

Review Article

History of Evolution of the Armenian Sociological Thought

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Abstract: The article deals with the issues of the origin and evolution of social thought and sociological researches in Armenia. Since the ancient period Armenian philosophers in their works addressed the problems of man and his environment, social relations and the role of the state. Many social ideas expressed in the works of medieval Armenian thinkers are relevant even in our time. The article also addresses scientific research areas of applied sociological surveys, the institutional development of sociology and sociological education in Armenia since the Soviet times to the modern state.

Keywords: Armenian Sociology, History, Current State, Sociological Education

1. Introduction

In scholarly publication it is customary to draw a distinction between sociological ideas, conceptual frameworks and theories, on the one hand, and applied social studies, on the other hand. In Armenia, applied social studies started to be undertaken since the second half of the 20th century [Mkhitarian 1974]. As regards social thought, sociological ideas and frameworks, they have a long history and date back to early Middle Ages in Armenia [Khrlopan, 1978].

2. History

Quite a few historians, philosophers, religious and public figures of medieval Armenia addressed acute social and political problems of the time in their writings. Among them was outstanding Armenian thinker *Eznik of Kolb* (c. 380-450), a disciple of the founder of the Armenian alphabet Mesrop Mashtots (c.362-440). *Eznik of Kolb* produced many philosophical treatises, in which he formulated the basic principles of the ideological and political struggle of the nation. *Eznik of Kolb* proceeded from the Christian doctrine with its system of values and used it as a perspective to discuss issues of individual and collective freedom. The *Eznik of Kolb's* political conceptual framework was grounded in concepts of free will and its "autonomy" and of individual's freedom of choice. He was an ideologist of the national-liberation struggle and one of the authors of the then

famous missive "The answer to Persians" [Armenia, 2012]. The missive was addressed to the Shah of Persia on behalf of religious and secular leaders of Armenia. In it they criticized strongly the policy of assimilation pursued by Sasanian Iran, put forward the demand for freedom of conscience and religion and supported the idea of the right of all peoples inhabiting Persia to unique identity and independence as well as to freedom to choose ways of their political and cultural development.

A few years earlier, the well-known Armenian Catholicos and the prominent clergyman and politician *St. Nerses the Great* (329 - 373) launched a wide range of activities in the social sphere. On his orders, poorhouses were built in all regions of Great Armenia. The poorhouses admitted the sick, the crippled and the poor and provided proper care and food to them [Christian Armenia, 2002: 779-780].

Political, legal, socio-philosophical, moral and psychological justification of the liberation struggle of the Armenian people was at the core of the political doctrine of another prominent Armenian historian and thinker *Yeghishe (Elishe)* (410 - 475). *Yeghishe's* political views are expounded primarily in his famous book "History of Vardan and the Armenian War". Issues of social relations and institutions, the nature of power, domination and submission are dealt with also in other works of the thinker [Arevshatian and Mirumian, 2007: 120-143].

The founder of the Armenian historiography, eminent historian, author of the famous "History of Armenia" *Movses*

Khorenatsi (Moses of Chorene) (c. 410 - 490) attached particular importance to coverage of the history of social and political thought. In line with the Aristotelian tradition, Khorenatsi regarded the emergence of the State as a result of the natural expansion of the family. He believed that State is a qualitatively new level in regulation of social and political relations, while the written law makes society more stable. On the other hand, for the normal functioning of the society and the preservation of order it is essential that every person, regardless of his social standing, should properly perform the role ascribed to him [Chaloyan, 2008: 118-120]. Already at that time Khorenatsi considered the issue of the relationship between towns and villages as very important and believed that towns had a higher status than villages. While assessing the social significance of wealth from the rationalist perspective, he nevertheless emphasized its contradictory nature.

Following Plato and Aristotle, eminent Armenian medieval philosopher *David Anghat* (David the Invincible) (5th-6th centuries; believed to be born in the mid-70's of the 5th century) divided philosophy into theoretical and practical [Arevshatian and Mirumian, 2007: 279-330]. At the same time he regarded regulation and improvement of social and political relations, social community and individual morality as the ultimate goal of practical philosophy.

