

and his sincerity, she gradually motivated him, showed him the way, and urged him to find Turkified Armenian women and ask them to tell their story.<sup>29</sup>

And the journey began. The first stop was Amasya, but Yalçın was too late. Yes, there had been Armenians in Amasya, even until the 1990s, he was told, but they had left for Istanbul or passed away. He did not give up but continued his inquiry with ordinary townsfolk and government officials in towns and villages. It was during this difficult journey that he learned about the events of 1915, as well as the absolute denial of any Armenian presence in the Ottoman Empire in the past. He learned about the ongoing persecution of Armenian survivors, even those who were Islamized. He also learned that asking about Armenians and searching for Turks with Armenian mothers, unlike his former experience of seeking out Greeks, was not a simple matter: it would immediately generate fear and invite suspicion. Because of this, the townsfolk did not help him in any way, lest they bring unnecessary peril upon themselves. They even pitied him and admonished him to abandon his futile inquiry and go home. All this occurred as Yalçın began to ask the whereabouts of Safieh/Zaruhi,<sup>30</sup> a second-generation Armenian survivor who

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<sup>29</sup> Meliné's mother had lost her first husband to the massacres of 1915 in Sebastia (Sivas) when she was only 18 years old. She lived the miserable life of a widow with two orphaned children until years later she remarried. Meliné was born in Istanbul of her mother's second marriage.

<sup>30</sup> Safieh was the Turkish name given to Zaruhi when her family converted to Islam. This was a common practice during and after the Genocide. Armenian boys and girls or young women who were taken in by Turkish, Kurdish, or Arab families during the Genocide