

**THE CONCEPT OF HOMELAND AMONG ANATOLIAN  
ARMENIANS: ARMENIANS OF YERAVAN AND ISTANBUL**

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# ABSTRACT

## THE PERCEPTION OF HOMELAND AMONG ANATOLIAN ARMENIANS: ARMENIANS IN ISTANBUL AND ARMENIANS IN ARMENIA

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This thesis, aims to provide an analysis of the perception of homeland of the Armenians in Istanbul and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin in order to identify the meanings attributed to the concept of homeland in the formation of their identity. Based on the in-depth interviews, this thesis focuses on transformation of the homeland and questions where is “home”, “homeland” and “diaspora”.

The analysis is based on data collected during fieldwork conducted in Istanbul, Turkey during the months of November 2011 to February 2012 and Yerevan, Armenia during September 2011.

Keywords: Armenian Identity, Homeland, Diaspora.

# ÖZ

## ANADOLU ERMENİLERİ'NİN ANAVATAN ALGISI: İSTANBUL'DAKİ ERMENİLER VE ERMENİSTAN'DAKİ ERMENİLER

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Bu tez çalışması, Anadolu kökenli Ermenistan Ermenileri ve İstanbul Ermenilerinin, kimlik oluşumunda anavatan kavramına affettikleri anlamı tespit etmek amacıyla, anavatan algıları üzerine bir analiz sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Tez çalışması, yapılan derinlemesine mülakatları esas alarak, “anavatan” kavramının dönüşümüne odaklanmakta, “yurt”, “anavatan” diaspora kavramlarını sorgulamaktadır.

Analiz, 2011 Eylül’ünde Ermenistan Erivan’da ve 2011 Kasım – 2012 Şubat aylarında Türkiye, İstanbul’da gerçekleştirilmiş saha çalışmaları esnasında toplanan verilere dayanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ermeni Kimliği, Anavatan, Diaspora.

*To My Family..*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ÖZ .....	v
DEDICATION .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER	
1.INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1.Introduction .....	1
1.1.1. Contrubitions of This Study .....	2
1.2. Methodology .....	3
1.2.1. Fieldwork in Yerevan .....	4
1.2.2. Fieldwork in Istanbul .....	8
1.3. Outline of the Thesis .....	10
2.THE CONCEPT OF HOMELAND .....	11
3.BRIEF HISTORY OF ARMENIAN PEOPLE.....	19
3.1 From Antiquity .....	19
3.2 The Adoption of Christianity and The Establishment of the Armenian Alphabet .....	21
3.3 The Kingdom of Cilicia .....	22
3.4 Under Foreign Rule .....	23



3.5 Soviet Armenia .....	26
4. THE PERCEPTION OF HOMELAND AMONG ARMENIANS IN ARMENIA WITH ANATOLIAN ORIGIN .....	28
4.1 Territorially Dissatisfaction .....	30
4.2 Differentiation of “Western” and “Eastern” Armenia .....	35
4.3 The Sense of Security .....	40
4.4 Belief to Go Back .....	42
4.5 The Effect of Symbolic Places .....	43
4.6 The Impact of Soviet Past in Shaping the Perception of Homeland .....	47
4.7. Conclusion of the chapter .....	49
5. THE PERCEPTION OF HOMELAND AMONG ARMENIANS IN ISTANBUL WITH ANATOLIAN ORIGIN .....	52
5.1 The Sense of Belonging .....	53
5.2 Being an Armenian of Turkey: In Armenia, Diaspora and in Turkey .....	57
5.3 Istanbul as Constitutive Element of Armenian Identity .....	63
5.4 Perception of Anatolia as a Root of Culture and Identity ...	66
5.5 Distinction of Istanbul Armeniand and Anatolian Armenians .....	71
5.6 Conclusionof the chapter .....	73

6. CONCLUSION .....	75
6.1. Major Findings of the Thesis .....	76
6.2. Conclusion .....	82
REFERENCES .....	84
APPENDICIES	
A. SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS .....	90
B. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS IN ISTANBUL .....	92
C. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS IN ARMENIA .....	95
D. TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU .....	98

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The concept of homeland means a defined piece of land where an ethnic group lives and has a long history. Beyond this definition, the notion of homeland is one of the constituent elements in the formation of identity. According to Connor, “the ethnic homeland is far more than territory” and “the attachment to the homeland derives from perceptions of it as the cultural heart and very often, as the geographic cradle of the ethno-national group” (Connor, 1986: 16-17). Brubaker mentions that:

Rather than speak of ‘a diaspora’ or ‘the diaspora’ as an entity, a bounded group, an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact, it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on. We can then study empirically the degree and form of support for a diasporic project among members of its putative constituency, just as we can do when studying a nationalist project. And we can explore to what extent, and in what circumstances, those claimed as members of putative diasporas actively adopt. (Brubaker, 2005: 13).

The aim of my thesis is to provide an analysis of the perceptions of homeland of the Armenians in Turkey and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin in order to identify the meanings attributed to the concept of homeland in the formation of their identity. To be able to do this, my research focuses on various questions to enlighten the perception of the homeland of the respondents.

First of all, I take into account the respondents' own definitions regarding the term "homeland" and then consider where their homeland is in order to relate to their definitions. Secondly, I attempt to understand what makes a place a "homeland" and how they constitute that perception. Other main questions are: How much and what do they know about their village of origin and how did they learn that? What is the importance of their ancestral land to their identity?

### **1.1.1. Contribution of this study**

This thesis aims to contribute to the literature in several ways. First of all, although studies related to Armenians in Turkey have proliferated, there are still only a few studies about the Armenian community in Turkey (See, for instance, Ozdogan&Karakasli&Kentel&Ustel, 2009; Ors&Komsuoglu, 2007 : 2009; Tataryan, 2011; Bilal, 2004)

Secondly, since 2000 an increasing number of NGOs have organized international workshops to raise knowledge about how the Turkish and Armenian societies relate to one another. However, current academic research in Turkey related to Armenia focuses on historical issues or state relations.

Furthermore, there is a common belief in Turkey that the majority of the Armenian diaspora consists of Armenians from Anatolia, which is not false. But there are also a significant number of Armenians of Anatolian origin in Armenia, and this is the first academic research in Turkey about them.

Lastly, with respect to diaspora literature, by working on the homeland perceptions of Armenians in Armenia and Armenians in Istanbul of Anatolian origin, I attempt to analyse two communities who are not living in their ancestral lands and not considered as part of the diaspora. In this

way, I open up the discussion of the terms 'diaspora' and 'homeland' by using perceptions of the homeland held by Armenians of Anatolian origin living in Istanbul and Armenia.

## **1.2 Methodology and fieldwork**

A qualitative analysis provides us with a holistic view where the respondents expressed their views in an elaborated and detailed way in order to provide an in-depth analysis about the perceptions, the ways in which they define themselves and the meanings attributed to the notions of homeland, attachment, belonging, memory and reconstruction in association with the national identity.

The analysis is based on data collected during fieldwork conducted in Istanbul, Turkey during the months of November 2011 to February 2012 and Yerevan, Armenia during September 2011. Throughout both periods of fieldwork, 32 in-depth interviews were conducted, each of them were lasted around sixty minutes and all interviews were recorded on a tape recorder.

It was not possible to conduct interviews in Yerevan with the first generation who moved on from their ancestral lands. As a result, transmission of the history within the family was important for me to gather their perceptions of the homeland. On the other hand, according to Kandiyoti, women are considered to be the custodians of cultural particularisms by virtue of being less assimilated, both culturally and linguistically, into the wider society (Kandiyoti, 1991: 435). Thus, I decided

having paternal and maternal origins in Anatolia as the sole criteria for determining the sample.<sup>1</sup>

Interviews in Armenia were carried out generally in English. Eight of the 20 interviews were conducted in English, two interviews were conducted in Turkish and the other two were conducted with the help of an Armenian-Turkish translator.

The interview questions were composed of five sub-topics for the fieldwork in Yerevan. These were conceptualizations of the 'homeland', perceptions of Armenia in terms of homeland, conceptualizations of the ancestral lands, similarities and differences between Armenians of Anatolian origin with other Armenians, and lastly the impact of symbolic places on the conservation of Anatolian identity. The interview questions in Istanbul were composed of these sub-topics and one additional sub-topic which was related to Istanbul to reveal the importance of Istanbul for Armenians in Turkey. In this thesis the names of the interviewees are kept anonymous.

### **1.2.1. Fieldwork in Yerevan**

I conducted the first part of my field research in Yerevan with 12 Armenians of Anatolian origin in September 2011. During a month of fieldwork I had a chance to meet different segments of Armenian society.

According to the latest statistics, the population of Yerevan stands at 1,119,000 - 34.4 % of the total population of Armenia<sup>2</sup>. Yerevan, besides being the capital city of Armenia, is also the country's economic and cultural centre. Yerevan is a well laid-out city, full of parks and buildings

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<sup>1</sup> See table 3 and 4 in Appendix A for more detailed information about respondents.

<sup>2</sup> Armenian Statistical Service of Republic of Armenia. Retrieved 24 August 2012. [http://www.armstat.am/file/article/demos\\_11\\_2.pdf](http://www.armstat.am/file/article/demos_11_2.pdf)

made from basalt and tuff. Social life is very lively, and the streets are full of people of every age. Most people that I met were outgoing and helpful.

I went to Armenia in 2008 for an NGO workshop and I have friends from Armenia since then. So when I went to Armenia this time, I had a list of interviewees. They also tried to give me further access, but some people rejected my request because giving an interview to a Turkish researcher was perceived as unreliable.

I would like to mention that I felt safer in Yerevan than I do in Istanbul most of the time. I felt safer because first of all the city centre of Yerevan offers a well-organized and secure city life for everyone. More personally, being a Turkish M.A. student conducting fieldwork in Yerevan provided me with extra hospitality. They treated me as their guest and tried to make me go back to Turkey with nice memories instead of bitter ones. Also, many of the people who I met in Yerevan tried to convince me that “I will not encounter any problems in Armenia”. Besides, meeting a Turkish student is still something new and interesting for Armenians in Armenia from every age group, and Armenians have a lot of things to say and various questions to ask a researcher from Turkey.

I can categorize my experiences on finding interviewees. The first group accepted my request directly without any questions. As for the second group, I needed a trust-building process or a reference from their friends to be able to conduct interviews with them. They replied: “Let’s meet and drink something first and then we will see about your interview,” but those conversations before the interviews were not political ones. The third group rejected my request because they did not want to be included in the fieldwork of a Turkish researcher.

Armenia offers a great experience for a researcher from Turkey. First of all, Turkey and relations between Turkey and Armenia is a hot topic for Armenian society. Armenian newspapers and television channels publish various news related to Turkey. The most popular subjects are Turkish-Armenian relations, the conditions of Armenians in Turkey, Islamized-Turkified Armenians<sup>3</sup> and the Hemshin people<sup>4</sup>. Hence, Armenians have a certain knowledge of Turkey. Therefore, it is not surprising to encounter people asking questions about domestic politics in Turkey.

As a researcher who is working on Armenians of Anatolian origin and their perceptions of the homeland, I can say that I was cautious while conducting interviews and also during my entire time in Armenia. I had helpful friends around me and I really appreciated the hospitality of Armenians who I met.

When people learnt that I was doing the first part of my fieldwork in Yerevan, that confused them and made them approach me with suspicion, but that suspicion easily turned to interest. For instance, many of the interviewees and people who I met in Yerevan jokingly asked me whether I was a spy. Other popular questions that I encountered were “Why are you working on Armenia?”, “Why are you studying this subject?” and “Why are you carrying out research in Armenia?” I tried to give persuasive answers to all those questions because they were somehow related to my thesis and I respond to them with scientific motivations rather than political

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<sup>3</sup> They are Armenians who converted to Islam or Armenians adopted by Turkish families and raised without knowing their ethnic identities. There are various claims about the population of Islamized-Turkified Armenians, ranging from 300,000 to 3,000,000 .

<sup>4</sup> The Hemshin people are a diverse group of people from the Hemshin district of Rize, Turkey. According to some scholars the Hemshin people have Armenian roots and their language is a dialect of Western Armenian. Today, the Hemshin are a popular research topic in Armenia. See Simonian (2007). There are NGOs to conduct research on the Hemshin people and a weekly- newspaper called The Voice of Hemshin is published in Armenia (in Armenian). Copies of the newspaper can be seen at <http://www.dzaynhamshenakan.org>



and nationalist motivations. Then most of them responded to me by saying “I think you have some Armenian roots that you do not know about. Try to find out.”

Meeting a Turkish student is a new experience to which many Armenians do not know how to respond. For instance, a woman of over 50 years of age began singing a nationalist/patriotic song called “Zartir Lao”<sup>5</sup> when she learnt that I was Turkish. But after 10 minutes of talking, she hugged me, saying “My family is from Istanbul and you brought me the smell of Istanbul”. So the attitudes of Armenians towards me sometimes changed quickly.

Before conducting the interviews, I tried to explain that I was not there to judge any ideas and I tried to encourage them to give their responses freely. While sending out requests to conduct the interviews, only one person stated that he would not be interviewed by me until I changed “Anatolia” to “Western Armenia”<sup>6</sup> in the title of my thesis. Armenians reject the use of “Anatolia” because it is perceived as an effect of Turkification. I replied to him that “he is free to call it Western Armenia or whatever during the interview, but I will not change the title of my thesis.” So I did not have the opportunity to conduct an interview with him. Apart from that individual, none of the interviewees asked me to express my ideas or my political position before conducting interviews.

I was cautious before going to Yerevan, and while doing my fieldwork in Armenia helpful friends and the hospitality of the people who I met facilitated my fieldwork. Despite all the problems and disagreements

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<sup>5</sup> The song dedicated to Armenian fedayee Arabo.

<sup>6</sup> Western Armenia is a term used by Armenians to refer to Armenian-inhabited areas of Eastern Anatolia. It consists of six vilayets: Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakir, Kharput and Sivas.

related with politics and history, it was exciting to experience a month-long stay in Armenia and hold the interviews smoothly.

### **1.2.2. Fieldwork in Istanbul**

I conducted the second part of my field research in Istanbul with 20 Armenians of Anatolian origin between November 2011 and February 2012.

