

THE ARMENIAN COLONY IN THESSALONIKI

Virtually nothing has been written in Western languages about the Armenian colony in Thessaloniki, which is in fact the oldest one in Greece. Although Armenians have lived in the city for centuries, one finds only a few scattered references to them in the Byzantine and Ottoman periods. This study is not intended to fill the bibliographical gap, however, but merely to give a general outline of the colony's history and an idea of our research, which is as yet in its infancy. Quite apart from anything else, the basic source of information on this subject, the colony's own archive (which is fairly complete), is still unsorted and uncatalogued. Consequently, this study makes only fragmentary use of unpublished material, and for the most part it has not been possible to provide the usual archival references. Our use of Thessaloniki's Armenian newspapers has been equally limited; although, as we shall see further on, they were numerous and important for a brief period between the Wars, they are very difficult to find nowadays. At this stage in our research, more valuable information was furnished by one particularly important work, the first proper record of the Thessalonican Armenians' activities, which was compiled by a former teacher of the Armenian colonies of Northern Greece, Asadur H. Magarian. Magarian's record was printed in Armenian in Thessaloniki in 1929, but has not yet been sufficiently utilised for research¹. As far as possible, we have cross-referenced the material from the direct, and more so the indirect, sources with data drawn from the Historical Archives of the Greek Foreign Ministry, the public Record Office in London, and elsewhere.

The history of Thessaloniki's Armenian colony is no recent affair. Quite apart from what we know of the Byzantine period², it is almost certain that a small nucleus of Armenian merchants and craft-traders was living in the city

1. A. H. Magarian, *Hushakirk Tragio yev Makedonio Hai Kaghutneru* (Memorandum for the Armenian Colonies of Thrace and Macedonia) (Thessaloniki, 1929), pp. 84-307.

2. P. Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire", *Byzantinoslavica*, 22 (1961), 238. Cf. P. Risal (J. Nehama), *La ville convoitée: Salonique*, sixth edition (Paris, 1918), pp. 65-6.

as early as the seventeenth century³; and there is clear evidence of Armenians in Thessaloniki in the first decades of the eighteenth century⁴. However, continuous and proper documentation of the Armenian presence in the city dates from the 1880s: for March 1881 we possess not merely general references, but an actual register of the names of 20-25 Armenian families who were permanently settled here. They comprised the first tiny nucleus of the colony whose descendants continued to populate the city until the 1920s and, to a certain extent, until the present day⁵.

The colony, then, is at least a century old, a period which may be divided into three major phases. The first begins in the 1880s and lasts more or less until the early 1920s, when the influx of thousands of refugees from Eastern Thrace and Asia Minor brought new dimensions to the colony and, as we shall see, changed its character. The second phase, which may nominally be said to have started in 1920, lasted until 1946, which was the year in which a large section of our Armenian colony — in particular those who had come here as refugees after the Asia Minor Disaster — began a mass exodus from Greece in search of a permanent homeland in Soviet Armenia, in Transcaucasia. The third phase, finally, which begins in 1948 and continues up until the present day, comprises the colony's current history.

The colony has experienced both major and minor demographic fluctuations. The data we have collected so far suggest that during the first period the colony increased in size more or less steadily. Thus, in March 1881, as we have said, there was an original nucleus of some 20-25 families, giving a probable total of 70-80 individuals. This nucleus swelled quite rapidly, such that by 1885 it comprised 35 families (183 individuals)⁶; and over the next ten years this figure virtually doubled to some 324 souls⁷. During this period,

3. At least according to Evliya Celebi: N. Moschopoulos, "Ἡ Ἑλλάς κατὰ τὸν Ἑβλιγιά Τσελεμπή" (Greece described by Evliya Celebi), *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Βυζαντινῶν Σπονδῶν*, 16 (1940), 352.

4. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 85. Cf. Garo Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk* (General Diary), IV (1957) (Beirut, 1956), p. 352; A. E. Vakalopoulos, *Ἱστορία τῆς Μακεδονίας, 1354-1833* (History of Macedonia, 1354-1833), (Thessaloniki, 1969), p. 169.

5. See Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 86-7, for a list of the names of these families and the occupations of their heads.

6. See the Archive of the Armenian Community of Thessaloniki (henceforth: AAC), *Hin domar mgrdutian amushnution yev mahran, 1885-1932* (Old book of baptisms, marriages, and deaths, 1885-1932), pp. 1-12 (= 4-15), for a catalogue of the names of these families with some further data.

7. See the Public Record Office, Foreign Office (henceforth: PRO/FO) 78/4734, ff. 383-5, for a report by the British consul in Thessaloniki, J. E. Blunt, dated 27 November

the colony's population remained more or less stable. Only some of the Armenian officials of the Ottoman state or employees of foreign companies may be considered to have been temporary residents, since once their period of service was over they left for other parts of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, another decade later, in 1908, the number of Armenians in Thessaloniki was still roughly the same: 300 individuals⁸. With the Liberation, however, some of the Armenian state officials left the city: shortly after Thessaloniki had been incorporated into the Greek state, the colony was slightly reduced in size to some 50 families, or 250 individuals. The number rose again, however, during the First World War, at which period 60 Armenian families (274 souls) were settled in Thessaloniki⁹. Towards the end of the War, in 1917, their number rose to 500-600 individuals, at a time when the Armenian population in Greece as a whole was estimated at 1500¹⁰.

The established Armenian community of Thessaloniki frequently extended its hospitality to temporary Armenian residents: for instance, some 700-800 Armenians of the Ottoman army, who had been wounded or taken prisoners and left stranded in the city after the end of the First Balkan War, were taken in by the Armenian residents or given medical treatment in the colony's school building¹¹. The same thing happened a few years later with the Armenian soldiers of the Russian expeditionary force which had taken part in the operations of the Macedonian Front in 1916-17¹².

The colony's numbers — as indeed the whole population of Thessaloniki — shot up suddenly in the brief period between 1920 and 1923: the influx of Armenian refugees, first from Eastern Thrace and later from Asia Minor, brought the colony up to more than 3,500 members¹³; and by 1923

1896, stating the number of the colony's members: 234 adults (158 men and 86 women) and 90 children.

8. P. M. Kontoyannis, "Σχολεῖα ἀλλοφύλλων ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ" (Schools of Foreigners in Thessaloniki), *Μακεδονικὸν Ἡμερολόγιον Παμμακεδονικοῦ Συλλόγου*, (1910), p. 182 (investigation conducted in 1908).

9. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 136-7; Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, VII (1960) (Beirut, 1959), p. 354.

10. According to a report by the French ambassador to Athens, Robert de Billy, dated 5 November 1918, and published in Arthur Beylerian's collection, *Les Grandes Puissances, l'empire ottoman et les Arméniens dans les archives françaises (1914-1918)* (Paris, 1983), p. 714. Cf. Risal, *La ville convoitée*, pp. 351-2.

11. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 102.

12. Beylerian, *Les Grandes Puissances*, p. 716.

13. Of these 3,286 were refugees. A list of the names of this first group of refugees survives in AAC, *Deder Artsanakrutiyan kaghtaganats* (Register of Refugees), No 1 (no date of registration).

this number had almost tripled to an impressive total in excess of 10,000 souls¹⁴. The colony soon began to shrink again, however, for as early as the autumn of 1924, and over the next three years, over 3,000 Armenians (at least a third of the population) left Thessaloniki. There were two principal reasons for this: firstly, the Armenians emigrated in large numbers to Western Europe, America, and above all Soviet Armenia; and secondly, the Greek authorities displaced many of them from Northern Greece (mainly Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace) to the Peloponnese and Crete¹⁵. By 1929, Thessaloniki's Armenian colony comprised some 6,500 souls¹⁶, a number which was to remain essentially stable until 1946. In July of that year, a census of the colony carried out for the British produced a figure of 6,010 members¹⁷.

14. Cfr. Table VI. A total of some 55,000 Armenian refugees were living in Greece as a whole, of whom 20,000 were settled in Northern Greece in 1924; see the report of the Armenian Metropolis of Thrace and Macedonia, dated 21 August 1924, in the Archives of the Hellenic Foreign Ministry, 1924, *1st Political Department, f. League of Nations/F 3* (henceforth: AFM/1924/A/KE/F3), No 117 (it was dispatched to the ministry by the General Administration of Macedonia, No 16751, on 24 August 1924). Cf. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 137; Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, p. 354 (c. 18-19,000 individuals in Northern Greece, 10,000 of them in Thessaloniki).

15. As early as November 1924, 116 Armenian families (a total of 491 individuals) had taken ship in Thessaloniki harbour for France and Soviet Armenia. Eighty-eight of these families (368 individuals) belonged to the colony; the rest were from Xanthi (5 families), Drama (16 families), and Kavala (7 families). In the eight months from September 1924 to April 1925, 3,313 Armenians left Greece, most of them for France (1,747 individuals) and Soviet Armenia (1,068). Concerning the problems facing the Armenian refugees in Northern Greece at that period, see: AFM/1924/A/KE/F3, *doc. cit.*, and documents of the International Labour Office, the General Administration of Northern Greece, the prefectures of Thrace, and the Thessaloniki Office of the Supreme Refugee Commission of the League of Nations, for the years 1924-5. Concerning the question of the displacement of Armenian refugees from Greece to Soviet Armenia and the effects of this "repatriation" on Greek-Soviet relations in 1925-6 and 1928-32, see A. L. Zapantis, *Greek-Soviet Relations, 1917-1941* (New York, 1982), pp. 178-9, 196-7, 269-75.

16. This figure is taken from a register of Thessaloniki's Armenians, which was compiled in 1929 with a view to their acquiring Greek citizenship. It comprised about 6,000 names (2,000 families), to which may be added those of the community's old members (c. 400-500): Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 137. Cf. Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, pp. 355-6 (some 6,000 individuals in 1930).

17. PRO/FO 286/1184: the British consul-general in Thessaloniki, E. Peck, to his embassy in Athens (26 July 1946). Cf. PRO/FO 371/58735, p. 109. Another census, however, carried out a month later by official Greek bodies, produced somewhat lower figures: 5,567 individuals, of whom 5,525 were from Thessaloniki and the surrounding area, and the rest from other parts of the prefecture. The census telegraphed on 12 September 1946 to the British consul-general by the British military services in Thessaloniki (see PRO/FO 286/1184, *doc. cit.*) also included those who in the meantime had left (as we shall see further on) for Soviet Armenia.

However, in the summer of 1946 a new exodus began for Thessaloniki's restless Armenian citizens, as indeed for the members of the Armenian Diaspora as a whole. Tens of thousands of Armenians, mainly from the Middle East and the Balkans, but also from Western Europe and America, accepted the USSR's invitation to settle permanently in Soviet Armenia. It was an impressive 'repatriation' programme, which Stalin combined with important political initiatives of his own in regard to the Armenians' lost homelands of Kars and Ardahan in Turkey. So between 17 August 1946 (when the first large group of Armenians left Thessaloniki harbour for 'home'¹⁸) and 16 November 1947 (when the last group left from Piraeus) some 4,600 of its Armenian citizens left the Macedonian capital¹⁹. The first systematic assessment of the colony's members to take place after this exodus was conducted on 10 September 1947, and listed only 462 families (1,344 people in all)²⁰. However, not long afterwards, a new census, which was conducted on 5 June 1948 on behalf of the Armenian Archbishopric of Athens, came up with a total of 509 families (1,399 individuals)²¹. The disparity may be due to the fact that the 1947 census — which was taken for the Aliens' Department — did not include those families which had acquired Greek citizenship.

Another small decrease was soon to follow, when, over the next five years, a number of Thessaloniki's Armenian residents left to seek a better fortune in Western Europe and particularly in Latin America. By 1953, the colony numbered 451 families (1,157 individuals)²². Henceforth this level was to remain stable, and today Thessaloniki's Armenian colony is estimated at some 1,200 people, of whom 712 are adults²³.

The colony has suffered considerable ups and downs as far as its economic and social development is concerned. At the end of the nineteenth century, Thessalonican Armenians, like the Greeks, exemplified those of the Sultan's

18. PRO, *doc. cit.*, report by E. Peck, dated 26 July 1946, which included the numbers of those who had put their names down for "repatriation" (a total of 1,359 individuals, of whom 365 were from the colony of Thessaloniki).

19. The departure dates were: 17 August and 29 September 1946, 2 and 17 August, 6 September, and 16 November 1947; see note in AAC, *Domar martahamari* (Census book), 1948f., p. 150 (= 152). For this 'repatriation' (nerkaght) see Claude Mouradian, "L'immigration des Arméniens de la Diaspora vers la RSS d'Arménie, 1946-1962", *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, XX/1 (1979), 79-110.