Recognizing legitimacy and fairness of the existing social order and social stratification, the Armenian philosopher, educator, poet, outstanding scientist, political thinker and founder of *Haghpat* and *Ani* universities *Hovhannes Sarkavag Imastaser* ("Imastaser" means "he who loves wisdom") (c. 1045 - 1129) demanded that the ruling class abide rigorously by the existing laws, norms and traditions. He pointed out that most rulers care only about personal fame and enrichment but not about people, without realizing evanescence of wealth, fame and power. Describing the process of formation of new social strata, in particular, the "masters" ("parons") and other business people, Sarkavag noted that their enrichment is based on deception and on trampling human rights and dignity and is, thus, contrary to the human essence and is inhuman. That, in his opinion, led to the situation, when in towns goodness and justice are despised, while lies and evil deeds are extolled. Lawlessness brings about moral decline, degradation of personality and the spread of social evils. Moreover, in real life the criminal and immoral people achieve more than law-abiding and honest citizens. Sarkavag described utter powerlessness and exploitation of the lower social classes by, particularly, urban *nouveau riche*. With a view to overcoming social contradictions and strengthening social cohesion he believed that rulers and officials should reduce their appetites and arbitrariness and should respect the rights of ordinary citizens, granted to them by existing laws. This is a necessary condition for consolidation of society and regulation of social relations. At the same time Sarkavag warned that "weak" and helpless lower social classes can, if they unite, become a powerful force capable to defeat powers that be. Sarkavag dealt with the issues of social conflicts (between individual and society, man and nature, and between social strata) and of

legal and property inequality in his philosophical poem "The Word of Wisdom." According to Sarkavag, human actions cannot be predetermined; they are not subordinated to a blind necessity because when they take any action, human beings are guided by reason and free will [*Christian Armenia*, 2002: 631 - 633]. In other words, human beings are entirely responsible for all their actions. Back then he viewed family with all its internal complex relationships as an integral unit and the basis of the society.

3. Middle Ages

Mkhitar Gosh (c. 1120 - 1213), an eminent legal scholar and author of the famous "Armenian Code of Law," enjoyed great prestige and respect among both scholars and politicians and Statesmen of his time. He was a confessor of and an adviser to Zakareh Zakarian, the Supreme Commander of the Georgian principality, who was better known under the name "Dolgorukiy." Mkhitar Gosh was one of the first to explain the problem of human non-freedom by socioeconomic reasons. He explained social stratification as well as legal and wealth inequality existing in the society by the "dependence, which has arisen because of the need in land and water because the Creator created human being free." Therefore, the divine laws and the laws made by humans operate equally in the society. He believed that all the people in the revived Armenian State should be equal before the law regardless of their ethnicity and religion. Each social group is endowed with rights and obligations by law, the implementation of which promotes justice. This is a necessary condition for achieving the "common good", which is above the class or individual good because "there is nothing more elevated than the public good." On the one hand, he called on the lower classes to obey masters and, on the other hand, he demanded that masters take care of their subjects and to ground relations with them in the law. From that perspective he attached considerable significance to the solution of social problems seeking to get social contradictions mitigated through various measures and to harmonize and streamline the interests of different social strata. Gosh believed that in the revived Armenian State the law of force must give way to the force of law [Avakian, 2000: 233-439].

An important component of the teachings of the great Armenian philosopher and social activist *Hovhannes Erznkatsi Blouz* (John of Erznka) (1225-1293) was the idea of improving social relations and achieving social cohesion. Following his predecessor Mkhitar Gosh, Erznkatsi considered private property as the underlying cause of social inequality. Social and political hierarchy is the basis for the existence of society. The structure of the society reflects the structure of the "Kingdom of Heaven", thereby ensuring the natural, i.e. legitimate nature of political, legal, social and other relations. Dividing society into several social strata, he classified them in terms of their relationship to power. According to Erznkatsi, human dignity is not directly related to social origin. In real societal life, as a result of prevalence of injustice and lawlessness the individuals who are wise and

worthy of honors often suffer and are treated with slight by the society at large, whereas “malicious and unrighteous people inherit glory, honors and power” [Chaloyan, 2008: 267-273]. Erznkatsi likened public life to a raging sea, where not everyone finds his place. Therefore, individuals, especially from lower social strata, should unite into brotherhood and association and to become collective force in order to counter social evils.