Speaking out is still an exceptional situation for Istanbul Armenians. To be able to cope with this situation, I tried to get appointments from my friends first and then I asked for other names. Although I have achieved most of my interviewees via my friends, my biggest challenge in making appointments was my research topic. “Perception of homeland” was regarded as a critical and political issue which caused many Istanbul Armenians to reject my appointment requests. For that reason, many of them asked to read my interview questions first before deciding whether to give me an interview. That was another reason for me to think that they perceived my interview topic as risky.

The Khojaly commemoration in Taksim<sup>7</sup> and the process of the genocide denial bill in France<sup>8</sup> had visible effects on my interview appointments. Both events raised unease among Armenians in Istanbul. Some respondents asked me to postpone the interviews, and some cancelled

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<sup>7</sup> A commemoration of the Khojaly massacre was held on 28 February 2012 in Taksim on the 20th anniversary of the massacre. The rally provoked debates because of some anti-Armenian slogans and banners.

<sup>8</sup> France recognized the 1915 events as ‘genocide’ in 2001. The French parliament submitted a bill to punish genocide denial on 23 January 2012 but that bill was found unconstitutional by the French Constitutional Court on 28 February 2012.

their appointments because of that political agenda. In other words, Armenians in Turkey have begun to speak out, but speaking out is a new and sensitive attitude for them.

Istanbul Armenians are not a monolithic community. While I was in the field, I met Istanbul Armenians who criticized other Istanbul Armenians for not “speaking out” and living in a closed society. The interesting point is that most of the interviewees who criticized Armenians about keeping silent had experience of giving interviews to researchers.

Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered many different questions and statements before and during my interviews such as “Why are you studying this topic?”, “It is interesting to meet a Turkish student who is studying such an issue” and “I have not been to Armenia yet, how is Yerevan?”

The topic and purpose of the research was perceived differently in Yerevan and Istanbul. In Yerevan, being a Turkish researcher carrying out fieldwork about “perception of the homeland” increased the interest of Armenians, but the situation was the opposite in Istanbul. For Armenians in Armenia, talking about their history and homeland with a researcher from Turkey was a new experience that they were willing to take part in, but my research subject caused Armenians in Istanbul to hesitate.

Likewise, I encountered very direct questions and responses during my fieldwork in Yerevan, but the questions and responses were rather timid during my fieldwork in Istanbul. My research topic, my status as a guest and my attempt to position myself as a neutral researcher despite my ethnic identity caused me to be more of an insider than an outsider during my fieldwork in Yerevan.

### **1.3. Outline of thesis**

This study is set out in six chapters. In the following chapter, the theoretical framework of the study will be presented. Here, the major approaches and concepts in the literature on diaspora studies and the literature on identity will be discussed.

In the third chapter, a brief history of the Armenian people will be provided. In this chapter, I aim to explain the historical background of the discussion of the homeland regarding the Armenians of Anatolia.

Chapters Four and Five are based on my fieldwork in Istanbul and in Yerevan, and analyse the perception of the homeland among Armenians in Armenia and Armenians in Istanbul of Anatolian origin related with the theoretical and historical background given in previous chapters. The meaning and their perception of the homeland and the effect of that perception of the homeland on their identity will be discussed and analysed.

In the last chapter, I will provide my concluding comments.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONCEPT OF HOMELAND

This study focuses on the homeland perceptions of Armenians of Anatolian origin. I aim to shed light on the meanings attributed to the concept of the homeland in the formation of their identity.

To do so, I have tried to find out what makes a place a homeland for them, how they define 'homeland' as a term and their homeland, what their relations are with their ancestral lands and how they affect their identity.

In this chapter, I assess the main debates on diaspora literature regarding the homeland. I use the literature of the diaspora because although the two communities that I worked on are not considered as the diaspora, it still provides a theoretical ground to understand and analyse the homeland perceptions of Armenians in Istanbul and especially Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin.

#### **2.1. Discussion of homeland in the literature of the diaspora**

The term 'diaspora' is inherently geographical, implying a scattering of people over space and transnational connections between people and places. Geography clearly lies at the heart of a diaspora, both as a concept and as lived experience, encompassing the contested interplay of place, home, culture and identity through migration and resettlement (Blunt, 2003: 282).

“Diaspora” has its origins in Greek history and civilization. The term is found in the translation of the Bible and originates in the verb “to sow” and the preposition “over”. For the Greeks, the expression was used to describe the colonization of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean in the Archaic period (800-600 BC) (Cohen, 1997: 2).

The debates on diaspora studies increased in the 1990s and the literature of the diaspora expanded through discussions on transnationalism, ethnicity and globalization. Moreover, the concept referred only to the historic experience of particular groups, specifically Jews and Armenians. Later, it was extended to religious minorities in Europe (Faist, 2010:12).

“Homeland” and “diaspora” have been in common use for many years but neither diaspora nor homeland are absolute givens, isomorphic and precise; they are instead considerably more complex and contingent (Levy and Weingrod, 2005: 6). There are two main approaches in the literature of the diaspora. One group of scholars attempts to define the features of the diaspora and diasporic communities in a socio-political way. They explain the characteristics of the diaspora through a homeland/diaspora dichotomy. In contrast, a second group of scholars, who are mainly anthropologists, explain the features of diasporic communities in terms of their interactions and social process. According to Tölölyan:

Diasporas are the paradigmatic other of the nation state, that have been an ally, lobby or even precursor of the nation-state (Israel), the source of ideological, political or financial support for national movements (Palestine), or the source of new ideas, new money and new languages to a newly-independent homeland (Armenia) (Tölölyan, 1991: 5)

Vertovec claims that there are three discernible meanings of diaspora. These meanings refer to what we might call 'diaspora' as social form, 'diaspora' as type of consciousness and 'diaspora' as mode of cultural production (Vertovec, 1999: 2).

For Gabriel Sheffer, a prominent scholar in diaspora studies, the most important determinant of a diaspora group is "migration", either voluntarily or forced. Sheffer enlists some basic features for modern diasporas, and explicitly claims the existence of diaspora as a perennial and pre-modern phenomenon, which has not a merely social but also a political aspect (Sheffer, 2003: 10-12). Sheffer claims some prerequisite conditions for diasporas. For instance, Sheffer defines diaspora members as regarding themselves as being of the same ethno-national origin, residing permanently as minorities in one or several host countries and maintaining their regular contacts or flows of information with their "real" or "imagined" homelands, as well as individuals or groups of the same background in other host countries, having a sense of belonging to the same ethnic nation, establishing organizations and trans-state networks with their homelands and people of the same identity in different host countries (Sheffer, 2003: 12-18). Sheffer also claimed that:

An ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homeland and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other countries. Based on aggregate decisions to settle permanently in host countries, but to maintain a common identity, diasporans identify as such, showing solidarity with their group and their

entire nation, and they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic and political spheres. Among their various activities, members of such diasporas establish trans-state networks that reflect complex relationships among the diasporas, their host countries, their homelands and international actors (Sheffer, 2003: 9).

According to the widely quoted definition proposed by William Safran, the key components of this classical diaspora paradigm are (Safran, 1991: 83-4):

- 1) dispersal from a homeland;
- 2) collective memory of the homeland;
- 3) lack of integration in the host country;
- 4) a 'myth' of return and a persistent link with the homeland;
- 5) regarding ancestral homeland as a true, ideal home;
- 6) relating homeland with their ethnocommunal consciousness.

Robin Cohen expands Safran's conceptualization of diaspora while underlining the theme of the homeland as a major aspect of diasporic communities. Agreeing in general, he states that the diaspora should include those groups who scatter voluntarily as well as those who move as a result of aggression.

According to Cohen, Safran's concept of the homeland is problematic, in that some people are diasporic although their concept of the homeland was created after dispersion and that there may be "positive virtues" in living in a diaspora (Cohen, 1997: 24). Cohen also criticizes Safran's definition of diaspora for not being capable of reflecting changing diaspora formations to incorporate all those who have become affected from "asynchronous, transversal, oscillating flows that involve visiting, studying,



seasonal work, temporary contracts, tourism and sojourning, rather than whole-family migration, permanent settlement and the adoption of exclusive citizenships” (Cohen, 1997: 123).

Cohen posits nine features of diasporas. As distinct from Safran, he suggests:

- 1) the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- 2) the possibility of a distinctive yet creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

And he identifies five types of diasporas (Cohen, 2007: 18):

- Victim diasporas: Populations forced into exile such as the Jewish, African, Armenian diasporas.
- Labour diasporas: Mass migration in search of work and economic opportunities such as the Indian and Turkish diasporas;
- Trade diasporas: Migrations seeking to open trade routes and links such as the Chinese and Lebanese diasporas;
- Imperial diasporas: Migration among those keen to serve and maintain empires such as the British and French diasporas;
- Cultural diasporas: Those who move through a process of chain migration such as the Caribbean diaspora.

Both Safran and Cohen underline the notion of homeland by describing the features of diasporas: dispersion from the homeland, mystification of the homeland, identification of themselves with their homeland, belief in going back and restoring the old order. Also, they consider diasporic communities in terms of a homeland/hostland dichotomy.

Another approach to diaspora studies attempts to discover diasporic features of migrating groups. These come mainly from anthropologists<sup>9</sup>. According to Baumann, authors such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy and James Clifford adopted the term “diaspora” to denote a specific type of experience and thinking, i.e. that of “diaspora consciousness”. Aspiring to move beyond essentializing notions such as ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’, in often jargon-laden papers, the idea of “diaspora” has been celebrated as expressing notions of hybridity, heterogeneity, identity fragmentation and (re)construction, double consciousness, fractures of memory, ambivalence, roots and routes, discrepant cosmopolitanism, multi-locationality and so forth (Baumann, 2000: 235).

Using Derrida’s theory of *différance*, Stuart Hall claims that diasporic identity is never complete and always produces and reproduces itself.

Diaspora does not refer to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return. This is the old, the imperializing, the homogenizing form of ‘ethnicity’... the diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are

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<sup>9</sup> See for instance, Appadurai (1996), Bhabha (1990), Clifford (1997) and Hall (1990).

constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and differences (Hall, 1990: 235).

Avtar Brah highlights the homing tendency in diaspora studies: “The concept of diaspora places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins” (Brah, 1996: 193). In his edited volume *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (1969), Barth asserts that ethnicity is a feature of social organization. In other words, according to Barth;

Ethnicity is a product of social process. Therefore, he underlines the importance of boundaries over cultural features: “The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it enclosed (Barth, 1969: 15).

In my thesis, I focus on the perceptions of the homeland held by Armenians of Anatolian origin, who are living in Istanbul and Yerevan. As mentioned above, the main approaches in diaspora studies highlight the attachment and perception of the homeland as a significant part of diasporic identity.

Armenians in Istanbul do not think that they are diasporan, because they have never left their homelands. On the other hand, they are perceived as “diasporan” by some Armenian diasporic organizations, and there are also works of research that label Istanbul Armenians as “diasporan”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance: Bjorklund, U. (2003). *Armenians of Athens and Istanbul: The Armenian diaspora and the ‘transnational’ nation*.

Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin are a divergent example for diaspora-homeland discussions. They are living in their nation-state since the independence of the Republic of Armenia but they went there as a result of forced dispersion from their perceived homeland, Anatolia.

In my thesis, I attempt to extend the definitions of diaspora and diasporic identity by using the perceptions of the homeland held by Armenians in Istanbul and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin and question the framework of diaspora literature.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **BRIEF HISTORY OF ARMENIAN PEOPLE**

In this chapter, to be able to understand the meaning of the homeland for Armenians, I briefly explain the historical turning points that shaped the homeland perception of Armenians. Instead of covering the whole history of Armenia and Armenians, I try to keep short and summarize turning points regarding perception of homeland.

I begin this section with the aim of clarifying the historical background of Armenia since antiquity. Then i will continue with the adoption of Christianity as a state religion and establishment of the Armenian Alphabet sections to demonstrate distinctness of the Armenian identity. Those sections will be followed by the period of The Kingdom of Cilicia, Under foriegn Rule (1375-1918) and Soviet Armenia.

#### **3.1 From Antiquity**

The Armenians trace their history to the establishment of the Kingdom of Urartu, 800 before Christ. The historic territory on which the Armenian people lived stretched between the Kur river to the east, the Pontic mountain range to the north, the Euphrates river to the west and the Taurus Mountains to the south (Bournoutian, 2006 : 6.). Although the Kingdom of Urartu populated mostly by Armenians, it is ruled by a non-Armenian. After the collapse of the Kingdom of Urartu, Yervanduni family<sup>11</sup> ruled the territory because The Hellenistic Empire was unable to assert

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<sup>11</sup> Also known as Orontid Family.

full control over them. Razmik Panossian claims that, under the rule of Yervanduni family, the Armenian identity was being solidified, because various regions and people who lived on the Armenian Plateau were integrated into imperial administrative structure (Panossian, 2006 : 35).

Artaxiad Dynasty which is acknowledged as zenith of Armenian history was founded in 190 BC. They expanded their territories when major powers, Romans and Parthians, were busy with their inner problems.

The fourth king of Artaxiad dynasty, Tigran II united all the territories inhabited by Armenians, and added northern Syria and Mesopotamia, as well as Cilicia and Phoenicia to his domains; by 70 BC he had an empire stretching from the Caspian to the Mediterranean. He built himself a new capital, Tigranakert (Armenian: 'built by Tigran'), and adopted the Parthian title of 'King of kings'. The site of Tigranakert cannot be determined with accuracy, but it is probably the modern town of Silvan, to the north-east of Diyarbekir. ( Walker, 1980 : 24.) After Tigran II, dynasty tried to balance their acts between major powers, but dynasty ended out in AD 10.

After the collapse of the Artaxiad dynasty, Armenia ruled by Arsacid Dynasty<sup>12</sup> and this dynasty ended in AD 428. According to Panossian it is not clear when it began because of confusing chronologies and differing founding 'acts'. The various dates given are AD 12, 66 and 180. Two main characteristic of Armenian society constituted in Arsacid Dynasty era. Adopting Christianity as a state religion and establishment of The Armenian Alphabet.

Since the beginning of history of Armenia, the independence of Armenia was conditional on balance of power of major powers. They experienced a

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<sup>12</sup> Also known as Arshakuni Dynasty

division between Rome and Parthia many times. They have expanded their territories, lost and gained their independence in related with their relations with major powers or the balance of power in between them.

