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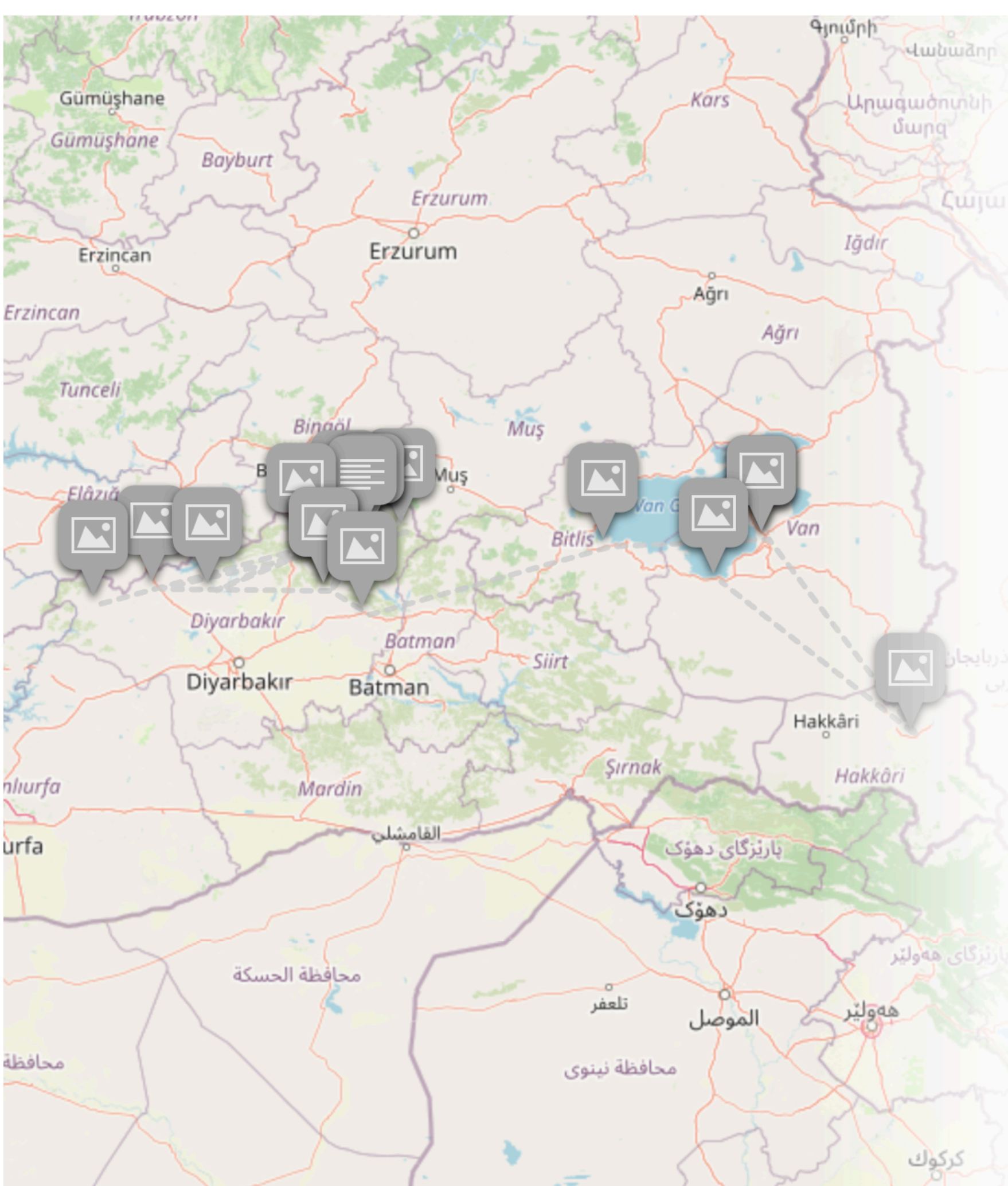
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SUPERSTITION, HAUNTINGS, AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN KURDISH COLLECTIVE MEMORY

UNDERGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP IN DIGITAL HUMANITIES 2025
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INTRODUCTION

THIS PROJECT EXAMINES HOW KURDISH ORAL HISTORIES OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE PRESERVE MEMORY THROUGH SUPERNATURAL NARRATIVE MOTIFS SUCH AS CURSES, HAUNTINGS, GHOSTLY RETRIBUTION, AND MAGICAL PUNISHMENTS. THIS THESIS EXPLORES HOW THESE MOTIFS FUNCTION NOT AS PERIPHERAL BELIEFS, BUT AS CENTRAL MODES THROUGH WHICH HISTORICAL GUILT, REPRESSION, AND COMMUNAL IDENTITY ARE TRANSMITTED IN A SOCIETY HISTORICALLY IMPLICATED IN, YET ALSO SILENCED BY THE GENOCIDE'S LEGACY.