20. AAC, *Domar martahamari: Hamarod* (Census book: Summary), 1947, p. 132.

21. AAC, *Domar martahamari*, 1948f., p. 146 (= 148).

22. AAC, *Domar martahamari*, 1948f., p. 123 (= 125).

23. According to data provided by the superior of Thessaloniki's Armenian Apostolic Church, Archimandrite Shahe Panossian. We should like to take this opportunity to thank *vardapet* Shahe for his generous assistance in our research in the community's archives.

chiefly Christian subjects who were leading the way towards the modernisation and westernisation of the Ottoman Empire. They were architects, engineers and usually higher officials of the eastern railway companies, military doctors, pharmacists, post-office officials, forestry commissioners, experienced technicians, and goldsmiths. Some were teachers of foreign languages and technical subjects in the Ottoman schools, others agriculturalists or specialists at the pilot Agricultural School which opened near Sedes (Thermi) in 1888²⁴. After the Liberation, the picture changed slightly: the Armenians who remained were chiefly involved in commerce and craft-trades, a fact which is pointed up by the notable part they played in the very first International Trade Fair of Thessaloniki in 1926²⁵. The colony's social composition changed somewhat with the arrival of thousands of wretched and homeless refugees at the beginning of 1920. Henceforth, though the ranks of the successful businessmen were soon swelled by no small number of the refugees, a great mass of underemployed men, labourers, and small traders were to live alongside the Greek refugees in shanties and hovels in certain quarters of the city, most notably Ayia Paraskevi, Eleftheria (Harmankioi), Kato Toumba, Harilaou, Armenohori (Sykies), and the Upper Town. And it was mainly this poorest section of the city's Armenian population which left Greece in 1924-7 and 1946-7, seeking a better life in the West and in Soviet Armenia²⁶. The colony's social composition today is as varied as that of Thessalonican society as a whole.

The Armenian community began to organise itself as far back as the 1880s. In 1884, the first six-member 'national committee' (*Azkhain Khorhurt*) was formed, elected by the traditionally established assembly of the colony's representatives²⁷. Like the Church, the community came under the direct control and jurisdiction of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate of Constantinople, which, from 1885 to 1922 appointed the colony's vicars. Following the Greek Disaster in Asia Minor and the problems that were created for the Armenian element remaining in Turkey, the Armenian community and its Church passed under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate

24. PRO/FO 78/4734, *doc. cit.* Cf. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 86-7, 90, 145-59.

25. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 133, 270-8, for brief *curricula vitae* of Armenian businessmen of Thessaloniki.

26. PRO/FO 286/1184, *doc.* No 199/31/46 of the British embassy in Moscow to the Foreign Office (4 September 1946), containing information about the professional capabilities of the Armenians arriving in Soviet Armenia from the Middle East and the Balkans. Cf. PRO/FO 286/1184 (report by Peck) (= PRO/FO 371/58735).

27. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 90, for the names of the members of this first committee.

(Catholicosate) of Echmiadzin, in the Soviet Republic of Armenia. From 1957 onwards, the appointment of the colony's, and indeed the whole country's, vicars has been in the hands of the erstwhile Patriarchate of Cilicia, now in Antelias in the Lebanon²⁸.

With the appointment of the colony's first vicar, Mikael Hovanessian, a regular register of baptisms, marriages, and deaths began to be kept, and an, albeit rudimentary, archive of the colony was started, which, as mentioned above, still more or less survives today. Over the next two years, 1887-8, the community also managed to acquire its own privately owned cemetery (which now lies beneath the Ayios Dimitrios Hospital)²⁹.

At the same time — in 1887, that is — the first Armenian school began to function on a more or less regular basis, the 10-12 pupils being taught by the vicar. It was originally housed in a building near the Greek Church of St Athanasius, but in 1903 was transferred to premises near the Arch of Galerius (Kamara). In 1907 the community acquired a privately owned two-storey school that was built next to the church, and it was here that Manig Depanian began her career as the community's first professional teacher. The number of her pupils rapidly swelled from 30-35 to 40-45³⁰. As we shall see further on, after 1922 the school became the seat of the Armenian Metropolitan of Thrace and Macedonia, while simultaneously serving increased needs as a kindergarten, primary school, and orphanage, as a result of the influx of hundreds of homeless Armenian refugee children. Two other establishments also fulfilled the needs of care and education: the girls' school, which was opened in the Harilaou quarter in 1923, and the so-called 'national school' (nursery and primary levels), which operated from 1928 onwards at Beh Çinar. Other schools too, which opened in Armenian neighbourhoods, also served the dual function of educational establishment and poorhouse³¹. All these occasional and more permanent institutions were kept going chiefly by the

28. Cf. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 90, 133-6 (list of the vicars from 1885 to 1903). Concerning the subjection of the Greek Armenians to the Patriarchate of Antelias and the incidents this provoked in the colony, see Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, VII (1960), pp. 295-6.

29. Concerning the colony's administration's efforts in this direction, see Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 92-5. Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, p. 353, mentions that it was donated by the Ottoman state.

30. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 98-100; cf. Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, pp. 353-4.

31. It should be noted that in October 1923 the community was obliged to care for 2,824 destitute people; of these 1,626 were adult females and 1,198 orphans of both sexes under thirteen years of age. These data are to be found in the report by the Armenian Metropolitan of Thrace and Macedonia of 21 August 1924 (see above, note 14).

community, their basic sources of revenue being collections, subventions, and private contributions from Thessalonican Armenians and other Armenian colonies in Greece and abroad. The colony's archive preserves numerous documents and a variety of testimonies to these charitable efforts, which were co-ordinated by the Armenian Archbishopric of Thrace and Macedonia and by various Armenian philanthropic bodies, some of them purely local and others affiliated with organisations (which often bore the same name) and foundations of the wider Armenian Diaspora. Local organisations included the Armenian Committee for the Aid of Refugees (founded in 1922) and the girls' orphanage, which was opened in 1927 in the Harilaou quarter on the initiative of Mary Minasian; amongst the affiliated bodies were the Armenian Red Cross (founded in 1923), the well-known Gülbenkian Institute (which financed a school at Beh Çinar from 1924 onwards), the Armenian Women's Educational Association (which was founded in Constantinople in 1879, and from 1923 to 1928 assisted the operation of a girls' school in Harilaou), the Armenian General Benevolent Association (founded in 1906), and the Armenian Cross of Mercy (founded in December 1929). The last two organisations mentioned are still active today, and indeed the Armenian Cross of Mercy maintains Thessaloniki's only Armenian school, which opens once a week for the direct benefit (chiefly linguistic) of some fifty students.

The burden of educating and caring for the thousands of Armenian children during the difficult interwar period (which was further complicated by the international crisis of 1929-32) was also shared directly and from the start by foreign philanthropic organisations and missions. For instance, the Danish Friends of the Armenians financed and ran its own primary and technical school in the Toumba quarter; in 1923 the Swiss Mission, which was founded at the beginning of the century, set up a small handicrafts centre in Thessaloniki, which employed and supported some 200 Armenian girls, and another school in the Harilaou quarter³². Finally, a number of the students attending 'Anatolia College' (which, of course, was originally founded in Marsovan, in Asia Minor, and attended chiefly by Armenian students³³) were members of the Armenian colony. It is interesting to note that in 1924, when 'Anatolia' first opened in Thessaloniki, a third of its students (some fifty children) were Armenian³⁴.