### **3.2. The Adoption of Christianity and The Establishment of the Armenian Alphabet**

In 301 AD, Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion in King Tridates III's reign. By adopting Christianity as a state religion, Armenians established a strong resistant point, important component of Armenian identity against assimilations of major powers around them. The notion of being the first Christian people who originally received the word of God directly from the apostles has remained with the Armenians throughout the centuries; it became a core element of their national identity. As such, Christianity became a rigid distinguishing marker, a cultural and symbolic boundary (Panossian, 2006 : 44). Besides, Walker claims that the adoption of Christianity had the effect of making Armenia look westward and northward rather than eastward ( Walker, 1980 : 25).

On the other hand the conversion to Christianity also introduced reforms in matters of familial relations and marriage, although it did not fundamentally change the androcentric, patriarchal customs and norms. The Armenian Church, with the full support of the monarchy, formalized the institution of marriage and required that husband and wife legalize their union by vows adhering to the Christian doctrine. It also expressly prohibited the clergy from officiating at secret weddings. (Payaslian, 2007 : 37) So to speak, adopting Christianity as a state religion transformed the Armenian society, caused them to acquire a unique marker as a "first state to adopt

Christianity”, and originated a distinguished feature to not to get assimilated in between major powers.

The second turning point that constitutes the distinguished characteristic of Armenian identity is the establishment of the Armenian Alphabet. According to Bournoutian, the King of Armenia and its religious leader were conscious of this need for cultural unity for the survival of their people. They therefore commissioned a learned clergyman-scholar, Mesrop Mashtots, to create an alphabet for the Armenian language. ( Bournoutian, 2006 : 70) In 404, The Armenian alphabet was created by Mesrop Mashtots. The alphabet gave Armenians a unique textual-literary basis for their language and linguistic identity. ( Panossian, 2006 : 45).

For Levon Zekiyan the invention of the alphabet opened a new path to the Armenian people, a distinctive way of being, feeling thinking as a nation and in the given case as a Christian nation. ‘Nation’ in the given context has a peculiar meaning, different from the idea of ‘nation’ as developed in Western modernity in the frame of the nation-state ideology following the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. (Zekiyan, 2005 : 51)

### **3.3. The Kingdom of Cilicia**

Bagraduni Dynasty reigned from 861 AD to 1118 AD. The second half of the tenth century accepted as a glorious period of Bagraduni dynasty. In 956, King Ashot III moved the Armenian capital to Ani which is very important for Armenian history. special mention must be given to the Bagratuni capital, the city of Ani, not least for its important place in current Armenian thinking. By medieval standards Ani was truly a magnificent metropolis, of 100,000 people at its peak—a city of ‘1001 churches’, of trade, commerce and wealth, as well as of impenetrable fortifications at



the height of its power. By the seventeenth century it was completely abandoned, and remains so to this day. But Ani, in its splendour, never left Armenian popular imagination. ( Panossian , 2006 : 60)

After the collapse of the Bagratuni dynasty, many Armenian families left their territories and in 1198 they established Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia which ended in 1375. The twelfth century also referred to as the Silver Age because of remarkable cultural developments in the cosmopolitan environment. As part of its grand geostrategic objectives, Byzantium sought to strengthen the Armenian leadership in Cilicia as a buffer between Constantinople and the Muslims, as a result, throughout its three centuries of existence, the Cilician kingdom remained highly unstable internally and highly vulnerable to foreign forces. (Payasliyan, 2007 : 78-79)

According to Panossian , who also calls “Diasporan Kingdom” to Kingdom of Cilicia, Cilicia has been a bridge in the development of Armenian identity on two fronts. First, although Armenia was always influenced by other cultures, in Cilicia these influences came directly from the European west for the first time. Armenians were thus linked to the non-Byzantine western civilisations. Second, Cilicia acted as a bridge between classical and modern Armenian. The last point that needs to be made about the Cilician kingdom is how it entered Armenian national memory not as an established diasporan community, but as part of the historic homeland. A new territory was imbued with the meaning of homeland because part of the elite established structural roots there (Panossian , 2006 : 64-66).

### **3.4. Under Foreign Rule**

After the fall of the Kingdom of Cilicia, Armenia was subject to various states like Mamluks, Timurids, Ottomans, Persians and Russians. Kouymjian mentions an important issue with this long “under foreign rule” era of Armenians; the early fifteenth century showed that the Armenians had learned well how to continue life under non-Armenian and non-Christian rule. (Kouymjian, 1997 : 21)

In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, new Armenian centers emerged like Isfahan (New Julfa), Tabriz and Diyarbakir. But the most important center of Armenians was around Lake Van. The other important issue for history of Armenia is, increase of the political importance of the Armenian Church. By the fifteenth century, there was no Armenian secular authority and at the end of the sixteenth century the catholicoses, especially of Echmiadzin, made only initiatives toward the liberation of Armenia, speaking, they claimed, for the entire nation. In later centuries the power of the church increased dramatically. ( Koyoumjian, 1997 : 32-33)

Until the 1513 and 1737, Armenia was a battleground in between Ottoman Empire and Safavid Dynasty. In the late seventeenth century, Russian Empire expanded its borders through Caucasus and considered Armenians as a crucial part of Russian expansion.

After Russo-Persian War, 1826-1828 and Russo-Turkish War, 1877 – 1878 Armenians living in Ottoman Empire migrated to Russian controlled Caucasus. The most important result of the Russian conquest of Transcaucasia and the subsequent migrations was the formation of a compact Armenian majority on a small part of their historical homeland. ( Suny, 1997 : 112) According to Payasliyan mass migration to Russian

Armenia, involving 7,668 families, began in October 1829; nearly 14,047 families (between 90,000 and 100,000 individuals) moved to Russian Armenia. (Payasliyan, 2007 : 112)

Although scholars differ over exact definitions of the period, most accept the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the period of modern Armenian “awakening”, or Zartonk (Arkun, 2005: 73) For Ronald Suny, the modern Armenian renaissance was, in fact, not a spontaneous release of a deep-seated Armenian spirit but the product of hard political and intellectual work by Armenian scholars, teachers and political activists. (Suny, 1997: 116) During the early part of the nineteenth century, Armenian nationalism appeared in the form of cultural reawakening, although by the end of the century, it had evolved into armed revolutionary struggle (Payasliyan, 2007: 117).

Girard Libaridian explains the idea of territoriality on Armenian nationalism. According to him, Armenians living in rural area and cities have different perspectives. He claims, the ethnic identity of the Armenians in the provinces was rooted in the historic land on which they lived:

The residents of Van did not need to labor at cultural edifices or intellectual definitions to assert a link between themselves and history. The peasants’ link to the land of Armenia was neither culturally inspired nor politically negotiable. Rather, it represented the most basic relationship between man and nature. This identity was not, therefore, in and by itself an acceptance or rejection of Ottoman rule, just as Armenians’ attachment to the land was neither a threat to nor a confirmation of Ottoman integrity. Whereas the new, culture-laden azgasirutiun<sup>13</sup> of Istanbul had been a distortion

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<sup>13</sup> Means “Love of Nation”.

of the patriotism, hayrenasirutiu<sup>14</sup>, of the provinces. (Libaridian, 1983: 86)

### **3.5. Soviet Armenia**

The time span from late nineteenth century to 1921 was a crucial turning point for history of Armenia and Armenians. Young Turk Revolution, independence movements and lastly the events of 1915 which is “Genocide” for Armenians and some scholars, and “Deportation” for others dramatically changed the demography of Anatolia. So to speak, the formation of the modern Armenian Diaspora is a result of list of events from late nineteenth century to the events of 1915.

The Independent Republic of Armenia<sup>15</sup> was established on May 28, 1918, and survived until Nov. 29, 1920. The First Republic of Armenia overwhelmed by Turkish and Soviet army and it was annexed by the Soviet Army. In 1922 Armenia combined with Georgia and Azerbaijan to form Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. In 1936 Armenia with Georgia and Azerbaijan, declared as a separate constituent republic of the USSR.

Soviet experience transformed Armenian society a lot. For instance, in 1926 82 percent of the population lived in countryside, but in 1979 this figure was 34 per cent ( Panossian, 2006: 59). Seventy years of Soviet modernization turned Armenia into an industrialized country.

Besides economic development, industrialization and urbanization, Soviet modernization also involved the shift of values from traditional and religious to secular and socialist. But, according to Ronald Suny, at the

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<sup>14</sup> Means “Love of Fatherland”.

<sup>15</sup> Also known as Democratic Republic of Armenia

same time Soviet policy was also directed toward preserving, indeed nourishing, many aspects of Armenian national life, at renationalizing Armenia. ( Suny, 1993: 145)

The policy of korenizatsiia ( nativatization) of the 1920s and 1930s, the renewal of nationalism at various points in Soviet history ( most notably during the Second World War), and the underlying socioethnic developments let to a reconsolidation of the Armenian nation, to a re-Armenization of the territory of Soviet Armenia. ( Suny, 1993: 184)

In addition to these, Armenia became a secure place for displaced Armenians from all around the world. The population of Yerevan reached 65.000 from 30.000 in between 1913 and 1926 and many were refugees from Turkey and other parts of the Middle East. ( Suny, 1997 : 145) And in 1980, the population of Yerevan reached to 1.000.000.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE PERCEPTION OF HOMELAND AMONG ARMENIANS OF ANATOLIAN ORIGIN LIVING IN ARMENIA**

“I was born in the town of Husenig, in the ‘apricot season’. Husenig is located in the province of Kharpert in historic Armenia in Asia Minor... Countless generations living there had so strengthened the people’s ties to the place that even after being forcibly evicted from these ancestral lands, the succeeding generations still live there in spirit, even despite resettlement and new lives in various countries. Husenig remains in the blood, in the hearts and under the skin of those forced to leave.” (Ketchian, 1988: 5)

This quotation, written by Bertha Nakshian Ketchian, underlines the importance of the homeland for Anatolian Armenians who had to leave their territories.

In this chapter, I demonstrate the features of Armenians of Anatolian origin living in Armenia, in the context of perception of homeland and the effect of their perception on their national identity. The characteristics of Armenians of Anatolian origin regarding perception of homeland will be presented and analysed in every subtopic with illustrations from interviews.

The majority of existing studies are historical studies focusing on the formation of the modern Armenian diaspora in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries regarding Armenian diaspora. On the other hand, in Turkey there are a limited number of studies conducted on Armenians and most of them are related to the Armenian community in Turkey or the Armenian diaspora.

Additionally, there is a common belief in Turkey that the Armenian diaspora is made up of Armenians of Anatolian origin. However, the general perception regarding Armenians in Armenia is different, despite many Armenians living in Armenia having origins in Anatolia.

There is no statistic related to the number of Armenians of Anatolian origin living at Armenia, but it is almost impossible not to recognize their existence in the everyday life of Armenia.

City names from Anatolia can be seen everywhere. Even four of the twelve districts of Yerevan have names from Anatolia; Arabkir, Zeytun, Malatia – Sebastia and Nor Marash<sup>16</sup>. Various towns and villages have names from Anatolia, for instance Musa Ler<sup>17</sup> and Nor Kharberd.

These settlements have been founded by Armenians who emigrated from Anatolia. Over the years, the demography of these districts changed. In a manner of speaking, Armenians have brought certain reflections of their homelands; such as city and districts names.

The first section of this chapter argues that Armenians in Armenia with Anatolian origin have a perception of “incomplete homeland”. “Lost

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<sup>16</sup> “Nor” means new in Armenian.

<sup>17</sup> “Ler” means mountain in Armenian, and their village of origin is Musadag, Hatay.

homeland” is the place where their ancestors are from and “current” homeland where they are living now. There is no separation in the perception of those lands, they perceive ‘lost’ and ‘actual’ homeland as two parts of their ‘homeland’.

The second section deals with the meaning of lost and actual homeland, in other words “Western” and “Eastern” Armenia and attributions of Armenians to those “Armenias”. The third section is about the role of feeling insecurity in the formation of Armenian identity and its effect on the perception of homeland.

The fourth section reveals the belief of Armenians to go back to their “lost homeland”. The fifth section looks at the role of Symbolic places, such as Mount Agri and Lake Van, on the transformation of narratives and conserving their ‘Western Armenian’ identity. The last section is about the effect of the Soviet past on their perception of homeland.

#### **4.1. Territorially Dissatisfaction**

In this section, I analyse how Armenians of Anatolian origin living in Armenia describe and conceptualise the term “homeland” and where their homeland is.

According to Anthony D. Smith ‘partial restoration’ of Armenia provided a ground for diaspora nationalism and caused trauma to Armenians.

In the Armenian case, the disaster was more generalized. It took the form of dispossession of the homeland, first on the battlefield of Avarayr when the Arsacid kingdom was destroyed—commemorated annually (on 2 June) to this day, along with the



Armenian commander, Vardan Mamikonian—then through the loss of the Bagratuni Kingdom and the principality of Cilicia and the resulting expulsions of Armenians, through the Ottoman conquest to the great massacres of 1895-96 in Constantinople under Sultan Abdul Hamid and finally the attempted genocide of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire engineered by the Young Turk regime in 1915. The ensuing division of Armenia, with only one part obtaining independence, and the current struggle over Nagorno-Karabakh, suggests the achievement of only a partial restoration, one that would hardly satisfy the various Armenian nationalist parties of the late nineteenth century, or fully assuage the sense of both recent and millennial trauma. (Smith, 1999: 217.)

The dissatisfaction of that ‘partial restoration’ can be seen in the perception of homeland of Armenians of Anatolian origin. On the field, all the respondents mentioned “the other homeland” that they “lost”. The idea of “lost homeland” has a constitutive effect on determining the perception of homeland of Armenians of Anatolian origin in Armenia.

