

World War and the start of the Turkish effort to annihilate the entire Armenian race. The Prologue then focuses on the locus of the novel's events in Sivas, a city and province with a mixed Armenian and Muslim population living together "more or less peacefully for over four centuries" (15).

The novel portrays the torturous journey of the family of Vartan Balian, as well as other characters on the road of deportation, as a flagrant example of the experience of the whole nation. Hacıyan's protagonist, Vartan, represents those Armenian citizens of the Ottoman Empire who were well educated and prosperous, usually in careers that served their country, but were nonetheless persecuted and subjected to imprisonment and despicable torture. When Vartan asks the police commissioner what he is accused of, the latter coldly and cynically replies, "Of being what you are, a *giaour*" (104-5). Hacıyan mobilizes all the themes that make up the texture of the first generation's conceptualization of the Armenian Genocide. He dramatizes various reactions to the astonishing news of the deportation order. One reaction is disbelief: how could the government order such a thing against an entire ethnic group, its own citizens? "We're really worrying about nothing," says one character. "This deportation order is just a way to intimidate us. They want to scare us so they can levy another tax on Christians." Another character argues, "We have too many Turkish friends. They won't allow it. It would impoverish the town... the province, and they know it" (54). Disbelief is followed by shock and disillusionment which in turn generate a strong determination to survive.

The plot involves a series of psychological upsets and vicissitudes such as we have seen in first-generation accounts.