In 14th - 15th centuries, social ideas were developed in Armenian religious universities in Gladzor and Tatev. It was in those universities that outstanding thinkers of that period Hovnan Vorotnetsi and Grigor Tatevatsi (Gregory of Tatev) perfected their knowledge and skills and focused on the most important social and political issues of that time.

Gregory of Tatev (1346-1409), the great philosopher and thinker, chancellor of the University of Tatev, left a rich written heritage. Gregory of Tatev proceeded from the Aristotelian idea that man is a social animal and does not exist outside the society. Human activities are determined by social relations, in and due to which an individual manifests himself as a human being, who is thus different from animals. Gregory of Tatev viewed the issues of the structure of society in light of the organic theory and likened society to the human body, where each organ performs a specific function and is connected with other organs. On the bottom rung of the hierarchic social ladder are commoners, on the second rung are the “azat” (freemen), on the third are princes and on the fourth are kings. Functional unity and harmony among social strata are often disturbed by the spread of heresies, by greed of princes and by excessive requisitions imposed on commoners giving rise to numerous social movements, national disasters, dissatisfaction, and causing mass outmigration. Gregory of Tatev regarded the church as a social force whose mission is to protect society for the purpose of social cohesion against the excesses of mass disturbances, willful disobedience, delinquent acts and abuse of power. He believed that one of the main tasks of the church is smoothing of social contradictions. According to Gregory of Tatev, all social, political, legal and other relations, including inequality, injustice, delinquent acts, etc. are grounded only in free will of humans. These phenomena are not natural; they do not occur according to nature. Otherwise, it would mean that the person does not bear any responsibility for his actions and deeds. If that indeed were the case, humans would be deprived of social activism and of the opportunity to overcome evil in public life. He proposed to build on what brings people together rather than on what drives them apart. In his view, the main task in inter-ethnic relations is to establish peace and cooperation. The issues related to the majority of people should be resolved with the participation of that majority. The ruler’s power is strengthened and the country prospers in case of fair and lawful rule. Otherwise, his power is weakened and social revolts emerge bringing the country to the brink of destruction. In the opinion of Gregory of Tatev, the State power was lost, the country was devastated and people were leaving the country and dispersing among other peoples as a result of a despotic rule of religious and secular leaders and princes, who

did not confer with advisers [Chaloyan, 2008: 251 - 262].

Cilician Armenia (in the territory of present-day Turkey), which existed in the 11th - 14th centuries, was notable, inter alia, for the works of *Nerses Shnorhali* (Nerses the Graceful, c. 1100-1173). Shnorhali consistently advocated the principle of free will and sought to put religion into the service of the public interest, to use it for the prevention of vices and social evils. The theoretical principles and ideas expounded by Shnorhali were subsequently developed by *Nerses Lambronatsi* (Nerses of Lambron, 1153-1198). He descended from a famous princely family and was a prominent socio-political and religious figure in Cilician Armenia. He sharply criticized and condemned the inter-ethnic strife and the fomenting of hatred between peoples, and spoke against setting off peoples against one another on the basis of religious differences [Poghosyan, 2012 b: 568 -571].

4. 17-18th Centuries

From the 17th century on, there was a visible revival of interest in various phenomena of societal life. The issues concerning the nature of societal laws, the government, the present and future of the Armenian people and the ways of liberation of the nation from foreign oppression were raised and discussed. Thinkers and public figures of the time put forward the ideas of revolutionary transformation of the society. Hovhannes Dzhugaetsi, for example, defended the idea of harmonization of interests of different sectors of the society, while Ghukas Vanandetsi, his contemporary, was a staunch supporter of restricting lawlessness and arbitrariness of feudal lords through the use of force by workers. It is obvious that Ghukas Vanandetsi’s views had been affected positively by the ideas of progressive English thinkers of the time.