For Armenians in Armenia, the meaning of “homeland” is beyond the borders of the modern Armenian Republic. They conceptualise homeland via history and cultural heritage rather than describing their homeland with the territory of the Republic of Armenia. A female respondent, whose ancestors were settled in Armenia more than eighty years ago stated that:

In my opinion, homeland is the place where my ancestors were born rather than where I was born. Homeland is the concept that relates to history. (A5)

A respondent with Diyarbakir origin claimed that: “I was born in Yerevan but I think I have two homelands; Yerevan and Diyarbakir.” (A9)

Respondents have underlined that they are living in their homeland but they also mentioned another homeland. It appeared that they perceive their homeland as two parts of a whole; Western Armenia and Eastern Armenia. For instance, another respondent commented about his homeland as follows:

Even me and my father were born in this part of Armenia I know that I am from Western Armenia. My motherland, my home is Western Armenia, Sasun, Mush and Van. When you say “historical” I understand thousands of years but there were Armenians in Mush in a hundred year ago. After the genocide that lands has been taken from us but I still feel that it is mine. There was an Cilician Armenia too but it is not homeland for me maybe it is homeland for other Armenian but I think east and west Armenia as my homeland.  
(A2)

Fieldwork showed that respondents perceive the Republic of Armenia as a small part of their homeland, in other words they perceive the Republic of Armenia as an “incomplete homeland”. I discuss the meaning of those “two Armenian homelands”; but basically, “Western Armenia” is perceived as the place where their culture was born and where their roots are. The Republic of Armenia, “Eastern Armenia” is where they live, the place that holds the provisions for their survival.

Terms like “Anatolia” and “Historical Armenia” were understood in negative connotations. A scholar claimed that: “Terminologically it is Western Armenia. Whatever they call, I know that it is Western Armenia and I educate my kids in this way.” (A7)

The name “Anatolia” is perceived to be the result of Turkification efforts. Historical Armenia is also rejected by most of the respondents because

they claimed that it is not “historical”, it is still Armenia because of the continued existence of their cultural heritage, which has never disappeared.

It is not only historical; you call somewhere “historical” when it is not yours, but I feel it is mine. I do not give it to another nation; it is my homeland that is why I think it is not historical: it is my own homeland. ( A2)

Anthony D. Smith argues that “collective cultural identities are based on the shared memories of experiences and activities of successive generations of a group distinguished by one or more shared cultural elements,” and defines ethnicity as “the sense of collective belonging to a named community of common myths of origin and shared memories, associated with an historic homeland”. (Smith 1999 : 262)

The fieldwork has shown that transmission of the family narratives is the main source of preserving their “Western Armenian” identity and maintaining their feeling of belonging to “Western Armenia”. A twenty one years old respondent stated:

I grew up with my grandmother, and she told me about our family history, especially Western Armenia, which is now part of Turkey. (A9)

Grandparents tell their family history as a story to their grandchildren. That storytelling often starts with the curiosity of the grandchild. The narratives of the elderly people are the main source of helping younger generations to connect their identity with the past and ancestral lands. Likewise with the previous quotation, another female interviewee, at twenty four years of age said that “When I was a child, I was very curious, I was always

asking her to tell me the stories about her life so she told me about her parents.” (A3)

History lessons at schools appeared as the second major source of the continuation of shared memories and history regarding their ancestral lands:

When I was younger, at school it was very important because of learning history in school, learning about what happened in to my ancestors in Turkey. I was feeling like I have another home in Western Armenia which is actually in Turkey. (A3)

Furthermore, another respondent have mentioned about organized gatherings where family histories are told:

We met once in week when my grandfather and grandmother were still alive. They talked about nature, our culture, our homeland and our home in Western Armenia. (A2)

Similarly, Armenians of Anatolian origin have established associations to conserve their identity and the culture of their ancestral lands. Respondents mentioned organisations such as Sassountsi, Mushetsi and Vanetsi Associations: “Armenians from Hastur, a village of Eleskirt, gather together once a year.”. (A7)

Those associations function as a transmitter of culture and history, because not all the Armenians have a chance to listen their family histories as they are already the third generation of the ones who settled in Armenia. A respondent, at twenty seven years of age underlined the importance of those associations:

Yes there is association of Sasoun-Taron and Mus. I am a member of that association. We came together once a month, we talk, we watch films, discuss. You know, we are the third generations and we should not lose our history and culture. Not everyone can know about the history of their family but with this associations some people also learn about their history so yes, that associations help us to conserve our identity. (A2)

Today, it is apparent that Armenians of Anatolian origin define their homeland with history and culture rather than the current territory and culture of the Armenian Republic. Further, Armenians of Anatolian origin feel a sense of belonging to their ancestral lands which results in the perception of two homelands; the homeland that they live in now, and the homeland that their family and culture are from.

Narratives of the grandparents and history lessons at schools are the main sources of conserving the identity of Armenians of Anatolian origin. Associations are the second major source of the continuation of the sense of belonging to ancestral lands, and the establishment of those associations is needed to not lose their memories and to be able to transmit them to the next generations.

#### **4.2. Differentiation of “Western” and “Eastern” Armenia**

In this section, I will discuss that which I mentioned in the previous section of this chapter: the perception of two homelands, “eastern” and “western” Armenia, and what Armenians of Anatolian origin attribute to those lands in terms of their perception of homeland.

Armenians of Anatolian origin use “Western Armenia” to define their ancestral lands in Anatolia. Whilst my thesis does not include a discussion on what to call those territories, an analysis of their conceptualisation of “Western Armenia” provides better data about their attributions to the notion of homeland.

Respondents have defined “Western Armenia” as their real homeland and the base of the Armenian cultural heritage. Also, Eastern Armenia or the current territory of The Republic of Armenia have been described as a secure place for the continuity of Armenian culture and ethnicity, which I will examine in detail in the next chapter. According to a respondent, whose ancestors are from Mus and Van:

I am citizen of the Republic of Armenia, I was born in Yerevan but it is a part of my homeland. While I think of Armenia as my homeland, I consider my real homeland to be Western Armenia. (A2)

Cultural differences between Eastern and Western Armenians have also been mentioned. Although Eastern and Western Armenians agreed on a common Armenian culture, Western Armenian culture was perceived as the purest and highest point of Armenian culture. Respondents have associated Eastern Armenian culture with Iranian and Russian culture but purified Western Armenian culture as real Armenian culture. In other words, Armenians of Anatolian origin and their culture have been accepted as part of genuine Armenian culture. For instance, a university graduate respondent claimed that:

Armenians with Western Armenia origin preserved their traditions because they used to live in our real homeland. Eastern Armenians were under the influence of Russian and Iranian culture. Also, most of our cultural centers were in Western Armenia. (A6)

Being a “Western Armenian” is something to be proud of because it is believed that their identity is the purest, truest form of being Armenian. This feeling is explained by another interviewee: “There are some differences; Western Armenians are more proud of being Armenian in general” (A3)

Their identity and culture is associated with the heritage of “Western Armenia” which causes them to attach themselves to “Western Armenia”. This attachment leads them to perceive “Western Armenia” as a part of their homeland. Twenty years old university student told about her experience that she encountered at university:

Once our lecturer asked people where are they from and I said that my ancestors are from Western Armenia, then she was “oh you should be patriotic, you should work for your homeland, never leave this country, don’t become a part of diaspora stay here and live as a truly Armenian ... I feel good that I am from Western Armenia, I think that Western Armenia was more Armenia than this one, was more Armenian. Maybe that’s why I feel good, I feel more Armenian than the others, truly Armenian. (A8)

Interviewees who had visited that region have a feeling of disappointment because of the physical conditions of Armenian historical monuments. Here, I must mention that Armenians have an increasing desire to visit those lands. Although the closed land border between Turkey and Armenia increases the costs of travel to that part of Turkey, you can see flyers or advertisements of “heritage tours to Western Armenia” on the streets of Yerevan. A director expressed his feelings when he was at Kars as follows:

The pictures that I've seen were showing Kars in Armenian or Kars in Russian style, not in Turkish. The Turkish flag over the Kars fortress was just a message to me. I accepted it as a message. Another shock was the church which is now a mosque. Although there are crosses and angels, and Kurds and Turks do not use that mosque, I realized that this was a message ... Natural aspects were unchanging, the landscape had not altered in the slightest. (A1)

Respondents who had visited their "perceived homeland" complained about the conditions of Armenian monuments but also mentioned that the nature of their "homeland" was almost exactly the same as they had imagined: "Almost everything related to Armenian culture has been broken there. But the nature is same." (A12)

During the fieldwork, many interviewees or the people that I met told me about their friends and relatives who brought soil, rock or water from "Western Armenia". Most of them brought soil to spread over the graves of their ancestors. A female scholar shared her experience at her ancestral homeland:

I have been to Eleskirt three times. When I went there, I do not know why but I knelt down and cried out. I brought soil from there to my dad's grave. The nature of Eleskirt is almost the same as what I had heard from my dad. (A7)

While explaining the characteristics of Armenian identity on diaspora, Payaslian mentions the mythologized images of the Armenian homeland. (Payasliyan, 2010 : 113). So bringing water, rock or soil is a good example of mystification and idealization of the land by Armenians in Armenia with



Anatolian origin, too. By doing this, they aim to unite their ancestors with their ancestral lands somehow.

They treat the soil and water from their ancestral lands as if they are blessed. They think water from those lands can cure their illnesses or if they bring soil for their ancestor's grave, his/her soul may have rest:

When I came back from Dersim, I brought water from Munzur River for my grandmother with me. She told me that the 'water of Munzur is blessed, that water cleansed my eyes and soon treated my sore throat, too. (A12)

On the other hand, respondents who have not been to their ancestral lands hesitate to visit the region because of fear of seeing Turks and Kurds living in their villages but not Armenians. Despite their hesitations all respondents mentioned their will to visit. This feeling is exemplified by the university graduate respondent as such; "I want to visit Erzurum but I have "imagined Erzurum" in my mind. So I hesitate to see Turks and Kurds living there but not Armenians." (A6)

As exemplified in the above quotations, Armenians of Anatolian origin have a strong attachment to "Western Armenia". On the other hand, they do not reject that they also perceive the Republic of Armenia as a homeland with its territory and culture.

Respondents have defined "Western Armenia" with the past, as a base of glorious Armenian culture, as a place of purest form of Armenian heritage; and Eastern Armenia with the future, as a place for the survival of the Armenian nation and culture. Moreover, they idealize and mystify their "lost homeland"; bringing soil from there for their ancestors grave is common behaviour.

### **4.3. The Sense of Security**

The need for a secure place for the survival of Armenian nation and heritage has been mentioned so often in my interviews. Actually, physical safety and the economic security of Armenians have deep historical roots.

According to Richard Hovannisian, “the conscious Armenian demand for individual and collective security of life and property on the one hand and the burgeoning insecurity of both life and property on the other, that gave rise to the Armenian question as a part of the larger Eastern question.” (Hovannisian, 1997: 204). The problem of security existed but transformed into more cultural areas during Soviet Armenia.

Soviet central authorities, despite the stated ideological goal of a post-national communist society, never pursued a consistent set of policies. Simultaneous encouragement for both assimilation and cultural diversity (1970s), or an abrupt switch from one policy to the other (early 1930s, late 1940s and early 1960s), meant that neither one could be implemented successfully. (Panossian, 2006 : 274)

Respondents underlined the feeling of security while describing their perception of homeland. Security was the first thing that respondents mentioned while describing their definition of homeland. A respondent who has been at many countries stated that: “Security is the first thing that makes me feel I’m in my homeland.” (A4)

Anthony D. Smith’s conceptualization of trauma to explain the construction of diasporic nationalism can also be used to understand Armenians high sense of security related to their homeland. “Trauma involves not only a sense of loss and dispossession, but also of betrayal. The Greeks and

Armenians felt not only a sense of collective bereavement, of reduction to passive subject status, but also betrayed by their own Christian kinsmen, who failed to deliver them from Islam, the Ottoman yoke and captivity or genocide.” (Smith 1999: 218) Hence, Armenians perceive Armenia as a place for the survival of Armenian culture and ethnicity which Armenians live and develop for all Armenians. According to university student interviewee: “Homeland is a kind of symbol of security.”(A8)

Although none of the respondents mentioned discrimination or any kind of negative behaviour faced abroad, they have a feeling of insecurity; that is, they have the belief that Armenia is the only place where they can feel fully secure. A director told the story of his Armenian friend living at Moscow:

My friend recently moved on from Moscow where he had business, he had sold all, and he came to buy home here with his three children because the older son became six years old. I said “why are you coming here, you have house you have business at Moscow ?” He said “you would not understand. You would not understand what does it means to live a child of Armenian heritage with Armenian nose with Armenian name in Russian school. I always scared for my kids thats why I brought them here. So that give me the question again; “what is homeland?”. My friend never been in Armenia, I met with him in Turkey. We were in a group that climbed Mountain Ararat. He was from Moscow, he does not speak Armenian but he brought kids here to raise them here because he feels this is safest place for Armenians. So for us now, Armenia is where you feel yourself home. (A1)

The experiences of repatriates have a supporting effect on Armenians' feelings of insecurity. Traumatic historical background, ongoing discrimination against Armenians in the countries where they settled, and the problem of conserving Armenian heritage in other countries, makes Armenians perceive Armenia as a secure place for them and for the Armenian heritage.

In conclusion, in this section, I attempted to show that a sense of security has a revealing role in the formation of Armenian identity and perception of homeland.

#### **4.4. Belief to Go Back**

While defining visions of homeland, Susan Pattie states that "In diaspora the homeland is, or at least includes, an Armenian's own town or village of origin. Now, of course, that usually means the village of their ancestors' origin. This includes personal and collective memories of towns such as Kharpert and Adana, now in Turkey, and villages such as Kessab in Syria, places that people wonder and care about and long to see." (Pattie, 1999) Similarly, Libaridian emphasizes the importance of "Western Armenia" for Diasporan Armenians, arguing that "For many people and their offspring who survived the massacres and genocide in Western Armenia, homeland was Kharpert, Erzerum or Van. Yerevan would not do. Most survivors of the Genocide could think only of their cities there –Adana, Marash and so on." (Libaridian 1999: 124)

As I mentioned in the literature review section, for both William Safran and Robin Cohen, the will to go back and restore the "homeland" is a peculiar feature of diasporic communities. Also they highlight the mystification of the homeland and dispersion. Although I interviewed Armenians of

Anatolian origin living in Armenia, I have found that they have a strong feeling of dispersion, mystification of homeland, belief to go back and restore their homeland. Interviewee with Mus and Van origin expressed his strong belief to go back:

I believe that I will go there and live in my grandmother's house. You know, it is my house. I think that I just gave it to other people to live in and now I will take it back. (A2)

However much the region belongs to Turkey, the current social and economic situation of that region and security problems are seen as obstacles to returning. An engineer argued that: "You know, it is an unsafe and very mountainous place and Kurdish people live there." (A11)

When I ask respondents if they would like to live in their "perceived homeland" the most common response was: "If it were one day part of Armenia then yes I would like to live there, but if it is in Turkey, no. (A8)

Armenians of Anatolian origin in Armenia are not considered a diasporic community. As observed during the fieldwork, in the sense of going back to ancestral lands, Armenians with Anatolian origin have the idea of restoring the "old order" and remembrance of a lost homeland which has the significant feature of diasporic communities.