32. For details of the colony's schools and orphanages, see Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 100, 144-5, 159-66, 168-70, 173-4, 178-94. Cf. Karl Meyer, *L'Arménie et la Suisse*, Villeurbanne 1974, pp. 190, 214 f.

33. See G. E. White, *Adventuring with Anatolia College* (Grinnel, Iowa, 1940), pp. 157f., for a list of the names of the college's alumni when it was in Marsovan.

34. White, *Adventuring*, pp. 121, 169; Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 170.

The community's chief concern from the start, however, was to build its own church. Even after the Ottoman reforms of 1863, which gave a boost to the secular aspect of its nationality, for the Armenian people the church still remained not merely the only centre wherein to discharge their religious obligations, but the most important nucleus around which their sense of ethnic identity was formed (a fact which still holds good today). Up until 1884, the few Armenians living in Thessaloniki fulfilled their religious needs in the Greek Orthodox churches³⁵. In that year, the colony inaugurated a temporary church on the second floor of a house near the Aslan-khan in the Vardari quarter. Shortly afterwards, the church and the school were transferred to a site near the Church of St Athanasius, and subsequently to another house near the present-day Stratou Avenue³⁶. By November 1903, however, the community had acquired its own proper temple, dedicated to the Virgin Mary; it stands in Dialektis Street.

Efforts to build an Armenian church began in 1884 with contributions from Armenians in Thessaloniki and in other colonies of the Diaspora, and the following year the process of acquiring the necessary firman from the Sultan was set in train. Some years later, in 1902, the community was granted the ownership of the necessary plot of land for the church, the school, and the vicarage³⁷; and the same year the efforts (led by Krikor Passalian) to obtain Abdul Hamid II's approval of the plan were finally successful³⁸. Work apparently began at once, and the church was built in about a year (see Tables I-II). This is confirmed by the Armenian inscription over the entrance to the church (Table III), which states that: 'This church was erected in the name of the Virgin Mary with the assistance of the [Armenian] colony of Thessaloniki on 16 November in the year of Our Lord 1903, and in 1352 according to the Armenian custom'. It is interesting to note that the church was designed by

35. Kondoyannis, "Σχολεία", p. 182. The information given by the Jesuit priest François Tarillon to the effect that in 1714 the Armenians of Thessaloniki attended a 'public chapel', which the French consul had opened in the city (see Vacalopoulos, *Ιστορία*, p. 269), probably refers to Catholic Armenians.

36. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 89; Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, p. 353.

37. The AAC contains a *hojet* dated 3 Safer 1320 (12 May 1902), in which doubts are expressed about the ownership and the nature of this plot. Nevertheless, it seems that the problems were overcome in 1902, for it was in that year that work began on the construction of the church (Table IV).

38. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 90. However, the Sultan's firman approving the construction of the church, the school building, and the vicarage (which also survives in the AAC) is dated 18 Rebi-l-evvel 1325 (1 May 1907) (Table V). This may have been the date of the official ratification of the 1902 decision, which the community took as its basis for starting

a man who played an important rôle in the city's architectural history, the Italian architect Vitaliano Poselli, creator of some of Thessaloniki's best-known neoclassical buildings³⁹.

Not surprisingly, the church became the centre of the colony's community life, and in fact in 1922 the church complex also became the seat of the newly established Armenian Archbishopric (Metropolis) of Thrace and Macedonia, which succeeded the former Metropolis of Adrianople and Raedestos. Bishop Yervant Bertahtchian was installed as Metropolitan, and until his resignation on 24 January 1925 and departure for Bulgaria he had under his jurisdiction the whole of the Armenian Apostolic flock of Northern Greece⁴⁰.

After the Asia Minor Disaster, two more Armenian religious groups came into being in Thessaloniki: the Catholics and the Evangelists. These colonies were small, numbering some 1000 souls in 1922; and emigration (mainly to the countries of the West) reduced them still further, such that they were estimated at no more than 30-35 individuals by about 1959⁴¹.

From the time of its creation, the Armenian Apostolic community lived through all the ideological developments taking place within the Armenian nation, particularly in the Ottoman Empire. The part played in the community by the 'national council', the community's endeavours to preserve its members' sense of national identity through the schools and various organisations, as also its diverse efforts to draw attention to the sufferings of their fellow Armenians and their national claims illustrate the Thessalonican Armenians' participation in their own ethnic group's fundamental ideological activities. However, the colony's limited numerical force in the first phase of its history, allied with its social make-up, prevented its association with the activities of the Armenian patriotic organisations in the 1880s, and even more so with the dynamic initiatives of the Armenian revolutionary parties in the dramatic 1890s. Consequently, in 1894-6 the Armenians of Thessaloniki did not share the hideous experiences of their fellows in Constantinople, Trebizond, Van, Zeitun, and other cities in the Ottoman Empire⁴². There is also

the building work. All the same, this question requires further systematic investigation, which has already been begun by Mrs Kirki Georgiadis, who was also kind enough to read the community's Turkish documents for us.

39. V. S. Kolonas and L. G. Papamatthaiakis, 'Ο ἀρχιτέκτονας Vitaliano Poselli: Τὸ ἔργο του στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη τοῦ 19ου αἰῶνα (The Architect Vitaliano Poselli: His Work in XIX Century Thessaloniki), (Thessaloniki, 1980), p. 64, pl. 57-63.

40. Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, IV (1957), pp. 226-7.

41. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 242; Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, VII (1960) p. 387.

42. In his article, "Britain and the Launching of the Armenian Question", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 7 (1976), p. 484, R. F. Zeidner heedlessly reproduces rumours

no evidence that members of the community were in any way involved in the Young Turks' revolutionary movement, though Constantinopolitan representatives of the two most important Armenian revolutionary parties are known to have collaborated in it⁴³. At all events, in 1910, as soon as the commotion stirred up by the slaughter of Armenians in Adana had died down somewhat, the community set up its first philanthropic association, which had as its main purpose the relief of orphans and other victims of the Cilician tragedy. Two years later, another, similar, association undertook to look after the Armenian prisoners of the First Balkan War, as mentioned above⁴⁴. In the summer of 1915, still stunned by the news (which had reached them via Athens) of the systematic genocide of their fellows in Turkey, the Thessalonican Armenians launched efforts to stir up public opinion and concern in a variety of ways⁴⁵. A year later, the colony found warm support in Eleftherios Venizelos, as may be inferred from interesting, but as yet unsorted, evidence in