The so-called “Madras group” in India played a prominent role in shaping the national liberation ideology. Members of that Armenian group Hovsep (Joseph) Emin, Shahamir Shahamirian and Movses Bagramian were first representatives of the enlightenment and progressive social and political thought. They openly criticized and rejected the imperial order, opposed slavery, raised the issue of equality and freedom of the individual and strove for the implementation of social and political reforms. In their view, education, dissemination of ideas of equality, freedom, natural human rights as well as elimination of illiteracy and ignorance would make a significant contribution to the growth of the liberation movement. They put forth a demand that a republican democratic order should be established in Armenia after her liberation from the foreign oppression with the help of Christian Russia. Written by Shahamirian and published in Armenian in Madras in 1788 the “Snare of Glory” was in fact the first draft of the constitution for independent Armenia [Avakian, 2002: 5-20].

5. 19th Century

The Armenian philosophical thought in the 19th century

bore the imprint and marked influence of the European bourgeois-revolutionary ideology as well as of the ideas of Russian revolutionary democracy. It was at that time that many works of leading European and Russian thinkers that were particularly in tune with the Armenian national objectives were translated into Armenian. Independent studies that reflected the specific atmosphere of national life and had qualities necessary for contributing to the progress of Armenian society were also published.

The Enlightenment thinkers made consistent efforts to emancipate schools and education from the church's influence. They believed that instruction to people should be provided in a simple and accessible language. *Emancipation* from religious fetters and *enhancement* of civic mentality required that control over public education should be taken from the clergy. Such Armenian thinkers of the time as Khachatur Abovian, Mikael Nalbandian, Gabriel Patkanian and others addressed those issues in their publications. Development of progressive ideology of enlightenment marked a transition from romantic notions of social and moral mission of science and education to the bourgeois ideas of love of freedom and then to ideas of revolutionary democracy. The Enlightenment initiated the spread of scientific knowledge in Armenian society [Poghosyan, 2012b: 568-571].

At the end of the 19th century social thought was evolving in the context of erosion of patriarchal attitudes and the formation of the new, capitalist social and economic relations as well as of growing national unity. Since the 1880s the ideas of Marxism started entering the Armenian reality. The spread of Marxism was gaining momentum as class conflicts were getting worse. Propaganda of Marxist-Leninist ideas marked a radical turn in the history of the Armenian social thought. The works were published that used a new perspective in dealing with societal evolution and subjected the history of the Armenian socio-political thought to Marxist analysis.

6. Armenian Sociology in Soviet Union

Chairs of philosophy were established in institutions of higher education in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1944, the Sector of Philosophy was established in the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR. In 1969, the Sector was reorganized into the Institute of Philosophy and Law of the, Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR. Here studies were conducted of main contradictions in societal development as well as ways of the ways to identify and overcome them. Also studied were the dialectic of the relations of production, the issues of philosophy of labor and technology, of social progress of socialist humanism, of the formation of nations and ethnic relations, of war and peace, of theory of culture, etc.

In the 1970s-1980s the studies conducted in the Institute focused on issues of correlation between ideology and politics and between the social and the psychological in the society, of science-based management of the society and of the Marxist interpretation of humanism. Also studied were social issues of the education system [Osipov, 1989] as well as of labor, technology and scientific and technological revolution

[Mirzoyan, 1980]. Research was conducted of methodological and social issues of the socialist way of life [*Way of Life*, 1979] and basic concepts of sociology were reviewed in detail [Alakhverdian, 1980].

Applied sociological studies were undertaken since the 1970s. They were devoted to the sociological study of the socialist way of life, issues of labor and of staff members of enterprises, migration from the Republic's rural to urban areas, and issues of family and youth. Alongside those studies publications were produced on methodologies and techniques of applied sociological research [Methodological issues ... 1973; Poghosyan, 1983:162-167, 1985, 1987, 1999:163-166; Zaslavskaya, 2010]. At the same time sociological groups were set up 122 in industrial enterprises and associations, Ministries and research institutions of the Republic.