#### **4.5. The Effect of Symbolic Places**

In this section, I attempt to present the attributed meanings of special places to uncover the impact of symbolic places on conserving family history, belonging to "lost land" and perception of homeland. In order to

learn the impact of symbolic places, I have asked questions about what Mount Agri, Lake Van and Karabagh means to them. I chose those symbolic places because Mount Agri is of historical and religious importance, especially after 18th century Armenians populated the areas around Lake Van and Karabagh.

Anthropologist Levon Abrahamian uses the image of a mountain with two peaks to explain the dichotomic feature of Armenian society:

The dichotomous structure of Armenian society seems to fit a more general structure beyond the dramatic splits ranging from the division of Armenia between Persia and Byzantium at the end of the 4th century to the split into homeland and postgenocide diaspora in the beginning of the 20th century. The presence of the two Armenias, Greater and Lesser, in historical times and the present-day Armenia-Gharabagh formation, the constituents of which are neither divided nor united, but are in any case differentiated, seem to represent the different aspects of this intrinsic dichotomy. Even the double-peaked Mt. Masis (Ararat), the symbol of Armenia, seems to express the same idea, in addition to presenting the asymmetry of the two constituents of this dichotomous unity. (Abrahamian, 2006 : 331)

Mount Agri has historical importance for Armenians. The present-day Mount Ararat was identified with the biblical mountain where Noah's Ark landed after the flood only in medieval times. In early Christian times, it was thought to be located in Corduena, at the southern borders of the Armenian Highland. The present-day Mt. Ararat was known as Mt. Masis for the Armenians and had its own, Caucasian related mythology

described by Khorenats'i, who never mentioned it in a biblical context. (Abrahamian, 2006 : 11)

In the fieldwork, all respondents rejected the name "Mount Agri", instead preferring to refer to the mountain as "Mount Ararat". Their perception and attributed meanings of Mount Agri is really complicated. On one hand Mount Agri means history, memories, on the other hand it means future as one of the interviewee stated "Ararat is my and our everything. It is my history, my existence, my future." (A3)

A male interviewee have stated that Mount Agri is also a symbol of lost homeland; "Ararat reminds me of our lost homeland." (A7)

Thus, Armenians have a strong attachment to Mount Agri. Mount Agri can be seen from many parts of Yerevan and Armenia. Likewise, Armenians prefer to live in a house where they can see Mount Ararat. Also, in the streets of Yerevan, you can see images that symbolise Mount Agri everywhere –a mountain with two peaks. In a manner of speaking, Armenians also reproduce the images of Mount Agri and live with that symbol as a reminder.

Ever since the 1921 Russo- Turkish Treaty, Armenians have been physically separated from their Sacred Mountain, although they would claim have been far removed from it in spirit, which is proved by the presence of Masis-Ararat in the coat of arms of the three successive Armenian Republics –the first, the Soviet and the present day one. (Petrosyan, 2001: 38). According to a female interviewee:

No Armenian can ever come to terms with Ararat no longer being part of Armenia now. They can come to terms with the loss of anything but not Ararat. (A4)

Describing the meaning of Mount Agri was also hard for the respondents. They underlined the importance of the mountain, with many declaring, “it is our everything,” when trying to explain its importance. A director described Mount Agri as: “Ararat is the real and hidden religion of Armenians.” (a1)

Mount Agri raises reminders of their history, their prosperous days and their lost homeland and functions as an imperishable symbol so as not to forget their past. Another university graduate respondent defined her attachment to Mount Agri as follows:

Ararat is our symbol. All Armenians would like to see Ararat when they woke up. When I look at Ararat, I remember that our nation is one of the oldest on Earth, I remember how much we survived. We have always been there like Ararat and we wish to be like Ararat forever. (A5)

Nagorno-Karabag is a region in the South Caucasus which is also the subject of an unresolved dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Soviet Union created the Nagorno-Karabagh Autonomous Oblast within Azerbaijan SSR in 1923. In the last periods of the Soviet Union, the Karabagh problem erupted again and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the problem transformed into a war between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

According to the Armenians, “the land of Karabagh is the historic motherland of the Armenian people, and the roots of the culture and religious traditions are to be found there.” (Kurkchian, 2005: 150-151)

As Zori Balayan mentioned in 1989, “Karabagh is not just a geographic spot on the map. Karabakh is a provocation, an obstacle to the Pan-Turkic goal of reaching Turan, or Russia’s ‘underbelly’”. (Libaridian, 1991: 154)



So, Karabagh has historical importance for Armenians, but beyond that Armenians perceive Karabagh as a place to stop the threat of Pan-Turanism which threatens the existence of Armenia and Armenians.

The responses I received to my question regarding the meaning of Karabagh were also interesting. Respondents perceive Karabagh as their homeland but the meaning of Karabagh is more than this. Karabagh means “gaining back the territories that they own”. A university student respondent, at twenty years of age, explained the importance of Karabagh as follows, “it was very important for me, the first time that we won something which belongs to us.” (A10)

In addition to this, Karabagh is a symbol of “hope” in getting territories that “belong to them”. According to the another university graduate respondent, at twenty five years of age: “Hope, Karabagh means hope because we get back a small part of our homeland for the first time.” (A6)

Here, I also want to mention that respondents use Artsakh and Karabagh interchangeably. Sometimes, they began a sentence with “Artsakh” but ended with “Karabagh”.

#### **4.6. The Impact of a Soviet Past in Shaping the Perception of Homeland**

In between 1920 and 1991 Armenia was a part of Soviet Socialist Republic. I briefly mentioned how the Soviet experience transformed Armenia and Armenian society in the first chapter. Here, I explain how the Soviet era effected the perception of homeland for Armenians of Anatolian origin.

Respondents who took part in the fieldwork mentioned that they were not free to talk about their “homeland” in public in the Soviet Era, “Of course people began to talk about those lands in public after the collapse of the Soviet Union.” (A8)

However, a scholar stated that since they were not free to talk about their homeland in public, they did so in family speeches:

During Soviet rule, we were not able to talk about Western Armenia in public. Books and novels related to Western Armenia were written after 1950 ... but I remember from my childhood my parents telling me about our homeland. (A7)

So the private sphere was the key place for Armenians of Anatolian origin to transmit their family history, their memories and their feelings related to their “homeland”.

Additionally there are two distinct groups of thinking regarding perception of the Soviet Union as a homeland. Some of the respondents mentioned that they felt themselves attached to Soviet Union and perceived the USSR as a homeland. A director, at forty eight years old, explained his perception of homeland regarding Soviet Union:

After the Sumgait Massacre and collapsing of Soviet Union my homeland has diminished suddenly ... Soviet Armenia was a paradoxical place we felt ourselves as a citizens of little beautiful country without border and a citizen of a huge empire, one of the biggest power on earth. At that time there were no problems for me to reach Moscow or Vladivostok so that was my country. The same passport, the same prices, the same language, the same values, the same ideology. (A1)

On the other hand, the other group claimed that they have never been Soviet. Fanoher respondent mentioned that “my dad told me that ‘we were not anti-Soviet but not Soviet’.”. (A8)

In short, the Soviet era affected their perception of homeland in three ways; first, Armenians of Anatolian origin lost their access to their “homeland” for almost 70 years which caused idealization and mystification of the “lost homeland”. Second, being a small part of a huge union has opened Armenians up to new geographies; as a result of this, some Armenians perceived its territory as a homeland. Thirdly, identity politics of the Soviet Union tried to transform their sense of belonging and feelings toward the Soviet Union. My fieldwork shows that some Armenians of Anatolian origin felt a part of that huge empire; however, it seems that those politics were not at all successful in transforming that sense of belonging and the feelings of Armenians of Anatolian origin. Here, transmitting family narratives in the private sphere appears to be an effective strategy in keeping their attachment and sense of belonging to their “homeland”.

#### **4.7. Conclusion of the Chapter**

Armenians of Anatolian origin conceptualise the term of homeland with security because of their traumatic history. They perceive Armenia as a secure place for the survival of the Armenian nation and heritage.

Armenia is perceived as a homeland but respondents believe that they have another homeland and show characteristics of a diasporic community related to their belonging and the perception of homeland.

As I mentioned before, Armenians of Anatolian origin perceive their homeland as two parts of the whole: the one where they live now and the

other where their ancestors used to live, where their culture and roots are from. I used “Incomplete homeland” to define it because they have a strong desire to unify the two homelands.

The lost homeland, “Western Armenia”, is well idealized and the meaning of it is understood by the glorious Armenian culture and heritage. So, they differentiate Western and Eastern Armenia, in this manner they differentiate the “Western Armenian Identity” as the pure and highest form of Armenian heritage.

Armenians of Anatolian origin gather knowledge related to their ancestral lands from their grandparents, elderly people and schools. Also, newly established associations aim to transmit the culture and knowledge regarding their ancestral towns to the next generations.

Mount Agri dominates the skyline of Yerevan and is perceived as a symbol of Armenian heritage, lost homeland and a reminder of their past which ensures Armenians of Anatolian origin do not lose any connections or feelings belonging to the lost homeland beyond Mount Agri. Speaking in the private sphere was the main source of transmitting family narratives, especially in the Soviet Era.

Throughout this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate the features of Armenians of Anatolian origin in relation to their conceptions of homeland, strategies with which to conserve their family history, the meanings they attribute to symbolic places and the formation of their identity.

In the next chapter I explain the features of Armenians in Istanbul. Then I will analyze homeland perceptions of Armenians of Anatolian origin in

Armenia and Armenians of Anatolian origin in Istanbul in the following chapter to next the next one.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **THE PERCEPTION OF HOMELAND AMONG ARMENIANS OF ANATOLIAN ORIGIN LIVING IN ISTANBUL**

In this chapter, by analyzing the homeland perceptions of Armenians in Istanbul, I try to identify the meanings attributed to the concept of homeland in the formation of their identity.

It is estimated that there are around seventy thousand Armenians living in Turkey. This is an estimation because since the 1965 census, questionnaires no longer contain questions on religion and ethnicity. In the 1960 census, 72,200 people had marked Armenian as native or second language. According to the 1965 census, the population of the Gregorian religious community was 69,526. (Dundar, 1999 : 91-95.)

As I have mentioned in the third chapter, Anatolia was the homeland of the majority of Armenians. But today, Armenians living in Turkey constitute an exceptional case because the world's Armenians are usually considered in one of two groups: those living in Armenia and the Armenians living in the Diaspora. If we define Diaspora as the dispersion of a people from their original homeland, the Armenians living in Turkey are not considered part of the Diaspora, as they are still living in their "homeland" where they have lived for centuries. (Ors, Komsuoğlu, 2007 : 413)

In this part of the thesis, I attempt to understand and discuss the experiences of Armenians in Istanbul as a minority group and their

perceptions of homeland. The first section looks at the role of the sense of belonging in the homeland perceptions of Armenians of Anatolian origin in Istanbul. The first section also underlines the issues of Istanbul Armenians in feeling that they fully belong to Turkey. The second section deals with the problem of belonging of Armenians in Istanbul regarding the Armenian Diaspora and Armenia. This section includes examples from the perspectives of Istanbul Armenians about Armenia.

The third section is about their perceptions regarding Istanbul. Here, I discuss the importance of Istanbul for Armenians in preserving their identity. In the fourth chapter, I deal with their perceptions about their ancestral places in Anatolia.

The last section focuses on the distinction between Istanbul and Anatolian Armenians and its effect on their belonging to Istanbul.

## **5.1. The Sense of Belonging**

The Istanbul Armenians I interviewed conceptualized their homeland through “belonging”. Perceptions of belonging depend on personal, cultural, historical and social contexts. Homeland for the Armenians in Istanbul is a place that they conceptualize with their everyday life experiences and cultural similarities that they share with other people.

Everyday experiences and the habits associated with living in Istanbul are mentioned by the respondents while explaining their “belonging” to Turkey. However, their sense of belonging is not complete; they belong here because they feel they do not belong anywhere else more than they belong to Turkey. A female respondent described her belonging to Turkey:

There is always a situation in which you feel you don't belong to a place, but Turkey is the place where I strongly feel I belong to. (T13)

They describe what they mean by "belonging to Turkey" with being 'born and bred' here, speaking Turkish better than Armenian, and having cultural affinity to the society of Turkey and to their historical roots. An interviewee, at fifty seven years of age underlined that:

In my opinion, the motherland is the place where you look like the people walking in the street. We look like each other significantly, even though we are not considered equal at all. (T18)

They feel they "strongly belong to Turkey" but they still have a feeling of being in-between. For instance, another interviewee added that "I am in between. At best, this is the closest one, for my social circle is here. I am culturally from here". (T3)

Their degree of belonging is not static. They claim that they have unsolved problems related to being a minority in Turkey. Discrimination and mistreatment toward their community also affect their sense of belonging. A high school graduate respondent, at twenty four years of age emphasised the news about Armenian citizen of Turkey that hired by Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

I think a few years ago, a Turkish Armenian was appointed to the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it captured the headlines. Aren't we citizens of this country? Isn't it the ministry of foreign affairs of our country? (T20)



Interviews revealed that Armenians in Turkey still have fundamental problems regarding citizenship rights. They demand to be seen as equal citizens and they feel inconvenienced about being named as a “minority” :

We have equal citizenship, the state gave us that right but in my opinion the Turkish state did not work enough to make non-minority citizens to accept us as equals. (T3)

The assassination of Hrant Dink<sup>18</sup> is mentioned by the respondents when explaining their belonging to Turkey. The assassination definitely undermined their feeling of belonging and created hopelessness among the Armenian community. A male accountant explained the last time he thought about to moving to another country:

The last time I considered going was at the time when Hrant Dink was assassinated. We live in this country, we pay our taxes in this country, but when we are subjected to discrimination, I am really getting extremely angry. (T10)

Another interesting aspect of the interviews was that some respondents complained about the term “homeland”. For instance, a male respondent, at forty eight years of age said that they wanted to use “homeland” but felt they did not have a right to. Instead they prefer to say “I am from here” rather than “here is my homeland” :

We are from here, but when someone says homeland, it reminds me of chauvinists. I feel as if I don’t have the right to say that this is my homeland! However, I am from here. (T16)

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<sup>18</sup> Hrant Dink was a Turkish citizen of Armenian descent, journalist and editor of the weekly-newspaper AGOS. He was assassinated on January 19, 2007. Almost a hundred thousand people gathered in his funeral and shouted slogans such as “We are all Armenians, We are all Hrant Dink” in reaction to his murder. See Tataryan (2001).