THE RESEARCH FOCUSES ON TESTIMONIES COLLECTED IN YÜZ YILLIK ÂH! AND OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES. NARRATIVES FOUND IN THIS COLLECTION REFER TO A NATIONAL CURSE, CURSED TOWNS, HAUNTED GRAVEYARDS, AND CURSED ARMENIAN TREASURE PROTECTED BY SNAKES, BEES, OR TRANSFORMED INTO VERMIN. SEVERAL ACCOUNTS ALSO DESCRIBE GHOSTLY PRESENCES OR COMMUNAL SPACES THAT HAVE BECOME 'UNSETTLED' SINCE THE VIOLENCE OF 1915

THESE NARRATIVES WILL BE ANALYZED AS A FORM OF "GENOCIDE GHOSTLORE," A CONCEPT DEVELOPED BY COMPARING KURDISH ORAL HISTORIES WITH GHOST STORIES FOUND IN OTHER POST-GENOCIDAL OR SETTLER-COLONIAL CONTEXTS. THIS PROJECT ARGUES THAT KURDISH GHOSTLORE IS NOT MERELY CULTURAL FOLKLORE BUT A HISTORICALLY CONTINGENT MODE OF MORAL STORYTELLING. THESE STORIES ENCODE THE MEMORY OF THE GENOCIDE AND REFLECT A COLLECTIVE EFFORT TO MAKE SENSE OF AN ETHICALLY COMPROMISED PAST IN A CONTEXT WHERE FORMAL HISTORICAL RECKONING REMAINS POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE.

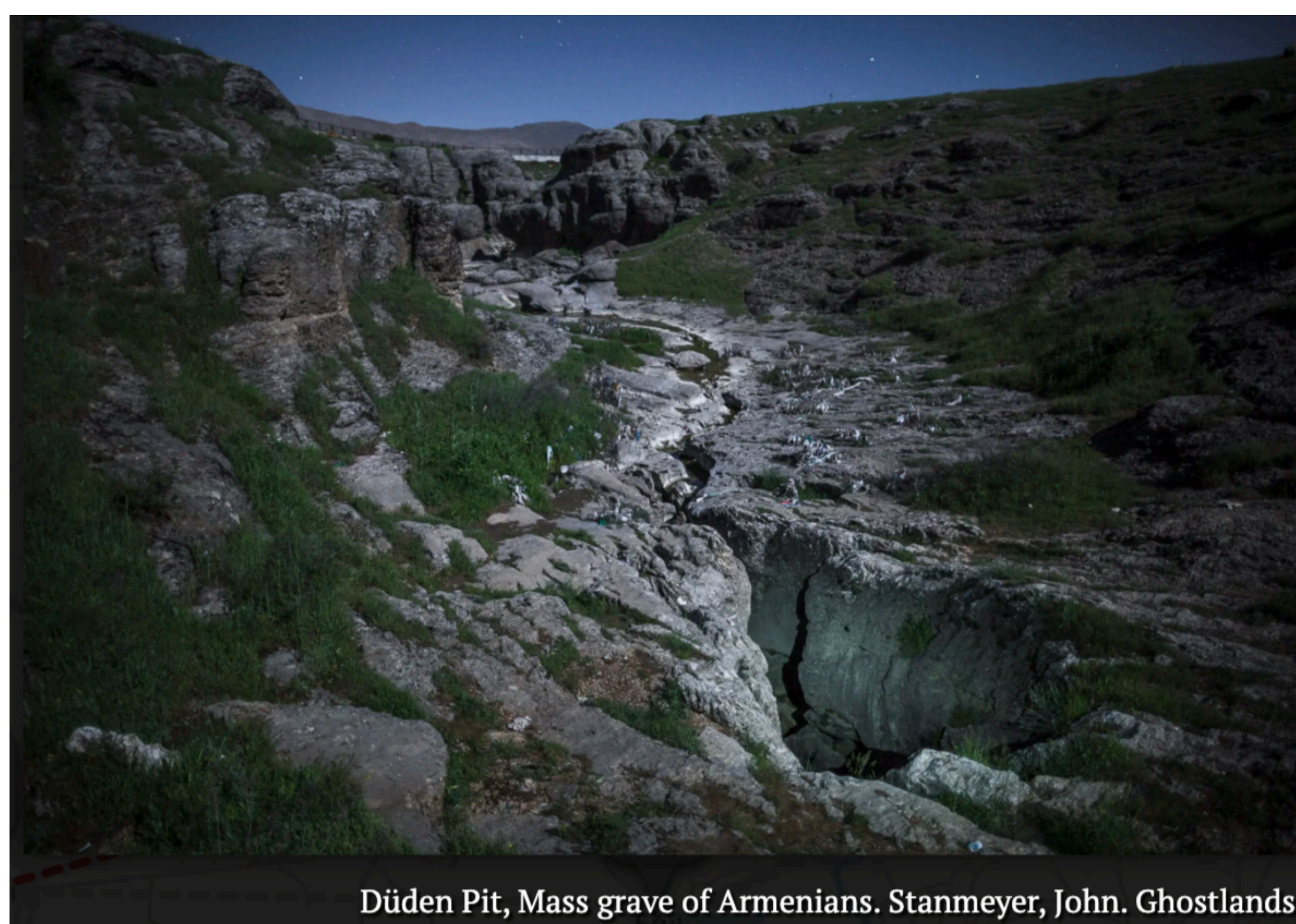
METHODOLOGY

THE CORPUS IS BUILT PRIMARILY FROM YÜZ YILLIK ÂH! (A CENTURY OF CURSE), WHICH RECORDS ORAL TESTIMONIES FROM KURDISH VILLAGERS IN DIYARBAKIR AND SURROUNDING AREAS. ADDITIONAL MATERIALS ARE DRAWN FROM SCHOLARSHIP ON MEMORY, ORAL TRADITION, AND LOCAL HISTORY.

