

# Devastation through Assimilation: The Struggle for Cultural Preservation in the Armenian Genocide

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# The Main People Groups



Turks



Armenians



Kurds / Arabs

Figure 1: File:Turkish woman, full-length portrait, seated, facing front, holding parasol.jpg (Turkish Women, n.d. [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish\\_woman\\_full-length\\_portrait\\_seated\\_facing\\_front\\_holding\\_parasol.jpg#filelinks](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Turkish_woman_full-length_portrait_seated_facing_front_holding_parasol.jpg#filelinks))

Figure 2: File:ArmenianGirlShemakha.jpg. (Armenian Women, n.d. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ArmenianGirlShemakha.jpg>)

Figure 3: Portrait of a Kurdish lady from Sivas, in festive costume, ca. 1875. Clothing style: traditional, urban, well-to-do. Photographer: Sebah Pascal. (Kurdish Women, n.d. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/329888741439813709/>)

Figure 4: Veiled woman, Cairo, Egypt, circa 1910. (Arabie Woman, n.d. <https://www.mediastorehouse.com/mary-evans-prints-online/veiled-woman-cairo-egypt-circa-1910-14357053.html>)

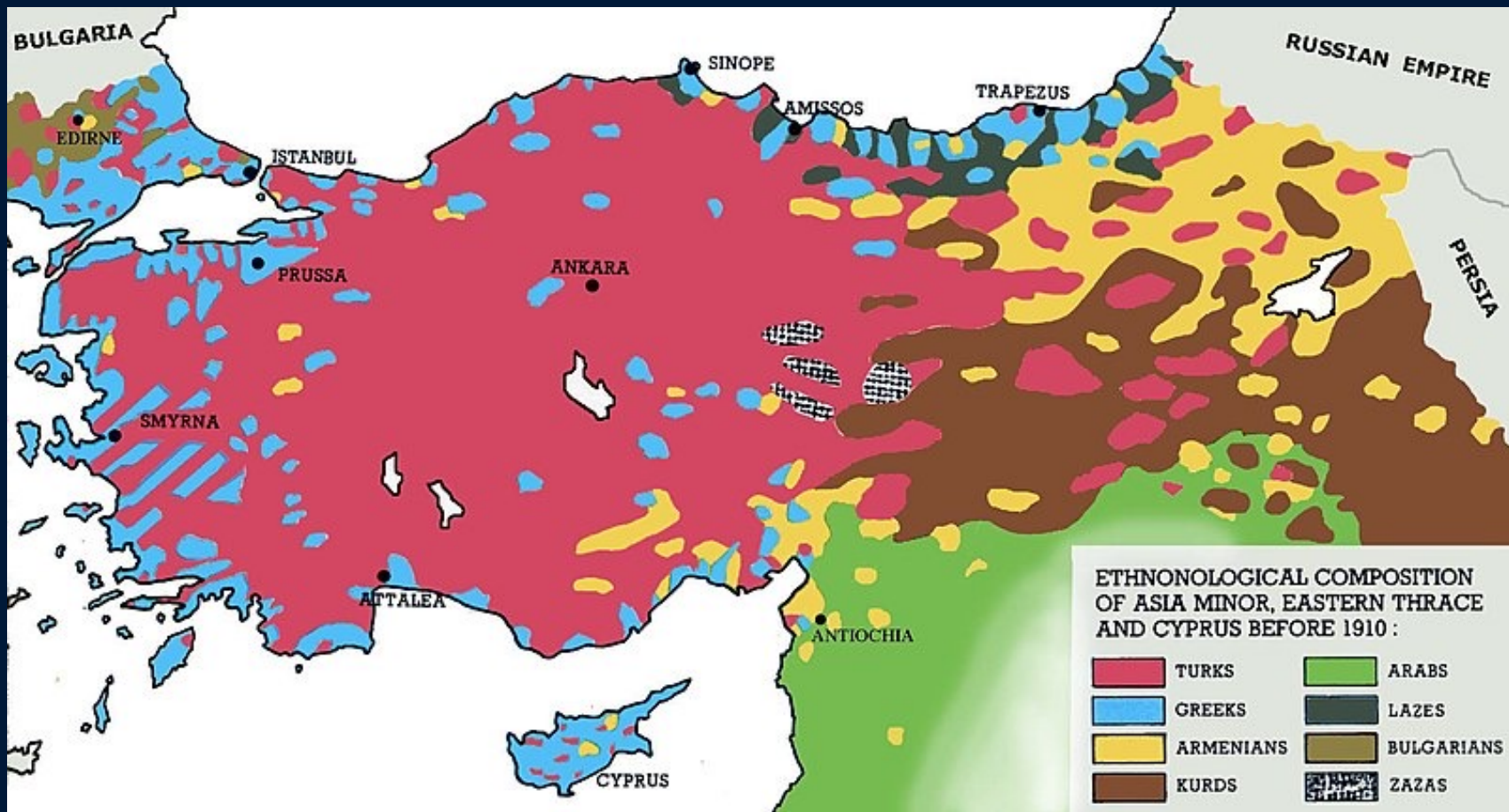


Figure 5: File:AsiaMinor1910.jpg (Culture map of Asia Minor, n.d., <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AsiaMinor1910.jpg>)

# Early History

- 301 CE - 1st ever Christian State
- 410-490 CE Movses Khorenatsi
  - “The Father of Armenian History”
- Early 1400’s – Establishment of the “Millet System”



Figure 6: History of the Armenians (Movses Khorenatsi, n.d., <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3781397-history-of-the-armenians>)

# Period of Tanzimat

- Tanzimat meaning reorganization in Turkish or “The Period of Reform”
- Initiated in 1839
- Set out to create one large nationalistic Ottoman society rather than a multitude of factions