Sociological research began to be undertaken in the Institute of Philosophy and Law and in the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Armenian Academy of Sciences. Later on, in 1997, the Chair of Sociology was established at the Philosophy Department of Yerevan State University and L. Harutiunian was appointed as its Head. In 1983, the Armenian branch of the Soviet Sociological Association was founded and Professor L. Karapetian was elected its Chairperson. Russian colleagues from leading sociological centers in Moscow and Leningrad played an important role in the emergence and evolution of Armenian sociology in those years. Not only did they help in training qualified personnel of sociologists in Russian institutions but they were also actively involved in the most important scholarly events and undertakings of Armenian sociologists.

7. Sociology in Independent Armenia

A serious breakthrough in the development of Armenian sociology occurred from mid-1980s to early 1990s. The emergence of the independent Armenian state, emancipation from heavily ideological Communist party regime gave impetus to a new stage in the development of social, philosophical and humanities thought on the whole. Discarded were ideological clichés of Marxist-Leninist philosophy within the constraints of which sociology remained as questionable science. In that politicized reality, sociology could be endowed with the right to be regarded only as applied science dealing with empirical research. Theoretical sociology was treated with caution because back in the Stalinist times it had been banned among other "bourgeois pseudo-sciences."

Liberalization of the society in early 1990s, abolition of one-party system and transition to free-market economy was played a crucial role in reinterpretation of social sciences in general. In the period of momentous changes the role of philosophy and social sciences grew considerably. The society felt the need in scholarly interpretation and analysis of the new realities that had radically changed lives of ordinary people. The transition period in Armenia clearly affected the development of the Armenian sociology. That was the path of gains and losses at the same time.

In 1992, on the initiative of G. Poghosyan, the Center for

Sociological Research was established in the Armenian Academy of Sciences, which had a status of a fully-fledged research institution, which also provided Ph.D. studies. Subsequently, in 1995, the Center became a constituent part of the Institute of Philosophy and Law, which in 2003 was renamed as the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law of the RoA National Academy of Sciences (Director G. Poghosyan). The main areas of sociological research conducted in the Institute included sociology of disasters, and population's social situation and migration [Poghosyan, 1994; Poghosyan, 2006; Karakashian, M. and G. Poghosyan, 2003; Migration Processes ..., 2003; Poghosyan, 2011]. Later on the sociologists from the NAS Institute started studying the phenomena of social and political alienation of people [Poghosyan, Harutiunian, Arakelian, 2007], the status of the individual in a changing Armenian society [Poghosyan, Nagdian, 2008; Sarkissian, 2011; Poghosyan, 2012a: 441-450] as well as social issues of mutual perceptions in Armenian-Turkish relations [Poghosyan, Kentel, 2006]. In recent years, a lot of attention has been paid to the study of the issues of modernization and social transformation of the Armenian society [Poghosyan, 2003, 2005, 2006; Armenian Society ..., 2009].

In 1992, Armenian Sociological Association (ASA) under the chairmanship of G. Poghosyan was founded as an independent non-governmental organization, which was among the first admitted to the International Sociological Association, with a national member status. Armenian Sociological Association brought together about 50 individual members and gave an unprecedented opportunity to ethnic Armenian sociologists from abroad to become its members. Such eminent and well-known American sociologists as Professor Edward Tiryakian, Dr. Levon Chorbajian, Ani Kalayjian, Berch Berberoglu, Ani Bakalian and some others were elected honorary members of the ASA Board. ASA has boosted Armenian sociologists' international contacts.

At the same time small sociological organizations, including in news agencies, political parties, Ministries and private universities, began to appear. It is noteworthy that sociological groups have been set up not only in the capital but also in other cities and towns of the country. There has been a significant increase in sociology courses taught in universities due to the emergence of a large number of private higher education institutions. A growing public interest in sociology has a positive impact on its institutional development and consolidation. The process is still going on.