printed in *The Times* of London on 5, 6, 8, and 12 September 1890 to the effect that the great fire of 3-4 September 1890, which destroyed a large part of Thessaloniki's Jewish quarters near the sea, was the work of Armenian arsonists. These rumours were, of course, utterly groundless. Cf. also Stephen Bonsal's completely fictitious account, *Heyday in a Vanished World* (New York, 1937), pp. 286-9. According to the indisputable testimony of the city's British consul, J. E. Blunt, on 27 November (see note 7 above), the Armenians of Thessaloniki were "peaceful and inoffensive members of the town", whose preservation was due to the timely and active intervention of the vali Riza Pasha, who gave express orders to the police to protect the Armenian colony from any acts of violence on the part of the Muslim population. This intervention may not have been entirely unconnected with fear of a repetition of the humiliation the Ottoman authorities suffered after the incidents which led to the slaughter of the consuls in Thessaloniki in May 1876 (see A. E. Vakalopoulos, "Τὰ δραματικά γεγονότα τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης κατὰ τὸν Μάιο τοῦ 1876 καὶ οἱ ἐπιδράσεις τους στὸ Ἀνατολικὸ Ζήτημα" (The Dramatic Events of Thessaloniki in May 1876 and their Impact on the Eastern Question), *Makedonika*, 2 (1941-1952), 193-262. There is likewise no evidence that the Armenian community of Thessaloniki engaged in any form of political collaboration with the Armenian colony of Athens, which, as is well known, played an important part in the Armenian revolutionary movement between 1890 and 1896: Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement* (Los Angeles, 1963), pp. 66f; J. K. Hassiotis, "The Greeks and the Armenian Massacres, 1890-1896", *Neo-Hellenika*, 4 (1981), 87-109; Iosif Kassessian, *Ὁ ἀρμενικὸς ἀπελευθερωτικὸς ἀγώνας* (The Armenian Struggle for Liberation), (Athens, 1979), pp. 42-85.

43. E. E. Ramsaur, *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 62-64, 124-130. Cf. K. Moskof, *Θεσσαλονίκη: Τομή τῆς μεταπρατικῆς πόλης* (Thessaloniki: The Sideface of the Comprador City), 2nd ed. (Athens, 1978), pp. 154, 244.

44. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 259.

45. Beylerian, *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 59-60.

the community's archive⁴⁶. In the same period, the colony went into action for the liberation of the Armenian prisoners of war who had voluntarily gone over from the ranks of the Bulgarian army (being members of Armenian colonies in Bulgaria) to the Allied camp on the Macedonian Front. In 1918, the colony made some noteworthy achievements, considering its limited numbers, in its contribution to the relief of the first refugees (both Greek and Armenian) from Thrace and Western Asia Minor; and it was also involved in recruiting Armenian volunteers for the Caucasus and Middle East fronts, particularly in the course of the efforts to get together the well-known Légion d'Orient, which was active in Cilicia shortly afterwards⁴⁷. In the same year, the colony's younger members founded the Armenian Youth League, which had manifestly ideological aims⁴⁸.

All these initiatives developed in a general climate of euphoria and national fervour, which gradually spread through both the Armenian enclaves and the Greek population around them, especially after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the Mudros Armistice in October 1918. Following the declaration of the Armenian Republic in May 1918, and the Allies' announcement about the establishment of so-called Great Armenia in Eastern Asia Minor, the Armenian colony in Thessaloniki in particular was kept constantly informed about the prospects opening up for their national question by the Greek and the Armenian press, and sometimes by well-known personalities in the Armenian national movement who visited the city. In November 1918, Zadik Khanjarian, a former officer in the Ottoman navy and a member of the Armenian Commission in Paris, came to Thessaloniki and met the Greek authorities and members of the colony⁴⁹. About five months later, the Armenians' national hero, General Andranik (Ozanian), visited the city and worked with representatives of the community in an endeavour to rouse the colonies of Western Europe to push more intensively the Armenian aspirations in the Ottoman Empire⁵⁰.

During the Asia Minor campaign and also after Greece collapsed and the Greek and Armenian refugees arrived in Western Thrace and Macedonia,

46. Cf. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 104-6.

47. Beylerian, *Les Grandes Puissances*, pp. 489, 716.

48. It was dissolved in 1920, but reformed again after the Asia Minor Disaster: Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 259.

49. J. K. Hassiotis, "Shared Illusions: Greek-Armenian Co-operation in Asia Minor and the Caucasus (1917-1922)", in *Greece and Great Britain during World War I*, Institute for Balkan Studies (Thessaloniki, 1985), pp. 144, 160.

50. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 107.

some of Thessaloniki's Armenian citizens became involved (despite the opposition of the community's leaders) in efforts to recruit young Armenians to fight as *chetes* in sensitive areas at the front in the event of a renewed Greek-Turkish clash during the Lausanne negotiations. Indeed, it seems that by February 1923 some sixty individuals had already gone to Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace in this context⁵¹. This was connected with various incidents which took place in these areas and which were initiated by Armenian refugees. The Greek authorities' fears of disturbances in the sensitive districts of Thrace shortly after Greek-Turkish relations had been restored, allied with certain inevitable problems arising from Christian-Muslim cohabitation, impelled the Greek government to transfer a large number of the Armenian refugees from Alexandroupolis, Didymoteichon, Komotini, Drama, Serres, Kavala, and Thessaloniki to Southern Greece. Relatively few Armenians were forced to leave Thessaloniki in fact (and those more for political and economic reasons than any other), for the displacements were quickly stopped when both foreign charitable missions and Greek organisations reacted against them⁵².

The colony's state of ideological ferment became more evident and more acute in the decade 1925-35, after the Armenian refugees had settled down in Northern Greece in general and Thessaloniki in particular. The ideological conflicts which were exercising the city's Armenians revolved around three basic questions (apart, of course, from their constant concern for the preservation of the colony's language, culture, and sense of national identity). First of all, there was the question of what position the Armenian Diaspora should take over the tiny Soviet Republic of Armenia. One section of the Armenian population — that is, those who were the most materially disadvantaged in their adopted countries — saw no alternative to 'repatriation' in the distant, but one and only Armenian homeland of Transcaucasia. The chief exponents of this view were three political factions: the Armenian Communists, the small group that remained of the old Marxist party *Hinchakian*, and the supporters of the democratic-liberal party *Ramgavar Azadagan*, which was reorganised in 1921. It was these factions which either gave moral and material support to the tendency towards 'repatriation' (in the case of *Ramgavar Azadagan*) or actually made practical arrangements for it, through the *ad hoc* pro-Soviet organisation League of Aid for Armenia (H.O.K.). The majority

51. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, p. 129.

