

identity.<sup>3</sup> The formation and evolution of that identity will be a metamorphosis from total oblivion and submergence to gradual adoption of the elements of Armenian identity—perhaps all the elements but the religion, because many of them are firm in their Muslim beliefs.

At present, a majority of the Armenian people will offer a rigid characterization of an Armenian that evolves around not only Christianity in terms of religion, but even more “authentically” includes belonging to the Armenian Apostolic Church. This rigid stance which held true in the recent past is somewhat undermined and refuted today. However, Christianity as an important element in the identity of the Armenian nation remains indisputable. Can these Hamshentsis, or other Islamized Armenians be considered as a group/tribe of ethnic Armenians who worship another prophet and follow another Holy Scripture?

In an interview with Ruben Melkonian, Kayel Margaroğlu, a Hamshentsi currently living in Istanbul, explains that the consciousness of their Armenian origin and the practice of Hamsheneren (the Armenian dialect of Hamshen) are stronger and better maintained among the Hopa group—and its older generation—than among the Hamshentsis in the western parts of Turkey. He also attests to the fact that many young and

---

<sup>3</sup> Recently, there has been increased interest in Hamshen Armenians. Scholarly research is being conducted, books published, and conferences organized to address the history and present state of this peculiar ethnic group. The Internet is inundated with entries on the subject. See *Wikipedia.org* and *Armeniapedia.org* in particular. Hovann Simonian’s *Hamshin: A Handbook* (2007) is another valuable source on this subject.