8. Current Research Fields and Directions

The areas of research and the scope of sociological topics have expanded dramatically. Sociologists started studying the problems that had until recently been considered as taboos. Liberalization, greater openness of the new Armenian society significantly expanded the scope of sociological analysis of societal life. At present, Armenian sociologists pursue studies

in three main spheres:

- Fundamental, academic research;
- Studies of public opinion, political sociology;
- Marketing research, studies of consumer behavior.

Marketing research and studies of public opinion are entirely new. However, new, earlier non-existent study areas emerged even in the field of academic research. The following can be pointed out among the major new areas in academic sociological research:

- Sociology of disasters;
- Migration and refugees;
- Transformation of the society;
- Gender Studies;
- Ethno sociology;
- Social stratification in the society;
- Sociology of poverty, etc.

Academic studies are usually concluded with publication of books, scholarly articles and presentations made at international conferences. Armenian sociologists participated in many World Congresses of Sociology (in New Delhi, Madrid, Bielefeld, Montreal, Seoul, and Gothenburg) and in numerous international conferences.

Big commercial companies commission marketing sociological studies in the fields of advertising, consumer demand research, etc.

9. Public Opinion Surveys

Public opinion research in Armenia gained particular momentum after the first presidential elections held in 1991. Armenian Sociological Association has been conducting public opinion polls on a more or less regular basis. In the past 10 years Armenian sociologists have conducted public opinion and exit polls during national elections in Armenia together with experts from Gallup, United States [Poghosyan, 2013a, 2013b]. The results of sociological studies and surveys are published in newspapers, broadcast by television, posted on the Internet and are published as separate analytical reports, articles in scholarly journals, books and pamphlets. In Armenia there is no specialized journal in sociology yet and that obviously makes it difficult to publish sociological materials. On the other hand, it encourages researchers to publish articles abroad.

10. Sociological Education

In Soviet times, the training of professional cadres of Armenian sociologists was taking place mainly in Moscow, at the Institute for Sociological Studies, USSR Academy of Sciences. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, contacts with Russian sociological centers significantly weakened, particularly in terms of training young sociologists. Currently, professional training of qualified sociologists is undertaken in relevant university departments in Yerevan. In 2004, the Sociology Department was established on the basis of the chair of Sociology in the Department of Philosophy at Yerevan State University.

Three chairs in the Department provide education to students in sociology, social work, conflict resolution, methodology of social studies and public relations. Since 2007, there is distance learning in sociology and social work. The Department has the Laboratory for Applied Sociological Research. The teaching staff of the Department takes professional development courses on a regular basis in research and educational centers of various countries, particularly in the US, Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, England, India, and Sweden as well as in reputable universities in the CIS countries. The Department has established strong professional contacts with and maintained international cooperation with a number of universities, including: the Humboldt University of Berlin, Social Sciences University of Münster, Ruhr University Bochum, University of Potsdam, George Mason University in the US, Swedish University of Uppsala and Saratov State University. Research at the Department is conducted in many areas, including in the field of theoretical sociology and research methodology [Mkrtchian, 2008; Zaslavskaya, 2010], in the field of conflictology and conflict resolution [Atanesian, 2008] as well as of theory and practice of social work [Antonian, 1999; Khachatryan, 2003]. The Department of Sociology is a group member of the International Sociological Association. In June 2009, jointly with the Swedish colleagues the Department organized the 39th World Congress of the International Institute of Sociology (IIS) in Yerevan.

Future sociologists are also trained in Yerevan State Engineering University (the Sociology chair is headed by E. Kyureghian. In 2006, in *Kh. Abovyan* Armenian State Pedagogical University Professor Yury Gasparian established Department of Sociology and Social Work on the basis of Laboratory of Sociology in the Department of Educational Psychology and Sociology. The Department started actively training future sociologists and social workers at bachelor and master levels offering 89 academic courses. Annually, there are 200 undergraduate and 30 master's degree level students. The Department Faculty consists of Doctors of Science-Professors, Ph.D. degree holders and several post-graduate students. Since 2006, the Department produced several scholarly and methodological publications, including 11 manuals and monographs [Gasparian, 2006; History ... 2011].

