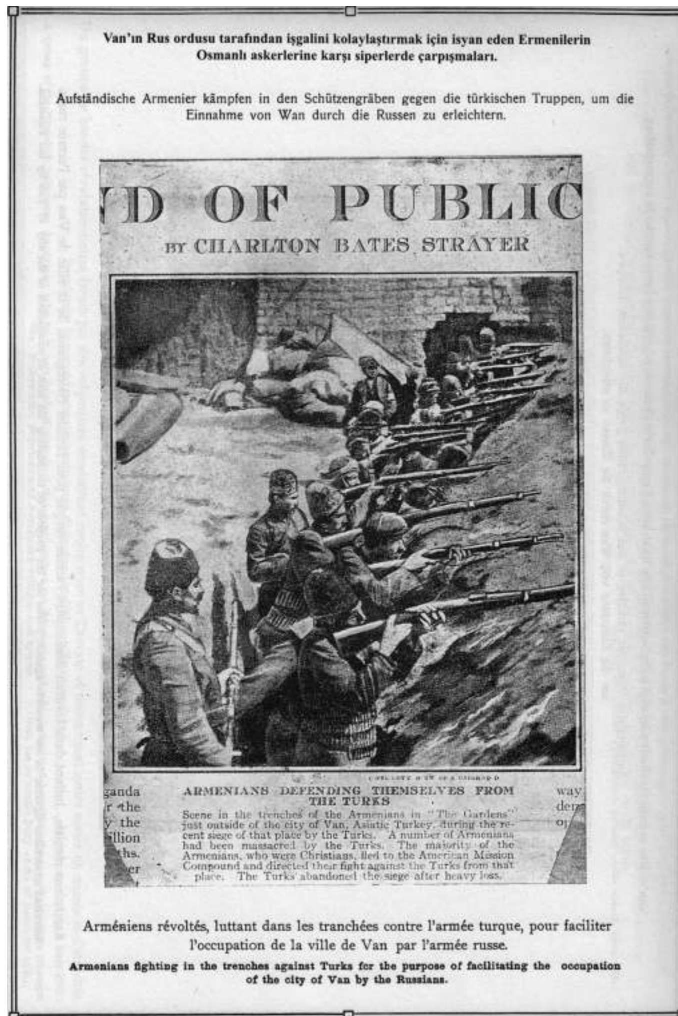
With their overarching narrative of sedition and betrayal, texts provide the lens through which Armenian images are viewed. This operation, designed to shape readings and subvert messages, is at work most clearly in the direct application of new captions to existing photographs, notably in the case of images from the 1915 siege of Van. That these images had their origins in the US press is plain to see, for the albums reproduce not only the images but wider sections of the newspapers that originally housed them. The result of this intriguing editorial decision is that captions both old and new are legible, and the supreme role of text in guiding interpretation is made evident. 'Armenians defending themselves from the Turks' reads one still visible newspaper caption; 'Armenians fighting in the trenches against the Turks for the purpose of facilitating the occupation of the city of Van by the Russians' is the caption with which the first is overlaid (figure 4).[55] The second text inverts the scenario laid out by the first, in the process turning defence into attack and victim into aggressor. Through such transplants, Armenians are subjected to a variety of the treatment seen meted out in 1908 to Ali Sami. Images designed as positive portrayals of their subjects are recast as pictures of villainy, and the strata of conflicting captions makes the viewer privy to this process of the rewriting of photographic meaning.

In addition to these semantic redeployments, the Ottoman authorities produced new accusatory photographic tableaus depicting prisoners and weapons. Such images also circulated as prints that were passed from hand to hand and shown in private circles, as attested to in his memoirs by Rafael de Nogales, a Venezuelan officer serving in the Ottoman army. Recalling a meeting with Mehmed-Asim Bey, commander in the gendarmerie of Diyarbekir, de Nogales describes how 'this gentleman overwhelmed me with attentions; and offered me two photographs, showing him and his secretaries aligned behind a stack of arms'. Presented as loose prints, these photographs were free from the texts that guide interpretation in the printed albums, and yet they had their own determining narrative with

53. *Aspirations et Agissements Révolutionnaires*, 52.

54. *Ermenİ Âmâl*, Vol.2, 64.

55. The original source for the photograph and text appears to have been the periodical *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly* (the precise edition is not known). The photograph was also printed with the caption 'Armenians Fighting for their Lives' in *The Literary Digest* (9 October 1915). For the Ottoman version see *Ermenİ Âmâl,* Vol.1, 53.


