

GHOSTS IN THE HUMAN PSYCHE

The Story of a “Muslim Armenian”

Vamik D. Volkan



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About the Author

Vamık Volkan, MD, DFLAPA, received his medical education at the School of Medicine, University of Ankara, Turkey. He is an emeritus professor of psychiatry at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville and an emeritus training and supervising analyst at the Washington Psychoanalytic Institute, Washington, DC. In 1987, Dr. Volkan established the Center for the Study of Mind and Human Interaction (CSMHI) at the School of Medicine, University of Virginia. CSMHI applied a growing theoretical and field-proven base of knowledge to issues such as ethnic tension, racism, large-group identity, terrorism, societal trauma, immigration, mourning, transgenerational transmissions, leader–follower relationships, and other aspects of national and international conflict. A year after his 2002 retirement, Dr. Volkan became the Senior Erik Erikson Scholar at the Erikson Institute of the Austen Riggs Center, Stockbridge, Massachusetts and he spent three to six months there each year for ten years. In 2006, he was Fulbright/Sigmund Freud-Privatstiftung Visiting Scholar of Psychoanalysis in Vienna, Austria. Dr. Volkan holds honorary doctorate degrees from Kuopio University (now called the University of Eastern Finland), Finland; from Ankara University, Turkey; and the Eastern European Psychoanalytic Institute, Russia. He was a former president of the Turkish-American Neuropsychiatric Society, the International Society of Political Psychology, the Virginia Psychoanalytic Society, and the American College of

Psychoanalysts. Among many the awards he received are the Nevitt Sanford Award, Elise M. Hayman Award, L. Bryce Boyer Award, Margaret Mahler Literature Prize, Hans H. Strupp Award, the American College of Psychoanalysts' Distinguished Officer Award for 2014, and the Mary S. Sigourney Award for 2015. He received the Sigmund Freud Award given by the city of Vienna, Austria in collaboration with the World Council of Psychotherapy. He also was honored on several occasions by being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize with letters of support from twenty-seven countries. Dr. Volkan is the author, co-author, editor, or co-editor of more than fifty psychoanalytic and psychopolitical books, including *Enemies on the Couch: A Psychopolitical Journey through War and Peace*. Currently Dr. Volkan is the president emeritus of the International Dialogue Initiative (IDI), which he established in 2007. He continues to lecture nationally and internationally.

About this Book

This book examines the impact of past and present historical events, cultural elements, political movements, and their mental images on the psyche of individuals. Psychoanalysts' attention to such external events while sitting behind their couches and listening to their patients has a long and interesting history. The first two chapters present the history of psychoanalysts' appreciation of the intertwining of external and internal events. Then the story of a successful businessman who called himself a "Muslim Armenian" is told to illustrate how ghosts from the past can remain alive and active in our lives.

The patient featured here is of Hemshin descent. When he started his psychoanalysis in Istanbul, his analyst knew that some individuals from the eastern Black Sea coast of Turkey near the Republic of Georgia and Armenia called themselves *Hemşinli* (the Turkish way of referring to Hemshin people), but she had no knowledge of their Armenian origin. It would be impossible to understand fully some of the important causes of this patient's symptoms and personality characteristics without knowing the history and the culture of the Hemshenis living in Turkey.

I am a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst living in the United States since 1957. As I was born on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus to Turkish parents, my mother tongue is Turkish. I supervised the Turkish psychoanalyst's clinical work while she was treating the businessman whose story is

presented in this book. She would call me from Istanbul by phone once a week to discuss the psychoanalytic sessions she had with her patient. She has given her permission to describe her work, but I have changed some of the patient's personal history in order to protect his real identity. These changes will in no way alter the readers' ability to follow this man's psychological journey and recognize how historical ghosts visit communities and enter an individual's inner world.