- This system, in theory, granted legal equality for the first time to the Empire’s Christian subjects

# The Conflict Prior to WWI

## Crimean War

## Tanzimat End

## Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878

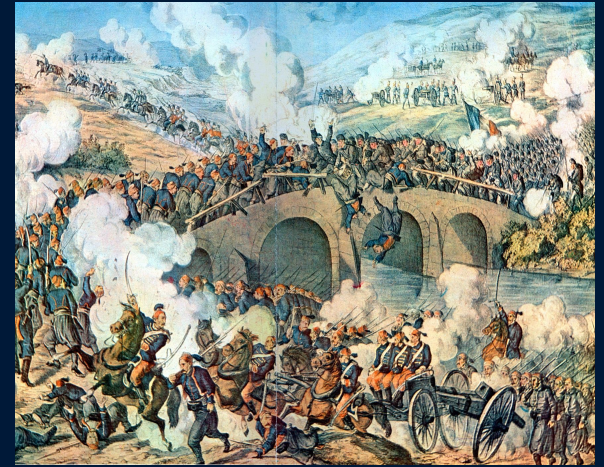


Figure 7: Charge of the Light Brigade. (Irma Grese, n.d., <https://www.britannica.com/event/Charge-of-the-Light-Brigade>)

Figure 8: From the abode of Islam to the Turkish vatan. (Tanzimat End, n.d., <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/william-armstrong/from-the-abode-of-islam-to-the-turkish-vatan-73318>)

Figure 8: Battle at Bridge Skit 1877 CE. (Russo-Turkish War, n.d., <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/12490/battle-at-bridge-skit-1877-ce/>)

# Anti-Armenian Government System

## The Young Turks



Figure 10: File:Les libérateurs de la patrie.jpg (The Young Turks, n.d., [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Les\\_libérateurs\\_de\\_la\\_patrie.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Les_libérateurs_de_la_patrie.jpg))

## Committee of Union and Progress



Figure 11: Committee of Union and Progress (Committee of Union and Progress, n.d., [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee\\_of\\_Union\\_and\\_Progress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Committee_of_Union_and_Progress))

# The Great War

- Ottoman Turks joined the Central Powers on November 2nd
- Armenians fought with Turks against Russia
- Ottoman decisive loss to the Russians at The Battle of Sarikamiş, December 22nd, 1914, to January 17th, 1915
- While Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman 3rd Army fought valiantly, CUP blames Armenians for the loss



“What evolved rapidly into genocide began as sporadic massacres that following a colossal defeat resulted in political panic, despair, and a thirst for vengeance.”