A respondent, who have been to Armenia mentioned the mistreatment they faced there. Mistreatment strengthened their “in-between” feeling:

I was going to work at Armenia voluntarily for six months. They asked me to write a short essay on one of the forms. The subject of the essay was “You are also an Armenian but a Diaspora Armenian. Armenians in Armenia are different. Consequently, you may not find what you expect when you come here. Write an essay in such a way that we can see your cross-cultural adaptation.” This irritated me to a large extent. Well, actually, I can’t understand it, but what annoyed me considerably was the section “You are also an Armenian but”. It is as if we are not sufficiently Armenian; it is an exclusionary attitude. (T9)

Belonging is the key factor in naming a place “homeland” for Armenians in Istanbul. By “belonging” they reference cultural affinity, everyday routines and habits. In other words, their sense of belonging is based on shared culture and mentality, and the social networks that they maintain, which will be discussed further when explaining the importance and meaning of Istanbul for Armenians.

Their sense of belonging is not static; it changes as a result of the discrimination that they encounter. In the end, although they have problems about belonging here, they do not have anywhere else that they belong to more than Turkey.

My fieldwork showed that Armenians of Anatolian origin living in Istanbul have an answer for the question “Do I belong to Turkey?” They feel they belong to Turkey but more importantly, this question is still fresh on their minds. Their everyday experiences and outstanding issues with the state cause them to reproduce the question “Where do I belong?”

## 5.2. Being an Armenian of Turkey: In a Triangle between Armenia, Diaspora and Turkey

Current literature on diaspora studies consider Armenians in two groups: Armenians in Armenia and Armenians in diaspora. In this section, I demonstrate the discontent of Armenians of Istanbul to be perceived as diasporan by diasporan organizations and the Republic of Armenia, and their “in-between” situation between Turkey, Armenia and the Diaspora. After explaining the source and reasons of their discontent, I will discuss how they perceive Armenia and how Armenia matters to them.

The fieldwork exposed that Armenians of Turkey have problems with the term “diaspora” and being considered “diasporan”. Armenian Journalist Robert Haddecian mentions that they have never left the country within which the greater part of that homeland is contained. ‘And remember’, he continues, ‘*Bolsahayutiun*<sup>19</sup> is a very old community, which has experienced its particular history and developed its unique character – here!’ (Bjorklund, 2003: 345) An interviewee, who engaged in trade explained his ideas about the situation of Armenians community in Istanbul:

I think there are no terms that would define us. For instance, we have dance groups; when they go to Armenia, the minister responsible for Diaspora affairs welcome them. Isn’t it strange? You will come and we will welcome you here! (T15)

Armenians in Turkey feel that they do not fit into those two categories and they should be defined in another category. They feel that they do not fully

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<sup>19</sup> Means Istanbul Armenians.

belong to either the diaspora or Armenia. A university graduate female respondent claimed that:

We are in a country where our roots are; we are in a different category. In my opinion, there are three categories. Armenians in Turkey; Diaspora Armenians, who, a few centuries ago, had to go to and live in places where no other Armenians had ever gone; and the Armenians in Armenia. (T9)

Although they mention that it is not appropriate to define Armenians in Armenia or Armenians in diaspora as homogeneous groups, they consider Armenians in Turkey to be different from Armenians in Armenia and Diasporan Armenians. They feel that neither diasporan Armenians nor Armenians in Armenia understand them well, which strengthens their feeling of being in-between.

Respondents complain about how other Armenians are not interested in the institutional problems faced by the Armenians of Turkey. This is one other instance where the reactions of other Armenians to the Dink case comes into play again. A female respondent who has been at Armenia and France many times emphasised her feelings about the Hrant Dink case and reactions of her Armenian friends at France:

I believe that it is highly problematic that Hrant Dink is considered only 1500000+1. I was extremely hurt this year. The case was concluded on January 17. None of my friends, who were very much happy and praising France when the law on Armenian genocide denial was adopted, shared anything with respect to the Hrant Dink case. They do not follow the incidents. They are extremely indifferent. I do not believe that their first statements such as "here, the genocide still persists, one more Armenian has been

assassinated” were sincere. If they were, they would follow the Hrant Dink case. (T9)

It is worth noting that, although I did not specifically ask about the murder of Hrant Dink, respondents mentioned Hrant Dink and the assassination very often in different contexts. Without a doubt, the murder of Hrant Dink is a milestone for the Armenians of Turkey about their future, and a turning point in their relations with Armenians around the world.

It is still early to discuss the impact of the murder of Hrant Dink on the feelings of Armenians of Turkey; however, it is apparent that the murder and the lack of progress in the case of Hrant Dink, and the reactions from the diaspora deepened their feeling of loneliness and their inability to belong.

Nine of the twenty respondents that I interviewed had visited Armenia. An interviewee who had lived in Armenia for four months explained how Armenians in Armenia were different, mentioning cultural differences between Armenians in Turkey and Armenia:

I considered settling in Armenia. Actually, I lived there for 4 months. If you ask me whether I felt I belonged there, no, I did not. Armenians in Armenia have a totally different lifestyle; they have a different perception of life. They look at things in a different way. (T1)

Being Armenian does not create a natural affiliation between the Armenians in Istanbul and the Armenians in Armenia. Thus, cultural differences arise between them. A university graduate respondent stated that:

I face discrimination here (in Turkey), but when I go there (Yerevan), I see that we have totally different cultures, for we have been raised in the Anatolian culture here. They have forgotten this fact, and been strongly influenced by the Russian culture. We are not at the same place. (T3)

After the independence of the Republic of Armenia, relations and communication between Armenians in Armenia and Armenians in Turkey increased. Since 2002, the two peoples have come to know more and more about each other. As a result of increased travel between the two nations, the Armenians in Istanbul began to form opinions about the society and the political system in Armenia. A male respondent, at fifty eight years of age, who had relatives in Armenia complained about the political and economic system there:

I have been to Armenia once before. There is the Musaler (Musa Mountain) village. I have relatives there and went there to see them. When I was there, there was no lemon for the salad. Actually, there is lemon, but very scarce. We thought it would be a good treat if we brought along 40-50 kilos of lemon. I told them that we could send them lemons from Hatay, but they said, "Oligarchs wouldn't allow it, we cannot have them imported here." You see, I would not live in a country with such mentality. (T8)

A psychologist stated that cultural affinity between Turks and Armenians and their long history of living together in this land causes her to perceive Turkey as her homeland.

In my opinion, considering this place as the motherland has nothing to do with ethnic identity. You know, they say Armenians and Turks are very close to each other; actually this not related to ethnicity or genetics. It is only natural that people who live in the same area for centuries will resemble each other. (T12)

Respondents who had been to Armenia told how they felt when they saw signposts in Armenian or officers who spoke Armenian on the street. For instance, a university student said that he was overjoyed to see the Armenian script on the street and was exuding happiness even during the interview:

When you go to Armenia, you witness things that give you pleasure. First of all, everything is in the Armenian language. You speak a language only within your family for many years, and you think that it is as if no one else speaks this language in the world. You use this language only for the purpose of gossiping, or saying something confidential. When you go there, you really get surprised to see that police officers speak in Armenian! (T19)

Although their dialect is different from Armenians in Armenia, speaking their mother language without hesitation and seeing signposts in Armenian constitutes the “happy side” of their experience and memories related to Armenia. Likewise, another respondent:

It is the country where my language is spoken. Even the police officers speak Armenian! When I first went there, the passport police stood up and said “Welcome my sister!” in Turkish, upon seeing that it is the first time I went there. We can become anything here; we can become a doctor, an architect or engineer, but we

can't be a police officer or similar. Actually, perhaps we wouldn't want to, but it is bitter to know this. (T9)

Importantly, "Armenian-speaking police officer" is mentioned by all respondents who had been to Armenia. They perceive Armenia as a different place where Armenians can become a police officer, they can speak their language without hesitation and they can see signposts in Armenian. But Armenians of Istanbul also mention cultural differences with Armenians of Armenia.

This presents the "in-between" situation of Armenians of Istanbul regarding their relations and perceptions about the Diaspora and Armenia. They are clear that they have never left their homeland, so they do not want to be categorized as "diasporan" when they visit Armenia or when they participate in an event held by the Republic of Armenia or diasporan organizations.

Armenians in Turkey still experience discrimination and mistreatment. On the other hand, Armenia and diasporan organizations all around world considers them "outsiders." At the very least, Armenians of Istanbul believe that they are treated as "outsiders" by those organizations, and this affects their belonging to Armenia and the Diaspora. The murder of Hrant Dink deepened their feeling of loneliness and challenged their hopes from Turkey and ideas about Diaspora.



### **5.3. Istanbul as a Constitutive Element of Armenian Identity**

In this section, I will explain how the Armenians in Istanbul perceive Istanbul as homeland and discuss the importance of Istanbul in terms of preserving their identity.

According to Susan Pattie, homeland for Armenians is and has been a contested and evolving notion. It is shaped by the personal memories and experiences, ambitions and hopes of people at particular times and by the desires and plans (and varying degrees of success of these plans) of intellectuals, teachers, priests, and political leaders. (Pattie, 1999: 5)

Today, nearly 95% of Turkey's Armenians live in Istanbul. The majority of the Armenian population of Anatolia moved to Istanbul during the early days of the Republic as a consequence of social pressure, the lack of churches and schools serving their communities, the difficulties in arranging marriages within the community, and the efforts of the Patriarchate to gather Turkish Armenians under its umbrella in Istanbul. (Komsuoglu and Ors, 2009 : 335-336).

According to Hrant Dink, although the urbanization process of Turkey was the main reason the Armenian population migrated from Anatolia to Istanbul, the inability of the Istanbul Armenian Patriarchate to help the churches in Anatolia, the lack of functioning Armenian schools in Anatolia, the 1942 Capital Levy and the events of September 6-7, 1955 were the other influencers of that migration. (Dink, 2000: 33-34)

Istanbul offers more security, less social pressure, and better access to education<sup>20</sup> and religious activities, which are crucial for preserving their identity and culture. Therefore, living in Istanbul is not a simple matter of choice for the Armenians in Turkey; rather, it is a necessity, as the female respondent mentioned, “There is no other province that would offer what Istanbul does. Schools, churches, community, associations, etc.” (T5)

Today Armenians of Istanbul in Turkey are the last remnants of the Armenian population in Anatolia. An interviewee who married with a Turk, described Istanbul as the “terminus” for Armenians in Turkey, which means if they were to go somewhere else, that place would not be in Turkey and this is not something they want to do.:

Istanbul is the terminus for the Turkish Armenians. Armenians have no other place to go in Turkey. If someone is to leave Istanbul, they will go abroad. This is what makes Istanbul important, both for you and for us. (T18)

Istanbul is a cosmopolitan city, which makes them more comfortable. It is easy to blend in with the crowd and hide as a minority. Consequently, they feel free on the streets of Istanbul:

You are free, since there are all types of people, but you are always one of the others. However, there are many “others” here, and so you don’t show up among all, unlike other places. (T3)

Moreover, most Istanbul Armenians settled in specific neighborhoods like Kurtulus, Bakirkoy, Yesilkoy and Samatya. Choosing specific districts to settle in shows the multi-layered solidarity networks of Armenians in

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<sup>20</sup> There are no functioning Armenian schools in Anatolia now. So, moving on to Istanbul is also a strategy to make their descendants learn Armenian and conserve their identity.

Istanbul. A sociology graduate respondent undelined the importance of solidarity network and Armenian institutions in Istanbul:

Istanbul is the place where we, as a community, can live with utmost comfort. We have schools and churches here. If you ask me how often I go to the church, that's another matter. There are specific locations such as Kurtulus, Bakirkoy; there is an established order in these locations. Armenians living in Ankara feel the need to hide at some point, but an Armenian living in Kurtulus would not feel it. (T5)

Armenians have historical presence in Istanbul. There has been an Armenian presence in Istanbul since the 4th century (Yumul, 1997: 48). According to Barsoumian, under the Ottoman rule, the number of the Armenian inhabitants of the city increased steadily. By voluntary or forced migration Armenians moved to the Ottoman capital. By the end of the eighteenth century, the number of Armenians living in the capital was estimated at 150,000; around the mid-nineteenth century, this number had risen to 225,000; and by the 1880s to over 250,000 or, according to some sources, as many as 300,000 (Barsoumian, 1997 : 188)

A respondent who engaged in trade mentioned economic and social facilities in Istanbul as his reasons to live here, "it is also a fact that Turkey's best schools and business centers are located in Istanbul. Istanbul means more to us than it means to Turks." (T16)

Istanbul provides significant relief to Armenians as they can blend in as a minority; furthermore, they established multi-layered networks and connections here, and they have institutions that they need to preserve their identity and culture.

Although all interviewees or their families had settled in Istanbul after 1920, they defined themselves as “Istanbullu” (“Istanbulite”) rather than defining themselves with their hometowns in Anatolia. On the other hand, they do not consider Istanbul their homeland.

I argue that Armenians of Istanbul perceive Istanbul as “home” for two main reasons: the environment that Istanbul provides them, and the feeling that they do not have any other place to live in Turkey. In other words, if they were to feel that they did not belong to Istanbul, they would have to move to another country and that would mean leaving their final place to go in Turkey, which is not something they want to do.

#### **5.4. Perception of Anatolia as a Root of Culture and Identity**

In the previous section, I stated that Armenians of Istanbul define themselves as “Istanbullu” but do not consider Istanbul as their homeland. In this section, I will discuss where homeland is for them.

I will also attempt to understand and analyze the ties of Armenians of Istanbul to their ancestral lands and the importance of those places on their identity. First of all, I will broach the subject of “Western and Eastern Armenia:” whether Armenians of Istanbul use the term Western Armenia to refer to their ancestral lands. Then, I will explain how they pass their memories down to younger generations regarding their hometowns and its effect on their identities.