52. Extensive correspondence on this question is preserved in AFM/1924/A/KE/F3, and particularly in AFM/1925/A/4/11; scattered documents in the AAC; some information in Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, IV (1957), pp. 228-9.

of the Armenians, however, rallied round the powerful Socialdemocratic, but firmly pro-Western, party of the Armenian Revolutionary Confederation (*Hai Heghapokhagan Dashnaktsutian*), which preferred to keep the Armenians in the Diaspora and ready at all times to revive the national question and to claim their lost homeland in Eastern Turkey⁵³. The second burning issue for the colony was connected with its legal status (as a religious community or an ethnic minority), the question of its members' Greek citizenship, and generally the relationship between the Greek-Armenian element and the Hellenic authorities and the Greek social environment. Disagreements which arose in this quarter concerned not so much the goals themselves as the strategy by which they were to be achieved⁵⁴. The third problem, finally, which occupied the colony's leaders more than anyone else, was an important issue for almost the whole of the Armenian Diaspora in the East Mediterranean between 1927 and 1930 — namely the question of Armenian collaboration with the Kurds, particularly after the Kurdish uprisings of 1925 and 1930⁵⁵.

The ideological disagreements over these three dilemmas, as also over the other problems facing the colony (such as, for instance, aid for the refugees, and particularly the orphans, and the efforts and contributions being made in this area by the foreign philanthropic and missionary organisations), were argued out in articles in the Armenian press in Thessaloniki (Cfr. Table VII). It is an impressive fact that, despite the urgent problems of survival that were facing them, between 1923 and 1938 the city's Armenians produced more than ten Armenian-language newspapers. Many of them were short-lived, of course, some were not printed regularly, others circulated mimeographed. But some of the city's Armenian newspapers played an important part in the life of the colony, at a time when its relatively numerous population (as indeed the rest of the Armenian element of Northern Greece) was developing extremely interesting ideological trends⁵⁶. Of particular note in this context were:

53. Concerning the attitude of the Armenian political factions of the Diaspora to Soviet Armenia and the problem of "repatriation", see the brief observations by Gerald J. Libaridian, "Armenia and Armenians: A Divided Homeland and a Dispersed Nation", in *Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers*, edited by W. O. McCagg, Jr and B. D. Silver (New York, 1979), pp. 36-9, 47-51, 59 notes 79-80.

54. See the relevant correspondence in AAC. Cf. also AFM/1936/B/26E, f. 20.

55. On the Armenian-Kurdish relations between the Wars, see G. Sassuni, *Kurt azgayin sharzhunnere ev Hay-Krtakan haraberutiunnere* (The Kurdish National Movement and Armenian - Kurdish Relations) (Beirut, 1969), pp. 14, 227f.

56. Some interesting information, referring to the brief history of the Armenian press in Thessaloniki in the period in question, is given by G. Tousimis, "Ο ἀρμενικὸς τύπος τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης γύρω στὰ 1930" (The Armenian Press of Thessaloniki in the 1930s), *Proceed-*

the daily *Alik* (Wave), Thessaloniki's first Armenian newspaper, which was published between early February 1923 and 7 November 1927; its rival, another daily, *Nor Alik* (New Wave), which came out between 1924 and 1927; the widely distributed *Horizon*, which essentially succeeded *Alik* and survived from 16 October 1927 to 8 September 1937; the militant left-wing *Askhadag* (Labour) (1926-7); and *Arevelk* (Orient) (March 1930-1938). Almost all these papers passionately promoted the ideological views of the two main parties mentioned above: *Alik*, *Horizon*, and to certain extent *Arevelk* supported *Dashnaksutiun*; *Nor Alik* and, indirectly, *Askhadag* favoured *Ramgavar*⁵⁷. This ideological polarisation was also evident in other, less dynamic and widely distributed, daily and periodical publications, such as the satirical *Megu* (Bee), the scientific *Oyibos* (Olympus), the short-lived Sunday satirical paper *Gismid* (Sting), the likewise short-lived polygraph publication *Askhadag-Modjak* (Labour-Gnat) (1927), the literary *Nor Aik* (New Dawn) (which was published in 1927 by the Armenian students of Anatolia College), and the fortnightly *Bahak* (Sentinel) (1929).

Between the mid-1920's and the early '30s, the Armenian population of Thessaloniki and of Northern Greece as a whole fell, and it was no longer possible for so many papers to keep going. Furthermore, the survival of a newspaper sometimes depended on the journalistic ability of a single individual: such was the case with Garo Kevorkian (1895-1975), for instance, main editor of *Alik*, *Gismid*, and *Horizon*; his rival (though they shared the same political views) Agop Malakian, founder of *Arevelk*; the left-wing editor-in-chief of *Nor Alik*, Garnik Navassarian; and the likewise left-wing editor of *Askhadag*, Stephan Kurdikian⁵⁸. Another fundamental reason why their circulation fell and Thessaloniki's Armenian newspapers finally folded was the keen competition between them — and, of course, the fact that many of them were addressed to the same political readership. And the circulation in Nor-

ings of the VII Panhellenic Historical Conference (May 1986), Thessaloniki 1986, pp. 109-118. Cf. Magarian, *Hushakirk*, pp. 196-99, and Kevorkian, *Amenun Darekirk*, pp. 232-39.

57. For *Dashnaksutiun*'s newspapers in Athens and Thessaloniki cf. H. H. Dashnaksutiun Buro, *Hushapatum H. H. Dashnaksutian, 1890-1950* (Historical Collection of the A. R. Confederation, 1890-1950) (Boston, 1950), pp. 572, 576, 577.

58. Kevorkian's autobiographical references in *Amenun Darekirk*, XIV (1967-1968) (Beirut, 1968), pp. 264-83. Concerning Kevorkian, Malakian, and Navassarian, see the information provided by the Hellenic security services in Tousimis's study, *loc. cit.*, pp. 115-116. Kurdikian is also an interesting case: After intensive political activity in Greece (for which, like his colleague Navassarian, he was often persecuted and displaced), he emigrated to Soviet Armenia, where he became a prolific translator of Modern Greek literary works into Armenian.

thern Greece of Athenian Armenian-language papers restricted the local press's possibilities even further. The result was that from 1938 onwards no Armenian newspaper came out regularly in Thessaloniki. The gap was filled initially by *Nor Or* (New Day), which was first produced in Athens on 25 March 1923; and subsequently, after its demise in 1941, by its successor *Azad Or* (Free Day), from September 1944 onwards. At all events, the colony still has a printinghouse of its own today, and, to the credit of its members and its organisations, produces a number of literary, historical, and social publications.