EACH TESTIMONY IS PRESENTED IN AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION. ENTRIES ARE TAGGED WITH ONE OR MORE MOTIFS, LINKED TO SPECIFIC PLACE NAMES, AND ANNOTATED WITH PAGE NUMBERS AND SOURCE REFERENCES. A GAZETTEER OF PLACE NAMES PROVIDES GEOGRAPHIC CONSISTENCY, AND PLACE NAMES ARE ADDED WHEN AVAILABLE.

ÇÜNGÜŞ DÜDEN: 100 YEARS ÂH (CURSE)

"THERE WAS NO EVIL THAT THIS GÜLLÜ BEY DID NOT COMMIT. HE GATHERED THE TRUE OWNERS OF THIS DISTRICT WITHOUT CAUSE AND POURED THEM INTO THE DÜDEN. THEN HE TOOK OVER ALL THEIR HOUSES, VINEYARDS, AND FIELDS AND LATER REGISTERED THEM IN HIS OWN NAME. LOOK—EVEN THE DEED TO THE MONASTERY YOU SEE OVER THERE IS NOW IN THE NAMES OF GÜLLÜ BEY'S CHILDREN. BUT WHAT HAPPENED? THE VILLAGERS GREW STRONGER AND DEFIED THEM, AND THE CHILDREN HAD TO MIGRATE TO BURSA. LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE LANDS THEY HELD WERE TAKEN FROM THEM. BY GOD, BECAUSE OF THIS MAN AND THOSE WHO ACTED AS HIS EXECUTIONERS, THERE IS AN ÂH (CURSE) OVER ÇÜNGÜŞ— A CENTURY-LONG ÂH. YOU SEE IT: THE DISTRICT HAS BECOME A RUIN. NO ONE EVEN HAMMERS A NEW NAIL. IT IS AS IF THIS DISTRICT IS CONDEMNED—BECAUSE OF THE ARMENIANS' ÂH. MY LATE FATHER WOULD SAY, 'ONLY WHEN A CENTURY HAS PASSED WILL THIS PLACE RECOVER, AND EVEN THAT I DOUBT. THE ÂH OF WHAT HAPPENED HERE WILL NOT LEAVE THIS PLACE...'"



Düden Pit, Mass grave of Armenians. Stanmeyer, John. Ghostlands.



Inside the small town of Chenkush / Çunguş (Chermug / Çermik kaza) (Source: Victor Pietschmann, Durch kurdische Berge und armenische Städte, Wien, 1940)

KEY CATALOGUE MOTIFS

CURSE - A LASTING MALEDICTION BELIEVED TO AFFLICT INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, OR THE KURDISH NATION AS PUNISHMENT FOR BETRAYAL, MASSACRES, OR SEIZING ARMENIAN PROPERTY. OFTEN INVOKED TO EXPLAIN PRESENT-DAY SUFFERING.

HAUNTINGS - APPEARANCES OF GHOSTS OR STRANGE PHENOMENA TIED TO SITES OF ARMENIAN DEATH. THESE STORIES REFLECT THE BELIEF THAT THE SPIRITS OF THE MURDERED REMAIN UNSETTLED IN THE LANDSCAPE.

RETRIBUTION/PUNISHMENT - SUPERNATURAL OR DIVINE CONSEQUENCES (MADNESS, ILLNESS, OR SUDDEN DEATH) THAT BEFALL THOSE INVOLVED IN KILLINGS OR THEFT. OFTEN SEEN AS ACTS OF JUSTICE RATHER THAN RANDOM MISFORTUNE.

SPELLS/PROTECTION -RITUAL ACTS USED TO BREAK CURSES, ACCESS TREASURE, OR SHIELD CHILDREN FROM HARM. THESE PRACTICES STRADDLE FOLK BELIEF AND RELIGIOUS CUSTOM.

CURSED LANDSCAPES -WELLS, CAVES, AND RUINS MARKED BY FEAR, SILENCE, OR AVOIDANCE DUE TO THEIR VIOLENT PASTS. THESE LOCATIONS ARE BELIEVED TO BE SPIRITUALLY CONTAMINATED OR UNLUCKY.

MAGICAL TREASURE -HIDDEN ARMENIAN GOLD SAID TO BE PROTECTED BY SPIRITS OR SPELLS. STORIES OFTEN CENTER ON FAILED ATTEMPTS TO RETRIEVE IT, WITH SUPERNATURAL FORCES INTERVENING TO PREVENT THEFT.

SCAN ME