Van'ın Rus ordusu tarafından işgalini kolaylaştırmak için isyan eden Ermenilerin Osmanlı askerlerine karşı siperlerde çarpışmaları.

Aufständische Armenier kämpfen in den Schützengräben gegen die türkischen Truppen, um die Einnahme von Wan durch die Russen zu erleichtern.

D OF PUBLIC

BY CHARLTON BATES STRAYER

ARMENIANS DEFENDING THEMSELVES FROM THE TURKS

Scene in the trenches of the Armenians in "The Gardens" just outside of the city of Van, Asiatic Turkey, during the recent siege of that place by the Turks. A number of Armenians had been massacred by the Turks. The majority of the Armenians, who were Christians, fled to the American Mission Compound and directed their fight against the Turks from that place. The Turks abandoned the siege after heavy loss.

Arméniens révoltés, luttant dans les tranchées contre l'armée turque, pour faciliter l'occupation de la ville de Van par l'armée russe.

Armenians fighting in the trenches against Turks for the purpose of facilitating the occupation of the city of Van by the Russians.

Figure 4
Photographer Unknown, 'Armenians fighting in the trenches against the Turks for the purpose of facilitating the occupation of the city of Van by the Russians', Ermenİ Âmâl ve Harekât-I İhtįlâlįyyesį Tesâir ve Vesâįk, 1916, Vol.1, 53

the commander painting the Armenians as the agents of a Russian-sponsored plan of revolution. Of this Nogales writes that 'it is impossible to know whether things were thus in hard fact, or merely in the Dantesque vision of the Sublime Porte, which, habituated to its own regime of blood and darkness, believed that the rest of the world acted in the same way.' He was certain, however, that the photographs were of questionable veracity, for he saw the 'discovery' of weapons in Armenian homes and churches as a charade, while an examination of the photographs told him that most of the weapons were not designed for combat. His conclusion is that 'this ostentatious collection of elements of war was nothing more nor less than the work of Mehmed-Asim Bey himself, in his attempt to mislead and impress the public'.[56] We

56. Rafael de Nogales, *Four Years Beneath the Crescent* (New York & London: Charles Scribner's Sons,

find similar statements in the memoir accounts of Aram Dildilian, who was tasked with photographing what he terms 'fake' displays of weapons in Marsovan, and Mary Louise Graffam, an American missionary in Sivas.[57]

The 'evidence' provided by these photographs not only took the form of weapons but also the human body (figure 5). Armenians were paraded as prisoners of the state in photographs that conform to an overarching compositional format premised upon the disciplinary modes identified by John Tagg, 'a repetitive pattern, the body isolated; narrow space; the subjection to an unreturnable gaze'.[58] Furthermore, many prisoners display numerical markers on their chests, thus giving the suggestion of the photographs operating within a disciplinary apparatus, as per the model of Alphonse Bertillon's classificatory system in which photographs of criminals were accompanied by detailed physical descriptions and measurements.[59] However, whatever state bureaucratic function the Ottoman photographs may have served, as seen in the albums they largely lack any corresponding information detailing the identities of their subjects. In such minimalist form, photographs play no role, as they did within the Bertillon system, in pinning down identity. Such imaging is instead interested only in highly reductive forms of characterisation and categorisation, resulting in generalised pronouncements regarding an entire community. As such its subjects stand not as themselves but as anonymous symbols of Armenian 'treachery' and 'lawlessness'.

Armenians were not the only people on show for the camera. The account provided by de Nogales of his meeting with Mehmed-Asim Bey suggests that the propaganda mission upon which the commander had embarked was in no small way orientated around himself as the subject. The creation of negative images of Armenians was certainly the primary aim of these pictures, but they also served as opportunities for positive depictions of Ottoman functionaries. Importantly, these figures are not just symbols of Ottoman power in the way that prisoners are symbols of Armenian guilt, for they also stand before the camera as individuals wanting to promote themselves. The role they play is similar to that of the policeman and doctor in British criminal photography as described by Jennifer Green-Lewis, those who '[b]y writing themselves into the photograph ... announce the significance of their authority, just as they indicate their sense that such authority must be recorded in order to be rendered real.'[60] Such people were thus involved, as Enver had been, in personal image construction based upon the projection of power, perhaps similarly imagining

1926), 140.

57. Armen T. Marsoobian, *Fragments of a Lost Homeland: Remembering Armenia* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 199; Susan Billington Harper, "Mary Louise Graffam: Witness to Genocide" in Jay Winter (ed.) *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 214-239.

58. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 85.

59. Jonathan Finn, *Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Show to Surveillance Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 23-28.

60. Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 225.

Figure 5
Photographer Unknown, 'Some bombs seized at Ada-Bazar together with tools to manufacture them. A few influential leaders of the Committee and some of its members whose duty it is to make bombs and distribute them', Ermenİ Âmâl ve Harekât-I İhtįlâlįyyesį Tesâir ve Vesâįk, 1916, Vol.1, 32

themselves in the role of 'national' heroes. What was theatrically performed in the wartime albums, however, was unmistakeably the wielding of power over others.

By providing testimony in favour of agents of the state and against Armenians, these photographs succinctly demonstrate Allan Sekula's double system of representation, and do so not within the space of the archive or in the pages of a journal, but within the frames of single images. In this way, photographs of officials and their captives combine the criminal mug shot and the society portrait, thus acting both repressively *and* honorifically. This dual role is particularly evident in a photograph from Maraş that depicts two clusters of people in a scene divided along the horizontal axis (figure 6). On the upper level stand Ottoman soldiers and officials, while below them we find a group of Armenian prisoners. The two groups are separated physically and socially, with the camera performing different operations with regards to each: those above are praised by the lens, while those below are condemned. Comparing this to the 1908 photographs of crowds, particularly that of the procession of Armenians and Turks at Şişli, we see the abandonment of solidarity and the involvement of photography not in the breaking down of social divisions but rather in their construction. The Maraş photograph's clear signalling of its message of the violent tilting of the social scales possibly provides the reason why this photograph did not appear in the Ottoman albums, appearing instead to have circulated only in the form of prints. The accentuated theatricality with which its scene of rise and fall is performed suggests the photograph more as a souvenir and trophy than a piece of 'evidence'.[61]

61. For this aspect of photography, see Leigh Raiford, "The Consumption of Lynching Images" in *Only*

It is necessary to consider what took place not only in front of the lens but behind it also. Grigoris Balakian, the priest and historian of the years of destruction, reports the widespread use of Armenian photographers for the making of these images.[62] The Ottoman state thus relied upon the skills of members of the very community it was targeting, and the survival of some photographers because of their roles in the construction of 'evidence' against Armenians calls to mind Primo Levi's 'Grey Zone', the ambiguous, morally complex position in which some victims found themselves during the Holocaust.[63] These photographers included the Dildilians of Marsovan, whose survival also rested upon a forced conversion to Islam, and the Encababians of Sivas.[64] The work of these photographers was not advertised, and it might be said that if the post-revolutionary period witnessed the emergence of the photographer into the public realm, then the genocide era witnessed the disappearance. The absence of photographers' names is in keeping with a strategy that positioned these images are neutral, organic documents that carried that aforementioned quality of having been 'somehow snatched from air'. Similar tactics were at work when, according toFuat

Figure 6
Photographer Unknown, Upper level - Ottoman officials and soldiers, including Ali Haydar Pasha, Mutesarif (Governor) of Maraș, Lower level- Armenian prisoners from Zeitun in Maraș. Hayk Demoyan (ed.), 100 lusankarchakan patmutyun Hayots tseghaspanutyan masin [100 Photo Stories on Armenian Genocide] Yerevan: AGMI, 2015, 48.

Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self, ed. Coco Fusco & Brian Wallis (New York: International Center of Photography / Harry N Abrams, 2003), 267-273

62. Grigoris Balakian, *Armenian Golgotha*, trans. Peter Balakian & Aris Sevag (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 108.

63. Primo Levi, *The Complete Works of Primo Levi* (UK: Penguin Classics, 2015), 2430-2456.

64. Armen T. Marsoobian, *Fragments of a Lost Homeland*, 187-253; Kay Encababian Surabian, Unpublished transcript of interview conducted by Ruth Thomasian 22 November 1988 (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Watertown, Massachusetts).

Dündar, publication details were omitted from the albums to obscure their CUP origins, in the belief that 'Western public opinion would be more impressed if they were presented as impartial publications.'[65]