As mentioned in the second chapter, all respondents in Armenia who had Anatolian roots defined their ancestral lands within the borders of Turkey as “Western Armenia”. But the Armenians in Istanbul, who had also left

their ancestral lands and had moved to Istanbul, have a rather different perspective regarding that region.

None of Armenians in Istanbul that I interviewed used the term “Western Armenia” to define those territories; instead, they preferred to name the village where they were from. A respondent with Sason and Malatya origin stated that:

Most of the Armenians in Armenia and the Diaspora call those places “Western Armenia,” but I have never heard “Western Armenia” from my grandfather. He would call the province of Malatya, Sason, and Diyarbakır ‘Tigranakert’. (T4)

The new generation of Armenians who have moved to Istanbul have fragmented memories of their ancestral lands and family history. Some families carried their history forward with all the positive and negative reminiscences while others only carried the “good memories” forward in order to protect them. A female scholar shared her memory about how she learned about her family history as follows:

I remember one thing very clearly. We had history of Turkish Revolution course at Notre Dame de Sion. One day, our teacher looked into our eyes and said “of course, some dramatic Armenian events happened in our history”. I opened the book and saw the Armenian events title. I asked myself what it was, I didn’t understand it. After school, I went to my grandmother and asked her. We sat at a table, I was 14-15 years old then. Think about it. She started telling me about it. But, she didn’t wind me up, she told things in a controlled manner. Of course, I asked her why I hadn’t known them before, why hadn’t they told me until that time! I was shocked. On the day when I was to graduate from primary school, some people wrote “Down with Armenians” on the wall of our

school. I think, it was at the time of Karabag war. You know you are an Armenian, but you don't know the reason of this anger and discrimination! Afterwards, I did not have so much business on these matters, but I was very much angry for they hadn't told me anything about these things in order to protect me. (T14)

Attitude of the family is the most important factor for the conveyance of memories but not attending Armenian schools and not growing up close to the Armenian community are other important factors in learning their identity and history. Istanbul could be a melting pot for those who do not intend to uphold their identities. A female respondent who did not went to Armenian middle and high school told that:

Because I did not attend any Armenian schools after primary school, I did not know much about the Armenian culture or identity. I questioned my own identity rather late. When I was at high school, I identified myself as a Turk. One day, one of my teachers said, "Well, of course, you can be (a Turk), you are a citizen of Turkey, but, can you be a Turk?". Then I researched and learned about the Armenian culture. I had a total Turkish identity consciousness. It was me who carried the Turkish flag at ceremonies. (T3)

Families who conveyed their feelings and memories associated with their ancestral lands spoke of the cultural elements that surrounded their life there. In other words, cuisine, lifestyle of the village and the natural environment were the main components that constituted the perceptions of most Istanbul Armenians with Anatolian origins regarding their ancestral lands:

What father used to tell me about the nature and cuisine of Anatolia. My mother would always try to prepare interesting dishes. Because my father's taste was shaped in Arapkir, he wouldn't like them at all. For my father, it was the Anatolian dishes and Arapkir, where he lived in his childhood. They would not tell me anything historical. (T9)

It is necessary to mention that, except two respondents whose roots are in Vakifli, currently the only Armenian village in Turkey, only two other respondents had visited their ancestral towns.

It must be noted that the number of Armenian hometown organizations has increased recently. The Vakıflı Village Association, founded in Istanbul in 2000, was the first association established by Anatolian Armenians in Istanbul. Today, Armenians from Sivas, Malatya, Sason and Arapgir have also established hometown organizations and are arranging cultural tours to those places. As such, the establishment of these associations may strengthen ties between new generations and their hometowns.

Respondents who visited their family villages were disappointed because of the current physical conditions of Armenian monuments, schools and churches. For instance, a female interviewee mentioned that:

I went to Arapkir last year. I stayed with our old neighbors there. They kept telling me 'there was a church here once,' but whenever I looked, I saw nothing but a pile of stones. I was very much upset to see that they were all gone with the wind now, but I didn't have an awareness of our history. Arapkir is in our minds with its nature and dishes. (T9)

It has been previously mentioned that the Armenians of Istanbul are reluctant to call someplace their homeland because of chauvinism, but they are sure that their culture belongs to Anatolia and they have deep roots there.

I can say that my homeland is Anatolia. My family settled in Istanbul so my ties with Anatolia are not strong, but if I were to associate myself with someplace, I would choose Anatolia. (T19)

Despite all this, most of the respondents mentioned that they consider Anatolia as their homeland but they perceive Anatolia as the root of their culture and identity. A respondent who has not been at her ancestral cities in Anatolia claimed that culture and traditions of Anatolia has a strong impact on her culture:

Even though I can't identify myself with Anatolia at all, or I can't say that I belong to Anatolia, you see, it is my Anatolia! I mean, I am from Istanbul, but my culture was shaped with the traditionalism of Anatolia and cosmopolitanism of Istanbul. (T3)

Throughout this section of the chapter, I attempted to explain the ties of Anatolian Armenians of Istanbul to their hometowns and the effect this has on their identity. Undoubtedly, they believe that their culture is rooted in Anatolia, which has a significant influence on their identity. Moreover, Armenians of Istanbul feel they belong to Istanbul but they perceive Anatolia as their homeland. Their knowledge of and interest in their ancestral towns are limited.

They do not have a holistic view with which to define their ancestral lands, which is the opposite of the Armenians of Armenia with Anatolian origins. What they mean by ancestral land is limited to their family history. They do not reject the existence of Armenians and the heritage of Armenians in



other areas, but their memories are conveyed through family narratives which are based on the lifestyle and culture of their ancestors in their hometowns. Consequently, their perception of “ancestral land” is limited to their family history. But Anatolia is seen as a source of Armenian culture, thus the source of Armenian identity.

## **5.5. Distinction between Istanbul Armenians and Anatolian Armenians**

Since the beginning of the 19th century, the general trend for Istanbul Armenians was to move abroad and Armenians living in Anatolia replaced them in Istanbul. (Yumul, 1992: 49) So today, the vast majority of Armenians living in Istanbul have Anatolian origins. The aim of this section is to discuss whether the distinction between Istanbul Armenian and Anatolian Armenian is still valid, and what the reasons are for differentiation. Then, I will attempt to analyze the effect of the distinction between Istanbul and Anatolian Armenians on their respective identities.

According to Hrant Dink, the differentiation between Istanbul Armenian and Anatolian Armenian was felt seriously for some time (Dink, 2000: 34). Although the Anatolian Armenians I interviewed had settled in Istanbul in the early 20th century, the distinction between Istanbul and Anatolian Armenians was still apparent on their minds. Although there is no clear definition of Istanbul Armenian and Anatolian Armenian, the term Istanbul Armenian, or *yanyan*, usually refers to Armenians who settled in Istanbul before the 20th century.

Dynamics of migration and modernization resulted in the emerge of a new Anatolia-based class in Istanbul. On the other hand, Armenians of Istanbul

can be seen as the last remaining agents of an elite culture; carrying the modernity of the early century, but aging at the same time and for the same reason. (Ozdogan, Ustel, Karakasli, Kentel, 2009 : 339)

Respondents explained the difference between Istanbul Armenians and Anatolian Armenians as the difference between having an urban culture and a rural culture. Speaking in general terms, it is believed that Istanbul Armenians have an urban culture which Anatolian Armenians do not have. A female university graduate, at twenty four years of age underlined that:

It is said that, when Armenians came to Istanbul from Anatolia, the Istanbul Armenians excluded the Anatolian Armenians; they looked down upon them. (T1)

On the other hand, as the psychologist interviewee noted, that this distinction was no longer valid. This was an issue for the generation that moved to Istanbul:

Distinctive characteristics could be more evident in their first generations. For example, my father always talks about Sason. Can he be the same as an Armenian who has lived in Kumkapi for seven generations? But, these are cultural differences. The same differences can be seen among Turks as well. (T12)

Cultural differences and local cultures of the Anatolian Armenians were emphasized as another characteristic of Anatolian Armenians. For Armenians with Anatolian origin, having an Anatolian origin transforms into a cultural reference. (Ozdogan, Ustel, Karakasli, Kentel, 2009 : 341)

My fieldwork demonstrated that although a distinction between Istanbul Armenians and Anatolian Armenians does exist, it is waning especially for the new generations. In other words, the gap between Istanbul and

Anatolian Armenians is narrowed in the younger next generations of “newcomers”. Additionally, Armenians of Anatolian origin perceive their origin as a cultural reference of their identity.

## **5.6. Conclusion of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I tried to reveal characteristic features of Armenians in Istanbul with Anatolian origin in terms of their perception of homeland and the effect this has on their identity formation.

Istanbul Armenians with Anatolian origins associate the term homeland with belonging. By belonging they actually mean similarity of everyday life habits and cultural affinity with the society that they live with. Regarding their conceptualization of belonging, they do not have anywhere else that they belong to more than Turkey. On the other hand, mistreatment and discrimination suffered by them or their community influence their feeling of belonging to Turkey.

Istanbul provides institutions and organizations to preserve their identity. They have schools, churches, historical presence, families and a community in Istanbul. But the significance of Istanbul is beyond these: Istanbul is perceived as a home, as the last place that they can live in Turkey. Additionally, fifteen of the twenty respondents described himself/herself as “Istanbullu”.

Ties of the younger generation to their ancestral towns are weak. They know where their family is from but memories are conveyed to them in fragments; therefore their idea of their hometown is limited to local food and lifestyle. What they understand by “historical homeland” is limited to the origins of their families.

Despite all this, Anatolia is perceived as a source and the root of their culture and identity. They believe that their culture is a product of the culture of their hometowns and the Armenian culture of Istanbul. The same applies to their perception of homeland as Armenians in Istanbul perceive Istanbul as a “home”, as a place to live, but Anatolia as the homeland of which Istanbul is also a part.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **CONCLUSION**

The thesis aimed to provide an analysis of the perceptions of the homeland of Armenians in Istanbul and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin and the meanings they attribute to the concept of the homeland.

In the first chapter, the objectives of the thesis were stated. In the methodology section, I provided information about how I conducted my fieldwork and why I chose this approach. The methodology section was followed by my fieldwork encounters. In the literature review section, I used studies on diasporas and nationalism. Both literatures provided me with tools to analyse the homeland perceptions of Armenians in Istanbul and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin. Then I attempted to provide a summary of the history of Armenia to point out historical turning points that might have changed the homeland perception of Armenians.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, using my interviews I tried to present the salient features of Armenians in Istanbul and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin in the context of perceptions of the homeland and the effects of their perceptions on their national identity.

In this chapter, I will present my findings and discuss them in a comparative way.

## **6.1. Major findings of the thesis**

The Armenians of Armenia and Armenians in Istanbul defined homeland with cultural heritage and history. The personal and collective memories of Armenians in Armenia are much stronger than those of the Armenians in Istanbul regarding their ancestral lands.

Armenia constitutes only a part of their homeland in the minds of Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin. They perceive their ancestral lands as a “lost homeland” and they mystify everything about those lands. As I mentioned, bringing soil or rocks from their visits to their ancestral lands is a common behaviour, which is a clear example of longing and mystification.

As I stated, Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin expressed their desire to go back as long as they could feel secure there or if those lands would again form part of the territories of the Republic of Armenia. In addition, most of them identified themselves with their ancestral lands.

I have mentioned William Safran’s and Robin Cohen’s definitions of diaspora. With these features, Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin have diasporic community characteristics.

Most of the Armenians in Istanbul who I interviewed hesitated when talking about the term “homeland”. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the homeland is perceived as a risky subject to talk about; secondly, they think that chauvinists talk about the “homeland” a lot, and they do not want to be seen as chauvinists. In other words, it is still a new phenomenon for them to talk about terms such as “homeland” and they do not know how to express their ideas, what to say and where to stop.

Armenians in Armenia and Armenians in Istanbul both mentioned that being born and bred, having friends and family members is important to name somewhere as a homeland. However, Armenians in Armenia underlined the need for security and Armenians in Istanbul mentioned a sense of belonging while describing the term “homeland”.

Armenians in Armenia perceive Armenia as a secure place for the survival of Armenian heritage and for Armenians. Their traumatic history is the main reason for this feeling, but the unsolved Karabagh issue, the huge military spending by Azerbaijan which Armenia cannot compete against, and their never-ending belief in the possibility of the realization of Pan-Turkism can be listed as other reasons. So, Armenia is a secure place but the security of Armenia and Armenians is still an actual subject.

The same thing can be said for the Armenians of Istanbul. Belonging is important to call somewhere as a homeland, and they believe that they belong to Turkey, but the mistreatment and discrimination that they or their community encounter challenge their sense of belonging. The question “Where do I belong?” repeats itself as a result of mistreatment.

The Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin believe that they have two homelands, “Western” and “Eastern” Armenia, and they attribute different characteristics to those territories. Western Armenia is a symbol of the purest and highest form of Armenian culture, and they mentioned that their culture was from there. My fieldwork showed that having origins in “Western Armenia” is still a special marker on their identities.

None of the Armenians in Istanbul mentioned “Western” and “Eastern” Armenia. Their east and west are different; the East is Anatolia and the West is Istanbul. Anatolia is perceived as a source of their identity, and Istanbul as the last stop to survive in Turkey. Clearly, the homeland is

Anatolia for the Armenians in Istanbul, but they believe that their culture is a mixture of urbanized Istanbul culture and Anatolian culture.

Transmission of the family narratives is the main source of knowledge related to ancestral lands. Armenians in Armenia and Armenians in Istanbul differ from each other when it comes to transmitting family narratives. Some Armenians in Istanbul do not pass on to the new generations everything that they know and remember related to their family history. As a result, some of the respondents' knowledge about their ancestral lands is weak. According to some of the interviewees, village of origin means local dishes, nothing more. For instance, only four of the 20 respondents among Armenians in Istanbul have visited their ancestral lands.

Thus, speaking out, remembering those years and transmitting history and narratives is a strategy to exist for Armenians in Armenia, and those narratives have an important impact on constituting their identities. They are much more into the culture of their ancestral lands. In Armenia, there are many associations of their ancestors' local towns to preserve and transmit their local cultures. Their strong attachment to the ancestral lands is mainly a result of narratives that they heard from elderly people.