Since the 1960s, Thessaloniki's Armenians, as indeed the whole of the Armenian Diaspora, have been more sensitive towards questions relating to their national problem. Taking as their point of departure the fiftieth anniversary of the 1915 Genocide, the Greek-Armenians initiated efforts to revive the political heritage handed down to them by the leaders of the Armenian national movement. This revival, which was both inward- (through the more organised teaching of the Armenian language, history, and culture) and outward-looking (by sensitising public opinion to the still unresolved Armenian Question⁵⁹), was carried out with a dynamism that fully revealed the social and cultural self-confidence the city's third-generation Armenians had acquired in the meantime. Of course, ideological differences did not vanish from the colony's microcosm, and they continued to reflect the ideological developments taking place in the Diaspora as a whole. They were no longer either so bitter or so important, however, since both local and general social and political circumstances had changed since the 1920s and '40s. One could say that the basic, common pole of the community's ideology was the unwavering pursuit of *Hayabahbanum* — the preservation, that is, of the colony's Armenian character⁶⁰.

Hayabahbanum did not, however, prevent the colony's forging fundamental links with the Hellenic environment of Thessaloniki and of Greece in general. This relationship cannot be termed assimilation in the first two phases of the colony's history, particularly during the second (1920-47), when the size of the Armenian population made it easier for it to maintain a certain relative economic, social, and cultural autonomy. It was for this reason that

59. Cf. G. J. Livaridian, "Diaspora: Process and Program", in (the proceedings of a special international congress) *La struttura negata: cultura armena nella Diaspora*, edited by M. Nishanian and R. Pomponio (Venice, 1979), pp. 3-35.

60. Cf. Anahide Ter Minassian, "Histoire contemporaine et mémoire du peuple arménien: Leur rôle dans la formation de la conscience nationale et des options politiques de la Diaspora", in *La struttura negata*, pp. 37-41.

few of the Armenians living in Thessaloniki during these periods took Hellenic citizenship. Nonetheless, from as early as 1913 or thereabouts, and much more so from 1930 onwards, the city's Armenians began to form ever closer ties with their adopted country. The community's archive contains abundant, albeit scattered, evidence of this development: certificates of Hellenic citizenship; testimonials from 1918 to 1940 confirming that members of the colony had served in the Greek army; documents attesting the community's participation in various national, religious, cultural, social, or economic events; direct or indirect evidence that the Armenians of Thessaloniki (and indeed of the whole country) had thrown in their lot with their Greek fellow citizens and compatriots and shared in their ups and downs in the interwar years, and during the Second World War, the German Occupation, and the Civil War⁶¹. From the late '50s, and particularly from 1960 onwards, the third-generation Armenians both in Thessaloniki and in Greece as a whole have played a direct and conscious part in all aspects of Greek life.

61. Cf. also Dyran Alexanian's eighteen-page pamphlet *Οἱ Ἀρμένιοι παρὰ τὸ πλευρὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων* (The Armenians Sided with the Greeks), (Athens, 1945).



Table I. The Armenian church and the adjacent school building in its initial form.



Table II. The setting of the founding stone of the Armenian church (1902).

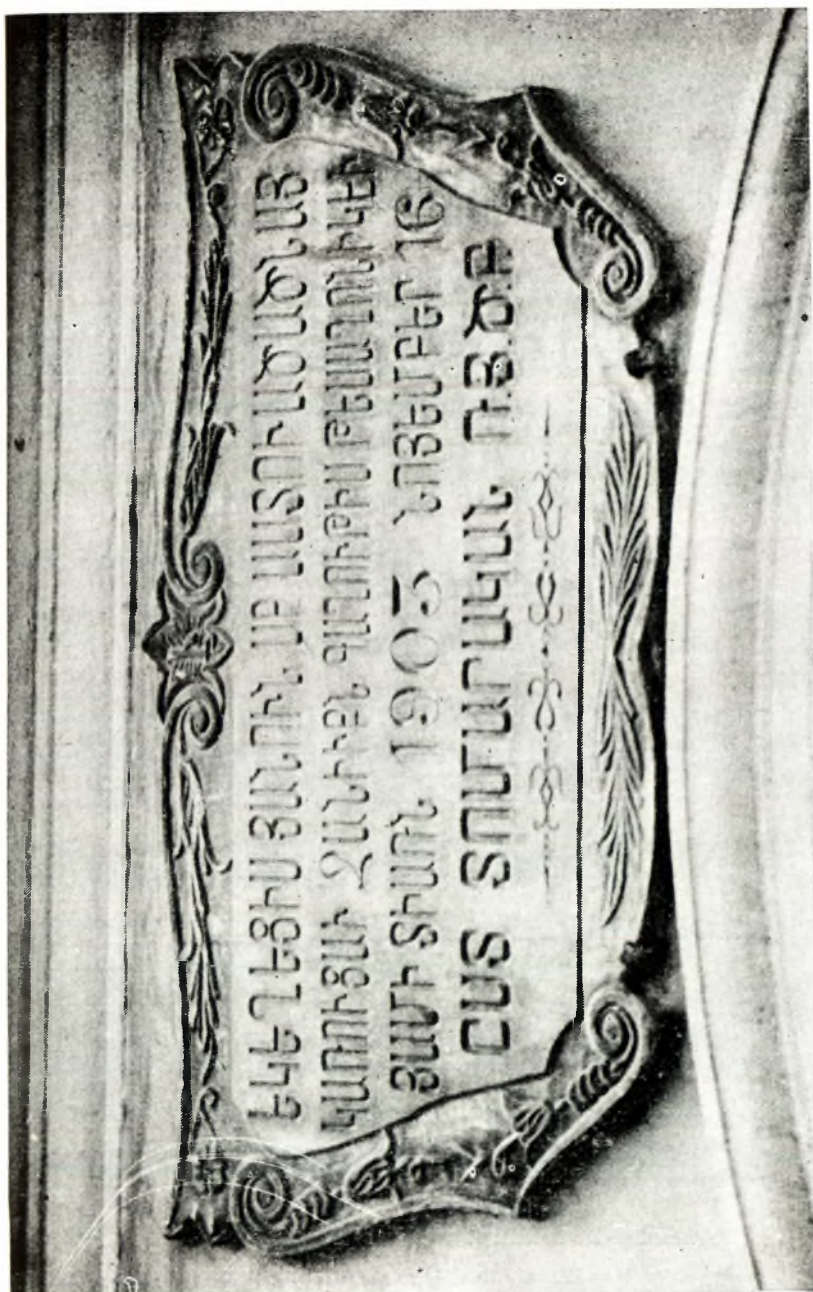


Table III. The inscription over the entrance of the Armenian church (November 16, 1903).

