

# KIRKUS

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# REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### **KHODORCHUR 100 YEARS LATER**

Gianighian, Raphael

Ed. by Gianighian, Vartan

CreateSpace (206 pp.)

\$9.99 paperback, \$3.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-1500692551; December 30, 2014

## BOOK REVIEW

An elegiac remembrance of an Armenian's flight from war and the cruel aftermath of a culture ravaged.

This is a family affair narrated by Raphael Gianighian and by his son Vartan, who edited the work. In 1915, Raphael was forced to flee his native district, Khodorchur, after the Turks attempted to exterminate the Christian Armenians. Raphael captured his travails in about 100 pages, the first third of this remembrance. His survival against grim odds was astonishing, partly due to his grandfather's bravery and guile and partly due to the assistance provided by American relief organizations that mobilized to help displaced Armenians. Raphael's account is harrowing, written in a simple but powerful hand: "We see headless, decomposing bodies floating on the Tohma River. The guards stop us in front of a big inn. We wait for our fellow countrymen to arrive. The site is crowded. The river flows below the inn, and in the front space, blood stains the tables and benches and walnut trunks. Old men with long beards smoke narghilé and drink coffee. The butchers have cut off the Armenians' heads, stuck them on the tree trunks, and thrown the corpses into the river." Written in the third person, the second third of the book is a pastiche of perspectives, which includes writings from Raphael and some of his fellow travelers, all woven together by Vartan. In this section, Raphael, after having settled in Italy, returns to Khodorchur to bear witness to the sad remnants of the village he once called home. Khodorchur is a testament not only to a victimized people but to a culture all but vanished from the earth. The third section of the book, written in the first person by Vartan, recounts his own emotionally tumultuous visit to Khodorchur in an attempt to learn more about his father, his family, and the ethnic heritage denied him. His own experience mirrors his father's return from exile, marked by profound sorrow and personal transformation. This is an affecting tale, told by both father and son, as historically edifying as it is excruciating.

Plaintive but philosophically provocative.