The research in the Department is focused primarily on the study of social issues of the Armenian family and youth [Gasparian, 1997, 1999, 2003].

Sociological education in the country expanded also due to the establishment of private universities. The 2-3 of those universities offer educational programs in sociology at a bachelor and master's degrees level. Opportunities to get professional sociological education in the US and European universities expanded considerably. The Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute has been very helpful in this respect by annually providing scholarships on a competitive basis for a full course of study at the European Central University (CEU) in Budapest. There are also other opportunities for getting higher education for those having good knowledge of English.

Many young people avail themselves of the opportunities to study abroad that are given by various foundations through such programs as IREX, MASKIE, ACTR/ACCELS and Fulbright. Every year 7-8 students from Armenia go to study humanities, including sociology, abroad.

The main problem faced by sociological education in the country is, in our view, the lack of books and textbooks in Armenian and of qualified instructors. The language of instruction in universities is Armenian. However, there are few textbooks written by Armenian authors in Armenian and 2-3 textbook translated from Russian or English [Hovhannisian, 1907; History of the bourgeois..., 1980; Poghosyan, 1987; Kravchenko, 2004; Military Sociology, 2005; Kyureghian, 2006; Tadevosian, 2006; Gasparian, 2006; Melkonian, 2007; Reader ... 2008; History ..., 2011]. In universities, students in sociology and political science departments get information primarily through lectures given by instructors. The works of the classics of sociology are available generally only in foreign languages. The lack of textbooks, manuals and primary sources in Armenian reduce significantly the quality of sociological education. Students receive bachelor and master's degrees even though their knowledge of the history of sociology, of sociological research methodology and of contemporary sociological theories, schools and trends is insufficient.

Among possible solutions to this problem could be provision of sociological education by foreign universities operating in Armenia and sending Armenian students to study abroad in departments of sociology and political science.

11. International Cooperation

It is not incidental that the past few years the "geography" of international professional contacts of Armenian sociologists has expanded dramatically. Armenian sociologists have intensified professional contacts with foreign university and research centers. Effective long-term contacts with some of those have been maintained for a number of years already. It would take up a lot of space to list international projects, bilateral and multilateral professional contacts and participation of Armenian sociologists in European projects.

The ACA played a major role in strengthening those contacts. Particularly noteworthy are the activities and efforts undertaken by ASA in 1997- 2000 to establish the South Caucasus NGO Network that brought together a number of non-governmental organizations dealing with issues of migration and refugees from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Abkhazia, Nagorno Karabakh and South Ossetia. Due to ASA's constant efforts, meetings of those NGOs from the region became regular. A computer-based network for those NGOs was set up and operated and *TCMS news* South Caucasus Newsletter was published in Armenia in English and Russian. ASA was implementing that long-term project with financial support from the Norwegian Refugee Council. Many other projects and sociological studies have been conducted in Armenia with support from such international organizations as

UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM, NRC, Save the Children, USAID, Eurasia Foundation, OSI, etc.

12. Conclusion

The general trend of commercialization of science could not but affect the status of sociology. The number and the total budget of the fundamental sociological research have dwindled. At the same time, the funding for marketing research, various commercial and political surveys, focus groups, telephone interviews, etc. has been on the rise. For this reason in Armenia, as in other CIS countries, there has been an outflow of sociologists from academic institutions into commercial enterprises. Fundamental research suffers from that, of course, even though there is a particularly acute need of it in transition societies. There are a large number of social problems in the Armenian reality that require sociological analysis, scholarly understanding and interpretation.

In the short term, I believe, financial and professional resources of the vast Armenian Diaspora should be more actively engaged for research-based solutions of the problems that the present-day Armenian society is faced with, including sociology. It is necessary to expand the practice of strengthening professional contacts with Armenian Diaspora by organizing joint research, publication of books and scholarly journals. Renowned and experienced sociologists from Armenian Diaspora could play an invaluable role in training young Armenian professionals. Serious efforts have been made to that end in recent years by the Ministry of Diaspora and the Diaspora Department at the Presidium of the National Academy of Sciences that have been specially established in the country.

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