- Ronald Grigor Suny, *A History of the Armenian Genocide*

# Turkification

“The policies and attitudes that emphasize Turkish population homogeneity, Turkish culture, and Turkish language, promulgated by the Young Turks, Kemalists, and later nationalists.”



Figure 12: THAT TROUBLESOME WORD, GENOCIDE: How Should We Understand It? . (Turk and Armenian men, n.d., <https://naasr.org/blogs/events-1/that-troublesome-word-genocide-how-should-we-understand-it-friday-april-21-2023-in-person-on-zoom-youtube>)

- While extreme violence was never explicitly encouraged by Turkish governmental officials, it was also never discouraged
- Neighbor turned on neighbor
- The decisions of individuals led to horrible, brutal, and inhumane acts that decimated Armenian society.

# Deportation / Death Marches

- Starvation and dehydration was very common
- They weren't told where they were going or when they would come back to their home
- Turkish government called for the redistribution of Armenian belongings.



Figure 13: AHEPA Applauds Passage of Armenian Genocide Resolution in the U.S. Senate  
(Armenian Death Marches, n.d., <https://ahepa.org/tag/greek-genocide/>)

# Forced Assimilation through Marriage

- Forced marriages to Turkify women
- These women had no choice in this matter
- Trying to incorporate them into the Turkish culture



Figure 14: The Armenian Genocide (Armenian Women, n.d., <https://www.genocidioarmenio.org/imagenes/>)

# Orphans, Kidnapping, & Adoption



Figure 15: Armenian orphans  
after the Hamidian atrocities  
1896

Photo by D. Ermakov  
Collection of the Armenian  
National Archive, (Armenian  
Children, n.d.,  
[http://www.genocide-  
museum.am/eng/online\\_exhibit  
ion\\_3.php](http://www.genocide-museum.am/eng/online_exhibition_3.php))

# Early History

Աա	Բբ	Գգ	Դդ	Եե	Զզ	Էե	Ըը	Թթ	Ժժ
a	b	g	d	je	z	e	ë	t'	ž
Իի	Լլ	Խխ	Ծծ	Կկ	Հհ	Ձձ	Ղղ	Ճճ	Մմ
i	l	x	ts	k	h	dz	ř	tš	m
Յյ	Նն	Շշ	Ոո	Չչ	Պպ	ՋՋ	Ռր	Սս	Վվ
j	n	š	vo	tš'	p	dž	r	s	v
Տտ	Րր	ՏՏ	ԽԼ	Փփ	Քք	Օօ	Ֆֆ		
t	r'	ts'	w	p'	k'	o	f		

- Forced to only speak Turkish or to be killed immediately
- Some mothers would teach their children Armenian or continue speaking in the home.



# Loss of Religion

- Forced to reject Jesus/God
- Made to claim Islam and Allah
- Would be tattooed with the crescent moon
- Mothers instilled the importance of being a Christian and dying as a Christian

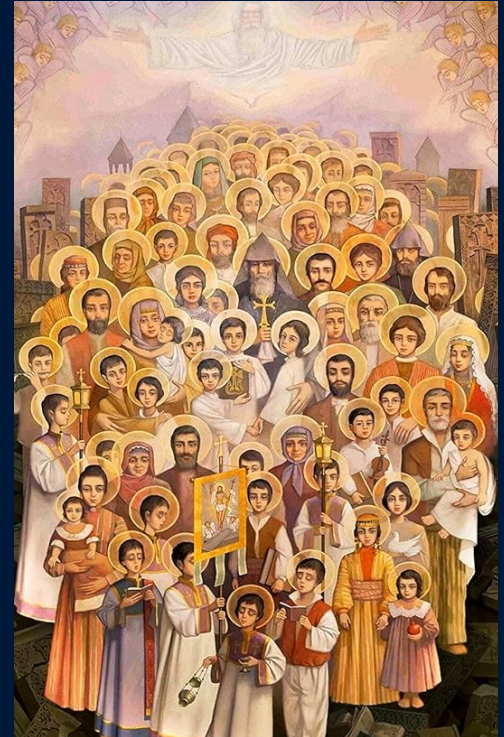


Figure 17: COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLY MARTYRS OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE (Armenian Martyrs, n.d., <https://armenianchurchsydney.org.au/event/commemoration-of-the-holy-martyrs-of-the-armenian-genocide-2-2/>)

