

TALAR CHAHINIAN, SOSSIE KASBARIAN, and TSOLIN NALBANTIAN, eds., *The Armenian Diaspora and Stateless Power: Collective Identity in the Transnational 20th Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2023). Pp. xii + 316. \$90.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper. ISBN 9780755648214.

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The edited volume *The Armenian Diaspora and Stateless Power* is a welcome addition to the underexplored histories of the Armenian diaspora. Through an original selection of case studies, it examines the role of diaspora elites in the cultivation of Armenian collective identity and in the formation of transnational institutions to sustain it in post-genocide diaspora communities across the Middle East, Ethiopia, Europe, and the United States. The book emerged out of a conference held in honor of the noted diaspora studies scholar Khachig Tölölyan, which was organized by the Society for Armenian Studies and held at the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2019. Leading scholars of the Armenian diaspora in their own right, the trio of editors – Talar Chahinian, Sossie Kasbarian, and Tsolin Nalbantian – have paid tribute to Tölölyan's pathbreaking oeuvre by compiling a volume that lays bare the exciting ways his concepts and theories are shaping a diverse new body of work in the field of Armenian diaspora studies.

The volume is composed of an introduction; eleven contributions by both seasoned and emerging scholars working in the United States, Europe, and Armenia; an afterword by Tölölyan himself; and an epilogue that chronicles Tölölyan's intellectual biography by Sebouh Aslanian. In their introduction, the editors begin by summarizing the evolution of diaspora studies as a field and by detailing Tölölyan's contributions to reconceptualizing the relationship between "homeland" and diaspora. They then analyze recent scholarship in Armenian studies through the lens of Tölölyan's concept of diasporic transnationalism, showing how this lens can help scholars

overcome the tendency in Armenian studies to overemphasize the Armenian genocide and can instead help them reframe twentieth-century Armenians as agents rather than victims. The editors also push readers in diaspora studies more broadly to grasp how “research that focuses on Armenians provides an opportunity for fresh readings” on themes like “migration, economic, social and political change, and attempts to overhaul community infrastructure” (13).

Following the introduction, we find eleven chapters divided into three parts. Within each part, the chapters are united in their engagement with one of Tölölyan’s theoretical innovations in the field of diaspora studies: “the logic of the sedentary,” “diasporic social formation,” and “the social text of diaspora.” The chapter authors come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and weave Tölölyan’s concepts into a range of disciplines and fields, including history, anthropology, religious studies, musicology, and literary criticism. While it is clear that some authors were more willing than others to expand their conference presentations into full-fledged studies, the vast majority of the chapters in this volume are developed, cohesive, and theoretically engaged. This feat is no doubt a testament to the careful work of the editors at the volume’s helm.

The book excels in offering a panoply of case studies that will likely be new even to those familiar with twentieth-century Armenian history. In the first part, Boris Adjemian, Gegham Mughnetsyan, and Nare Galstyan demonstrate how new homes and homelands can be formed in diaspora. Evoking the experiences of Armenians in Ethiopia, Jerusalem, and France, Adjemian advocates for a sedentary approach to diaspora studies, one that views life in dispersion as meaningful, and illustrates the promise of this approach for historians of immigration. Mughnetsyan painstakingly reconstructs the history of Soviet Armenian displaced people who were relocated to Germany during World War II and eventually settled in California, offering us a fascinating window into a little-known Armenian American diaspora community. Finally, Galstyan takes us to the Netherlands where she explores why Syrian Armenians fleeing civil war have chosen to make new homes in the Netherlands rather than in the Republic of Armenia, their presumed homeland.

In the second part, Hasmik Khalapyan, Vahe Sahakyan, Lilit Keshishyan, and Christopher Sheklian turn to “the dynamics of non-state governance across religious, political, literary and cultural institutions” (15). Khalapyan introduces readers to a prolific yet underappreciated group of Ottoman Armenian literati who published in fin-de-siècle Paris and London for a worldwide readership and used

their periodicals, she argues, as tools for social discipline. Sahakyan draws our attention to the work of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, invoking Tölölyan's framing of this transnational organization as a "government-in-exile" and demonstrating how it wielded power over the Armenian diaspora in the 1920s and 1930s. Keshishyan uses the literary production of three late twentieth-century writers—Vahé Oshagan, Hakob Karapents, and Vahe Berberian—to illustrate how diaspora intellectuals balked at the constraints placed on them by diaspora institutions while at the same time acknowledging the need for these institutions. Finally, Sheklian draws on ethnographic work in Turkey, France, and the United States to frame the Armenian Apostolic Church as a formidable diaspora institution and consider the concept of "ecclesial governmentality" in the modern-day Armenian diaspora.

In the third and final part, Sylvia Angelique Alajaji, Karen Jallatyan, Talin Suciyan, and Hrag Papazian all examine the various ways discourses on diaspora are shaped and diasporic identities are performed. Alajaji reflects on these ideas in the realm of music, exploring how and why the work of late Ottoman ethnomusicologist Komitas Vardapet has been venerated and held up as "purely Armenian" and the implications of his centrality in the post-genocide diaspora. Jallatyan delves into the poetic expression of Vahé Oshagan, illustrating how his poetry is marked by a "deterritorializing aesthetic" that highlights aspects of life in diaspora and conjures up a sense of "diasporic becoming." Suciyan offers a fresh perspective on the perennial question of whether Armenians in Istanbul constitute a diaspora community by looking at two Armenian writers working in Turkey in the mid-twentieth century—Aram Pehlivanian and Zaven Biberyan—and accounting for their marginalization within the global Armenian diaspora. Finally, Papazian dives even deeper into the question of Istanbul Armenian diasporicity by offering a lucid interpretation of the problems inherent in it and the role of the Turkish republic in shaping attitudes about it among Istanbul Armenians.

This volume has much to offer the field of diaspora studies broadly. First and foremost, it provides a series of challenges to the state-centric model of diaspora studies, driving home the concept of stateless power and showing clearly how, in the words of the editors, a "diaspora can act as an alternative and a complement to the nation-state" (3). Furthermore, many of the chapters—particularly those by Mughnetsyan and Alajaji—underscore the utility of oral history as a fruitful method for reconstructing social dynamics in diaspora history, especially those obscured or non-existent in print sources. Finally, this

volume also opens before scholars of other diaspora communities a series of rich case studies to compare their own communities of interest with and locate points of juncture and disjuncture.

Overall, *The Armenian Diaspora and Stateless Power* enriches scholarly understanding of the post-genocide Armenian diaspora and will be best appreciated by specialists of diaspora studies and Armenian studies. I look forward to seeing how this volume will serve as a launchpad for researchers in the years to come.