

through centuries of “peaceful coexistence”<sup>9</sup> with Turkish and Kurdish oppressors. They had learned how not to incite the government’s anger and their neighbors’ animosity. Hagop Mintzuri’s subtle references to the state of the Armenian-Turkish relationship speak of the unstable and explosive nature of that relationship. It was friendly and amicable only as long as Armenians did not cross the line and pass their “limits.”

The images Mintzuri portrays remain imprinted in the reader’s mind; as Toros Toranian typically puts it, “[his] words were whispered, but they sank deep into one’s heart.”<sup>10</sup> Mintzuri’s whispering words, his literature, have just recently been translated into Turkish, and now speak to the heart of the Turkish reader too. Could they help open a door?

Painted on the colorful canvas of everyday life in his native village is also the story of Mintzuri’s own family, his grandfather, mother, wife and children. He was told by an

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<sup>9</sup> The reason for putting this phrase in quotation marks is that the peacefulness of this coexistence was a one-way street. It was peaceful as long as the Armenians remained obedient and did not protest against the oppressive and discriminatory measures of the government or the local Kurdish chieftains against them. Armenians were even called *milleti sadık* (the faithful millet). The situation changed beginning with the second half of the nineteenth century – the Armenian cultural and political renaissance – when enlightened Armenian leadership began to ask for reforms and demand justice and equal rights. After a perennial postponement of the promised reforms, the Sublime Porte’s response came as punishment for those who began this movement but also for all those who would have benefited from the reforms. The Armenian massacres of 1894–96 marked the culmination of these punishments.

<sup>10</sup> Toranian, *Istanbulahayere ke kanchen* (1997), p. 36.