# Harems

- Incredibly common demonstrations of non-Armenian dominance and strength over Armenian females
- Most would not survive them



Figure 18: File:Refugees at the Taurus Pass.jpg (Armenian Women, n.d., [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Refugees\\_at\\_the\\_Taurus\\_Pass.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Refugees_at_the_Taurus_Pass.jpg))

# The “Normalcy”

- Most accounts that have survived are from children
- They carried these memories with them for the rest of their lives
- They were also carrying the Armenian culture taught to them



Figure 19: Armenian mother and her children fleeing persecution  
Photo: United States Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs  
Division. (Armenian mother and her children,  
n.d., [https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3781397-history-of-](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3781397-history-of)  
<https://www.eurozine.com/gendered-silences-gendered-memories/>)

# Other Forms of Resistance

- Physically hiding young children
- Volunteering to be in a harem in exchange for food for children
- Cooking and feeding Turkish soldiers in exchange for protection



Figure 20: Between 1915 and 1916– A refugee Armenian woman and child receiving food aid. Public Domain. By American Committee for Relief in the Near East, (Armenian woman and child receiving food, n.d., <https://stanfordpress.typepad.com/blog/2019/11/on-march-18-1915-on-the-western-front-british-and-french-naval-forces-launched-a-campaign-to-breach-the-dardanelles-strait.html>)

# Saviors of the Masses

- Elmasd Santoorian
  - Nurse in Aleppo
- Nora Altounian
  - Helped establish an Orphanage
- Nuritza & Siphora Shnorhokian
  - Sister midwives

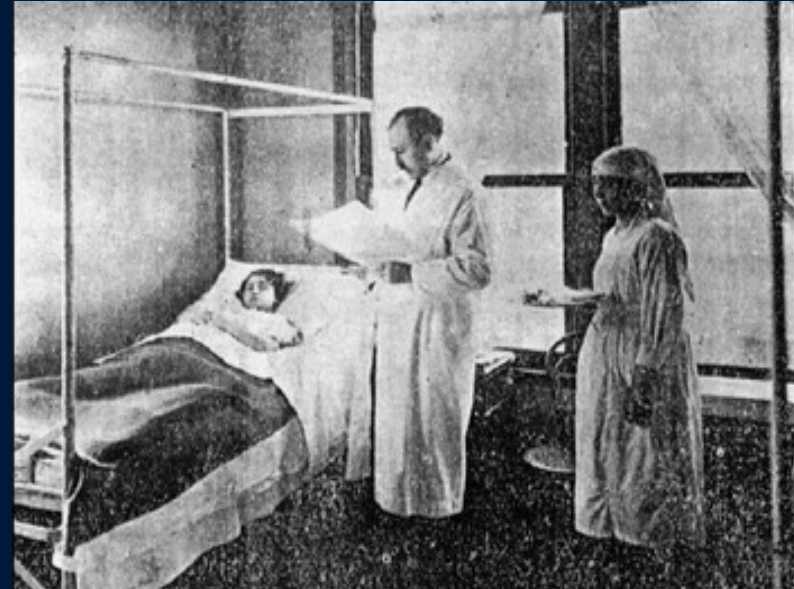


Figure 21: A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide (Medical Doctor, n.d., <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/comparative-studies-in-society-and-history/article/abs/climate-for-abduction-a-climate-for-redemption-the-politics-of-inclusion-during-and-after-the-armenian-genocide/5304CB3D319C102095938C7562B05A79>)

# Conclusion

- These women and children's efforts have been overlooked until recent years
- Their efforts in the preservation of Armenian society have been considered the “Backbone of modern Armenia”

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Thank You

Questions?