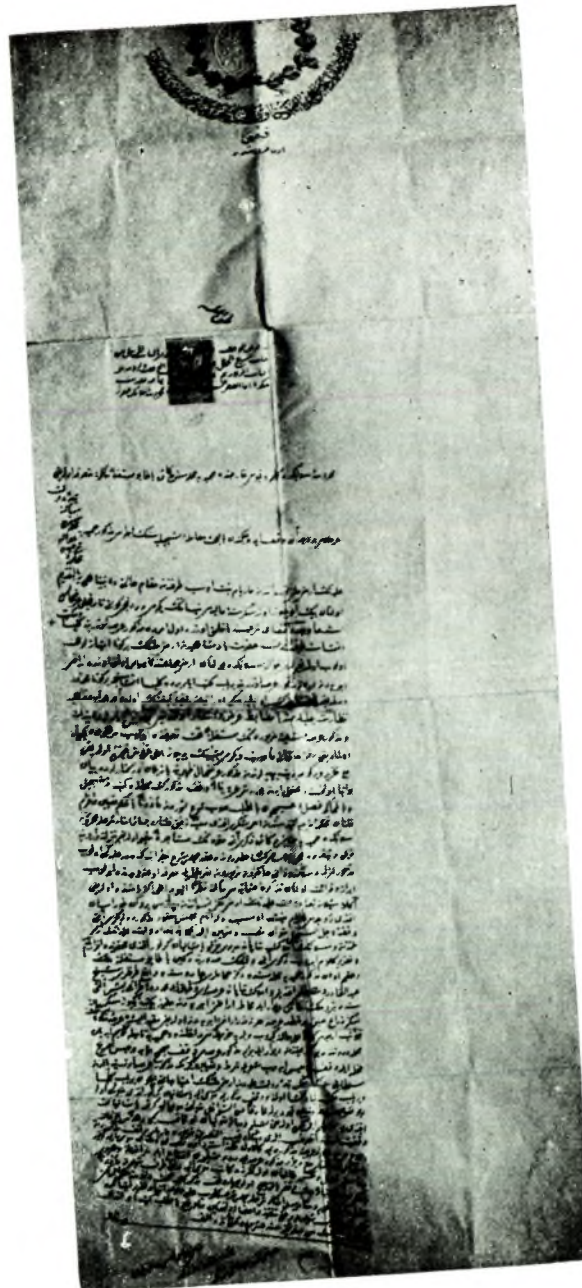


Table IV. A 'hojet' dated May 12, 1902 relating to the plot of land for the construction of the Armenian church (AAC).

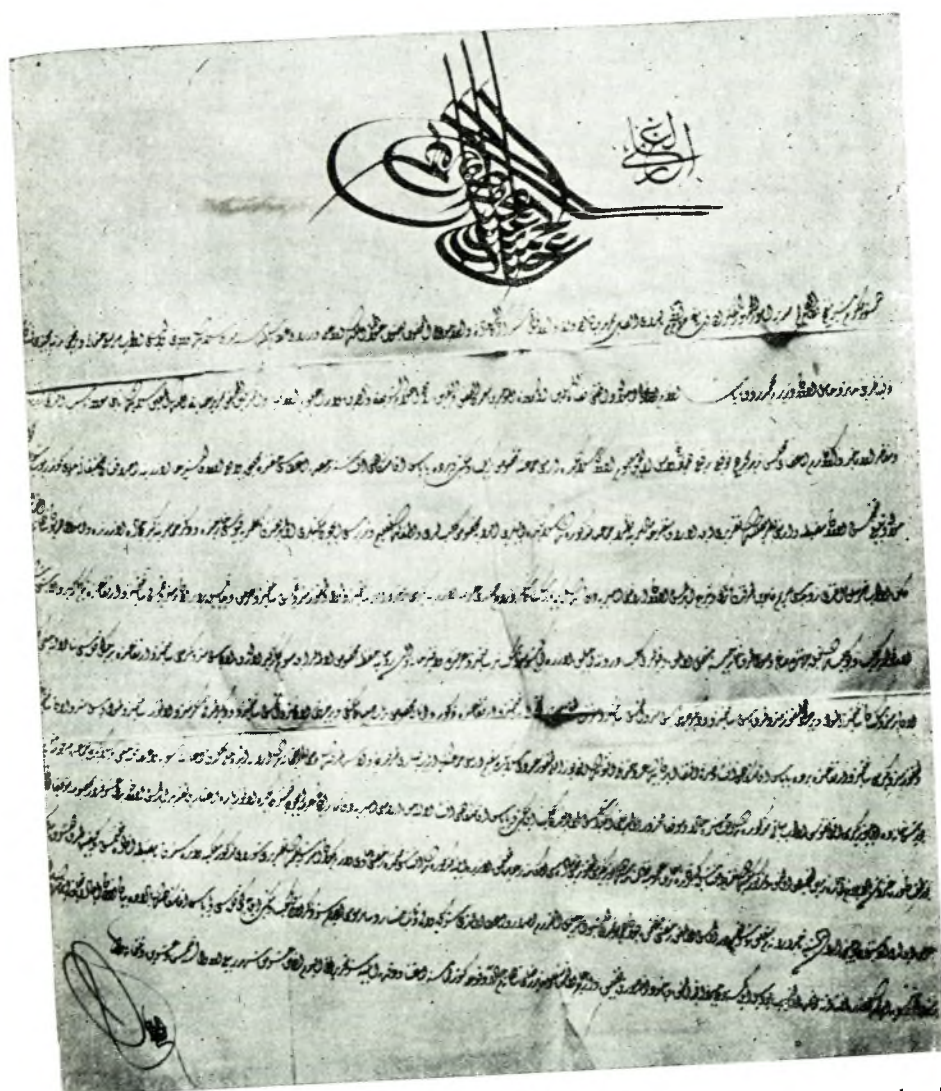



Table V. A 'firman' dated May 1, 1907, concerning the construction of the Armenian church (AAC).

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

AAIK
Առաջին Ամսագիր
Երթարկ
Օրը Ժամանակագիր ԵՐ
ՅԻՆԱՆԻՄ

ALIK
Արևիկ
Արևիկ
Արևիկ

JOURNAL QUOTIDIEN
Արևիկ
Արևիկ



ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

8
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱ 1924


ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

OPIZON
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ

HORIZON
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն

SALOMIQUE
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ



ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

1
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱ 1924


ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

OPIZON
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ

HORIZON
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն

SALOMIQUE
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ



ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

1
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱ 1924


ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

OPIZON
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ

HORIZON
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն

SALOMIQUE
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ



ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

1
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱ 1924


ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

OPIZON
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ
ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ ԵՐԹԱՐԿԻ

HORIZON
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն
Հորիզոն

SALOMIQUE
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ
Տալոմիկ



ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

ԲԱՐՈՒՄ ԲԱՐ 346

1
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱ 1924

ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ
ԱՐԵՎԻԿԱՆ ՕՐԱԿԵՐԸ

Table VII. The two most important Armenian newspapers of Thessaloniki in the 1920s and 1930s ('Alik' and 'Horizon') and their successor, the Athenian 'Nor Or'.