Dündar reports that 1700 copies of the propaganda booklets were sent to foreign diplomatic offices and Ottoman embassies abroad for distribution in 1917.[66] Yet it is also clear that the material had already been in circulation for around a year, with the British historian Arnold Toynbee describing seeing an album shortly after publication in spring 1916. While compiling documents for *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, he wrote of coming into contact with 'what they call an album containing photographs of arms purporting to have been found in possession of the Armenians'. Of this material he was dismissive, although without questioning some of the claims, stating 'I imagine that the Armenians were indeed in possession of a considerable number of arms, having been permitted to possess them ever since 1908'.[67] The Ottoman bid to convince foreign powers of the legitimacy of it actions seems to have met with little success, and yet it must be noted that its propaganda also appears to have carried a domestic agenda. The writer Yervant Odian records an encounter in Konya in 1918 while on his return to Constantinople after surviving deportation. He found that the albums, 'specially published to inflame the Turkish mob and the Turkish police against the Armenians', were being circulated among the population by local Unionists. This, he writes, 'was nothing but laying the groundwork for a massacre. And indeed, a short time after the arrival and distribution of those books, Turkish hatred towards the Armenians was even greater'.[68] The process described by Odian strongly resembles what Jay Winter terms the 'cultural preparation of hatred, atrocity, and genocide', the demonization of the enemy that, in a context of total war, allowed 'war crimes on a revolutionary scale and character' to take place.[69] Seen thus, the Ottoman visual propaganda operation was not simply concerned with constructing justifications for foreign powers but performed the vital role of readying the domestic cultural space that was necessary for the enactment of a violent reshaping of society. As instruments of this cultural preparation, the albums played a role akin to that of the illustrated press as previously discussed, being used 'to mobilize support, influence public opinion, and even spread rumours'.

Returning once again to Allan Sekula's assertion that the photographic definition of the criminal body contributes to the creation of a hierarchical social body, we might see how in the Ottoman Empire it was the body of the Armenian that was used for purposes of social construction. An aspect of social definition and social separation is evident in all prisoner

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65. Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers*, 125.

66. Ibid.

67. FO 96/205, Arnold Toynbee to William Walter Rockwell, 8 June 1916 (Foreign Office papers, National Archives, London)

68. Yervant Odian, *Accursed Years: My Exile and Return from Der Zor, 1914-1919* (London: Garod Books, 2009), 286.

69. Jay Winter, "Under Cover of War: Genocide in the Perspective of Total War" in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915, ed.* Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 37-51.

photographs, but is most clearly seen in the image of the two groups in Maraşwith its harshly delineated composition. As *Resimli Kitab* had previously done with its assembled galleries of the 'former ministers and spies of *l'ancien régime*', the albums brought together the images of those that were to carry the blame for the empire's misfortunes. However, in highly generalised depictions and narratives those being identified and disciplined were not individuals but an entire community. Branded as the 'enemy within', Armenians were presented as a dangerous social element from which the empire needed to be freed in order to survive and prosper.

The discursive reformulation of Ottoman identity taking place at this time was played out through photographs that identified those that belonged and those that did not. That the officials in these photographs represented the power of the state is clear, but they were also presented as *belonging* to the Ottoman state in a way that the Armenians on view did not. In the state narrative, the Armenian populace had chosen to reject the promise of the 1908 revolution and the new Ottoman contract, siding with outside forces who sought the destruction of the empire. In accordance, they were presented visually as being no longer Ottoman, no longer part of society and no longer subject to the protection of the state. Armenians in this scenario, this 'Dantesque vision' to borrow Rafael de Nogales's term, were an alien, hostile element that needed to be removed from Ottoman soil, the very soil that was in the process of being reconceptualised along Turkish 'national' lines.

The photographs made of Armenian prisoners in 1915-16 were a visual signal of the end of the multi-ethnic Ottoman society and collective existence that had been celebrated, in just as visual a manner, in 1908. Separated by seven years, these two groups of images constitute radically different imperial visions and take part in the different discourses that shaped the empire over those short years. However, the strategies at work in each case are remarkably similar, for they demarcate an 'us' and a 'them', identify those that belong and those that do not. The Young Turk revolution of 1908 had brought about a new discourse of Ottoman identity, one orientated around fraternity and solidarity. Photography took part in the reordering of the Hamidian world, theatrically announcing a new world of returning heroes and Ottoman brotherhood. However, the treatment of elements of *l'ancien régime* demonstrated that the 'new' empire had its divisions and that the camera would be deployed as an instrument to define different social groups and cast out those that were deemed to have no place. Armenians were painted as an essential element of Ottoman society in 1908, and yet later found themselves on the receiving end of this visual project, one that sought to depict them as a rotten section of the empire that needed removal. The image of an empire under threat from an 'enemy within' was promoted through the production and circulation of photographs in the same way that the image of a resurgent and united society once was. In the process of redefining the Armenian community, photographs also contributed to the redefinition of the empire in narrow national and religious terms. The returning hero and the exiled villain: these were the roles assigned to the Armenians in the period following the revolution, the picture of inclusion morphing into one of annihilation.