Ancestral lands have an important impact on the identity construction of Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin. As I have mentioned, having roots from "Western Armenia" is something to be proud of. Furthermore, having roots from "Western Armenia" and living in the Republic of Armenia is considered as a genuine form of being Armenian. As a result, they preserve their local cultures as a part of their identity.

Ancestral lands do not have such an impact on the construction of identity of Armenians in Istanbul of Anatolian origin. Apart from respondents from



Vakifli, which is the only Armenian village in Turkey now, ancestral land means merely history and local dishes for them. Newly established hometown organizations may change this in the long run.

Living in Istanbul is not just a choice for Armenians in Turkey; rather, it is a necessity because of their perception of threat and the lack of institutions that they need to conserve their identity and

Armenian institutions such as the Patriarchate, schools, churches, the social networks of the Armenian community, the Armenian historical presence and the cosmopolitan structure of Istanbul all provide the Armenians of Istanbul with a space to conserve their identity.

Istanbul is not just a place that provides the Armenians of Turkey with the institutions needed to preserve their identity. As I have stated, they believe that they are living in their homeland now and Istanbul is the last stop for them in Turkey. So moving on from Istanbul means leaving the homeland, leaving the land that their roots are from.

Respondents identified themselves as "*Istanbullu*", not "*Anadolulu*" like their ancestors. In the first stage of the migration of Armenians from Anatolia to Istanbul, I mentioned that they encountered mistreatment from the Armenian community too. They emphasized "being from Istanbul" a lot, so being an "*Istanbullu*" rather than "*Anadolulu*" could be a strategy to exist in Istanbul for the first generation who moved on to Istanbul. They tried to be "*Istanbullu*" so as not to get treated badly. This strategy to exist as "*Istanbullu*" may have had an impact on the loss of their local cultures and their interest regarding their ancestral lands.

On the other hand, Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin preserved their local cultures and even established districts and towns with the same name as their villages of origin in Armenia. Having roots from Anatolia, or

from “Western Armenia” as they called it, was perceived positively in Armenia.

As a minority group, Armenians in Istanbul often underlined their everyday life experiences and their relations with the state. Respondents underlined their request to be treated as equal citizens of the Republic of Turkey. The unresolved problems of the Armenian community and the mistreatment that they encounter in everyday life affects their belonging and identity construction.

The assassination of Hrant Dink changed the internal dynamics of Turkey a lot for Armenians in Armenia, as well as changing their relations with the diaspora. Many Armenians in Istanbul felt hopelessness and left Turkey. But this process also triggered some other Armenians to express themselves more.

As a result of these experiences, they feel hopelessness about their future in Turkey, which causes them to think about leaving Turkey. Thus, being ready to move on to other countries is something they feel familiar with.

The relations of Armenians in Istanbul with other Armenians around the world also have an important effect on their identity formation. They have problems in Turkey, but on the other hand approaches from Armenia and the Armenian diaspora towards them strengthen their sense of non-belonging.

The Armenians of Istanbul complained that Armenians in the diaspora and Armenians in Armenia do not understand them well. They think most of their speeches related to Armenians in Turkey are not sincere and are far from understanding the situation of Armenians in Turkey. Their failure to understand the Armenians of Istanbul creates a distance between the Armenians of Istanbul and other Armenians.

In the second chapter of the thesis, I briefly explained the main discussions in the literature of the diaspora regarding the homeland. William Safran and Robin Cohen define “diaspora” with reference to dispersal from the homeland. But “what is homeland?” and “what makes a place homeland?”. They emphasize the notion of a homeland without discussing the features of that homeland.

In the Armenian case, a new Armenian “nation-state” erupted after the collapse of the Soviet Union and defined a new territory as a “homeland”. But on the other hand, Armenians in Armenia kept their memories alive regarding their ancestral place. So, Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin did not transform their perceptions of the homeland a lot; their homeland “remains in their blood, in their hearts, and under their skin”. Throughout Chapter Four, I highlighted how Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin define their “other homeland” and their attributions to those territories. In other words, they desire a homeland - ancestral lands - in their homeland – the Republic of Armenia.

Although the Armenians of Istanbul are considered as a “diaspora” by some scholars, my research shows that Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin have more common features of a diaspora and the diasporic identity definitions of Robin Cohen and William Safran.

All Armenians in Istanbul who visited Armenia mentioned signposts in Armenian and how happy they were to hear people speaking Armenian on the streets. In the interviews, respondents also mentioned how much they missed hearing Armenian and seeing Armenian letters on the streets. Although they do not think that Armenia is their homeland, speaking their mother language without diffidence makes Armenia a special place in their minds.

So, speaking their mother language without hesitation in Armenia constitutes good memories related with Armenia for the Armenians of Istanbul, which is an indicator of how language creates affiliation.

In Turkey, there is a common typology of Armenians. The first group consists of Armenians in Turkey. The second group comprises Armenians in the diaspora. According to common belief, the roots of members of the second group are from Anatolia, which actually true. But what is missed relates to the third group, the Armenians in Armenia. There are many Armenians of Anatolian origin in Armenia too. Armenia is a place where you can rent a house in the Arabgir district of Yerevan, exchange your money at “Malatia Cash Exchange” and eat your meal at “Aintap Lahmacun”.

## **6.2. Conclusion**

This study tried to provide an analysis of the perceptions of the homeland among Armenians in Istanbul and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin in order to identify the meanings attributed to the concept of the homeland in the formation of their identity.

Throughout the thesis, I revealed that the perception of homeland is multilayered and not static. Family narratives, everyday life experiences, relations with the state and interactions with other people are the main elements that constitute their attribution to the homeland and the impact of the homeland on their identity.

I worked with two communities who are not considered as the diaspora: Armenians in Istanbul and Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin. I argued that Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin have the

characteristics of diasporic communities. I believe that existing studies on diasporas cannot provide satisfactory tools to understand how Armenians in Armenia of Anatolian origin relate to their perceptions of the homeland. However, how to define Armenians in Turkey is also problematic.

The writings of Rogers Brubaker, Avtar Brah and Stuart Hall question recent approaches to the existing studies on diasporas. Rather than creating typologies about societies to define which community is diasporic or not, I think that an approach to understanding how societies perceive the homeland as a term and their homeland as a part of their identity may create better theoretical tools to understand those societies.

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# APPENDICIES

## APPENDIX A

### Social and Demographical Profile of the Respondents

**Table 1.** Social and Demographical Profile of the Interviewees at Yerevan

	Age	Gender	Education	Birthplace	Status	Living Place
A1	48	Male	University Graduate	Yerevan	Married	Yerevan
A2	27	Male	University Graduate	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan
A3	24	female	University Graduate	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan
A4	30	female	University Graduate	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan
A5	22	female	University Graduate	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan
A6	25	male	University Graduate	Javakh, Georgia	Single	Yerevan
A7	42	female	University Graduate	Yerevan	Married	Yerevan
A8	20	female	University student	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan
A9	21	male	University Graduate	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan
A10	21	male	University student	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan
A11	42	male	University Graduate	Yerevan	Married	Yerevan
A12	26	female	University Graduate	Yerevan	Single	Yerevan

**Table 2.** Social and Demographical Profiles of the Interviewees at Istanbul

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Living place</b>
T1	24	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Single	Yesilkoy, Bakirkoy
T2	52	Male	Highschool Graduate	Tunceli	Married with Turk	Kurtulus, Sisli
T3	27	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Single	Kurtulus, Sisli
T4	27	Male	University Student	Paris	Single	Kurtulus, Sisli
T5	26	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Single	Kurtulus, Sisli
T6	30	Male	University Graduate	Istanbul	Married with Armenian	Moda, Kadikoy
T7	43	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Married with Turk	Acıbadem, Kadikoy
T8	58	Male	University Graduate	Vakıflıkoy, Hatay	Married with Armenian	Kurtulus, Sisli
T9	28	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Single	Yesilkoy, Bakirkoy
T10	50	Male	University Graduate	Istanbul	Married with Armenian	Kurtulus, Sisli
T11	26	Female	University Student	Istanbul	Single	Yesilkoy, Bakirkoy
T12	28	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Single	Kurtulus, Sisli
T13	26	Female	University Student	Istanbul	Single	Kurtulus, Sisli
T14	31	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Married with Armenian	Moda, Kadıköy
T15	30	Male	High School Graduate	Istanbul	Single	Kurtulus, Sisli
T16	48	Male	High School Graduate	Istanbul	Married with Armenian	Moda, Kadıköy
T17	24	Male	University Student	Istanbul	Single	Kurtulus, Sisli
T18	57	Female	University Graduate	Istanbul	Married with Turk	Yesilkoy, Bakirkoy
T19	23	Male	University Student	Istanbul	Single	Moda, Kadıköy
T20	24	Male	High School Graduate	Istanbul	Single	Yesilkoy, Bakirkoy

# **APPENDIX B**

## **QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS IN ISTANBUL**

### **I. Demographical information**

1. Birth place
2. Birth date
3. Address
4. Education
5. Occupation

### **II. Homeland**

1. What is homeland for you?
2. How do you define your homeland?
3. Where do you think your homeland is?
4. What is the importance of the homeland for you?
5. What does historical homeland mean to you?
6. Can you define the borders of your historical homeland?
7. Have you ever thought of living in a country other than Turkey?
8. Do you have any dependence/attachment/devotion to Armenia?
9. Is your homeland effective on defining your national identity?

### **III. Anatolia**

1. In your family, has Anatolia been frequently talked about?

- 1.1 Who were talking the most?
2. What have you heard about Anatolia from your family? When were these talks made? Were there certain times when these talks took place? National feasts, birthdays, etc.
3. Have you gathered any other information about Anatolia other than the ones you had heard from your family?
  - 3.1 From who and from where?
4. Have you ever seen Anatolia?
  - 4.1 If yes, does Anatolia that you've seen, look like the Anatolia you've heard about or dreamed of?
5. Would you like to go to / visit Anatolia?
6. Would you like to live in Anatolia?
  - 6.1 Why?
7. Do you remember any proverb/song/story about Anatolia?

#### **IV. Istanbul**

1. When did your family come to Istanbul?
2. From where did your family come to Istanbul?
3. Do you see Istanbul as your homeland?
4. How do you define Istanbul, by which qualities? What are the specific qualities of Istanbul for you?
5. Have you ever thought of living in another city in Turkey except Istanbul?

#### **VI. Armenia**

1. Have you ever been at Armenia?
  - 1.1. How often do you visit Armenia?
  - 1.2. What was your purposes to visit Armenia?
2. Do you have any investment in Armenia?

3. Have you ever thought of living in Armenia?

## **V. Similarities - Differences**

1. Does being came from Anatolia create any sort of affiliation?
2. Are there any differences between Istanbul and Anatolian Armenians?
3. Do the Armenians migrated from Anatolia have any differences from the Armenians that are not migrated from Anatolia?

4. Are there any associations found by the Armenians migrated from Anatolia, in order to survive that identity? Are you a member of any of those?

4.1 When do people come together in these associations? Do you have special days of places to come together?

4.2 Do these associations have an effect on surviving the identity of being came from Anatolia?

5. Did you change your surname? Did you wish to change your surname?

6. Are Turkish surnames dissociative?

7. How does it make you feel, having a surname which doesn't have a meaning in Armenian?

## **VI. Symbols**

1. What does border mean to you?

2. What does Mount Agri mean to you? What is your attribution to Mount Agri?

3. What does Lake Van mean to you?

4. What does Anatolia mean to you?

5. What does Karabakh mean to you?

6. What does Istanbul mean to you?



# APPENDIX C

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS IN ARMENIA

### I. Demographical information

1. Birth place
2. Birth date
3. Address
4. Education
5. Occupation

### II. Homeland

1. What is homeland for you?
2. How do you define your homeland?
3. Where do you think your homeland is?
4. What is the importance of the homeland for you?
5. What does historical homeland mean to you?
6. Can you define the borders of your historical homeland?
7. Have you ever thought of living in a country other than Armenia?
8. What is your dependence/attachment/devotion to Armenia?
9. Is your homeland effective on defining your national identity?

### **III. Anatolia**

1. In your family, has Anatolia been frequently talked about?
  - 1.1 Who were talking the most?
2. What have you heard about Anatolia from your family? When were these talks made? Were there certain times when these talks took place? National feasts, birthdays, etc.
3. Have you gathered any other information about Anatolia other than the ones you had heard from your family?
  - 3.1 From who and from where?
4. Have you ever seen Anatolia?
  - 4.1 If yes, does Anatolia that you've seen, look like the Anatolia you've heard about or dreamed of?
5. Would you like to go to / visit Anatolia?
6. Would you like to live in Anatolia?
  - 6.1 Why?
7. Do you remember any proverb/song/story about Anatolia?
8. What are the names of the cities and towns that you know in Anatolia?

### **IV. Armenia**

1. When did your family come to Armenia?
2. From where did your family come to Armenia?
3. Do you see Armenia as your homeland?
4. How do you define Armenia, by which qualities? What are the specific qualities of Armenia for you?
5. Between the Soviet Armenia and independent Armenia, are there any differences in terms of your perception of homeland? (Did the change of the political regime have any effect on your homeland perception?)

## **V. Similarities - Differences**

1. Do you believe the distinction of Istanbul and Anatolian Armenians?
2. Do the Armenians migrated from Anatolia have any differences from the Armenians that are not migrated from Anatolia?
3. Do the Armenians migrated from Anatolia have any distinctive qualities than the Istanbul Armenians? Culturally; food, tradition, song, etc.
4. Are there any associations found by the Armenians migrated from Anatolia?
  - 4.1 When do people come together in these associations? Do you have special days or places to come together?
  - 4.2 Do these associations have an effect on surviving the identity of being came from Anatolia?

## **VI. Symbols**

1. What does border mean to you?
2. What does Mount Agri mean to you? What is your attribution to the Mount Agri?
3. What does Lake Van mean to you?
4. What does Anatolia mean to you?
5. What does Karabakh mean to you?

## TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

### ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enformatik Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü	<input type="checkbox"/>

### YAZARIN

Soyadı : Bakırcı  
Adı : Erman  
Bölümü : Sosyoloji

**TEZİN ADI** (İngilizce) : The Concept of Homeland Among Anatolian Armenians: Armenians of Yerevan and Istanbul

**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans  Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:**