

ARMENIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATION

13TH–19TH CENTURIES

Edited, with an introduction and notes, by

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Preface

This book is an anthology of eyewitness accounts written by non-Armenian authors who traveled and observed the Armenian people living under Turkish and Ottoman rule from A.D. 1245 to 1900. The authors are men and woman of diverse professions and intentions. Most are Europeans. Together the authors represent a wide range of background experiences, including adventurers, merchants, geographers, historians, archaeologists, diplomats, physicians, missionaries, scholars, and writers. Two of the authors included in the collection are Moslem travelers. All of the authors shared the need and the perseverance to record and publish accounts of their travels. Excerpts of these accounts, relating primarily to the Armenian people, their lives, and the Armenian character, are compiled in this volume.

Together, the chorus of voices tells a story previously untold. It is a story of transformation and subjugation—the transformation of a once courageous people into servitude; the subjugation of a nation. The accounts ring of paradox—the paradoxes of government power and the abuse of that power, and the human paradoxes that emerged as a result of centuries of life under that rule.

A dramatic change in the Armenian character unfolds as the story unfolds. Many character aspects that emerge during the later stages of Ottoman rule are often observed in the behavior of individuals, families, organizations, communities, and even Armenian leaders.

Over 600 accounts were considered for inclusion in this collection. However, due to space restrictions, only 200 accounts were chosen from among works published in English—whether written in English or translated into it—and originally produced in book form.¹ Combined, the accounts present an objective viewpoint with minimal redundancy. Some authors favored Armenians over Turks; others took the opposite view. All focus on the Ottoman rule in general and its effect on the Armenians. The accounts address the history and geography of Armenia, as well as the religion, manners, customs, and aspirations of the Armenian people.

The term “Ottoman Empire” refers to an area which stretched over Asia, Europe, and Africa. However, the accounts included in this anthology relate only to occupied Armenia (Turkish Armenia) and Asia Minor (including Constantinople and Smyrna).

Among these, the texts pertaining to historical Armenia—referred to as Greater and Lesser Armenia, Turcomania, Turkish Armenia, or Anatolia—were few in number compared with those covering Constantinople and Smyrna. This disparity most likely is the result of a combination of the following factors: the travelers’ purpose for visiting the region did not include excursions beyond the Ottoman capital and Asia Minor; and the harsh terrain and climate of Armenia—combined with government restrictions or dangers posed by Kurdish brigands—discouraged interested parties.²

Consequently, some communities in the heart of Armenia proper were not visited by European travelers until the mid-nineteenth century when the Ottoman government allowed expeditions and religious missionaries to explore the remote parts of the Empire in the hopes of counterbalancing pro-Russian sentiments among the Armenian subjects living there.³

The accounts were not evaluated for their accuracy, reliability, or freedom from bias.⁴ Researchers have documented instances of inaccuracies in travel accounts.⁵ Pleasant and

unpleasant personal experiences, political and religious motivations, as well as other factors need to be examined and considered when reading any primary source document.⁶ Moreover, the travel literature of the period is known for its limitations in scope and depth.⁷ In some cases, travelers have been influenced by the accounts of earlier travelers. For example, the description of an Armenian stable by Randall Roberts (505) is a repetition of Robert Curzon's account (373). Nevertheless, travel literature contains valuable information for those interested in pursuing the truth.

The anthology has been designed to help the reader understand the political and administrative structure and conditions of the Ottoman Empire and its Armenian subjects over the period of study. Therefore, in some cases a text may not relate to the Armenians in particular, but it was chosen to complete an image. The discussion of the Christians' conditions in the Empire by Busbecq, Henry Marsh, and Paul Rycaut are examples of such inclusions.

The excerpts do not necessarily include everything that was written by a given author about Armenia and the Armenians. Large sections of texts relating to the doctrine of the Armenian Church, or the origin and history of the Armenian people, were omitted. Repetitive information was kept only when deemed necessary.

The anthology is structured in the following manner:

The texts are presented in chronological order. All texts written and published originally in Old English are converted into modern English, using American spelling conventions. No other major editorial interference is made; therefore, the use of capital letters and proper names is inconsistent throughout the book. To reduce the elements of confusion, the Geographical Index and the Glossary list the many variations in proper names and foreign words found in the texts.

A Subject Index is organized according to specific themes, and a Chronological Table summarizes key events and helps place the texts into historical context.

Maps are included to help the reader follow the changes in territorial boundaries and geographical terms.

Each author and his given work are identified at the beginning of each section.

Numbers found in the margins indicate the original page number of the excerpt in the original work.

Vertical lines, which appear on either the same or the previous line as the margin number, indicate where a new page begins in the original source.

Footnotes belong either to the authors or to the editors and translators of a given work, as does the information given in parentheses or brackets. Angular brackets and numerical endnotes have been added by the editor of this anthology.

Because sources are mentioned at the beginning of the texts, a separate bibliography has not been compiled.

Given the obscurity of many of the sources presented here and the scarcity of anthologies and studies in the field,⁸ the editor hopes that this source book will enhance the study of effects of the Ottoman rule on the Armenian people.

Introduction: A Story of Transformation

"It is to the government alone, founded on an oppressive religion, that we must impute the knavery of some, the tyranny of others, the vices of all. The Greeks, the Armenians, and the Jews, deprived of the rights of citizenship, excluded from civil employments and from military service, strangers to the religion on which every thing rests, obliged to redeem every year their head by a disgraceful tax, threatened incessantly with the loss of their life or their fortune, and weak and unprotected, have, from their very infancy, learnt to dissemble, to give way to the smallest shock, to withdraw themselves from force by address, from violence by submission. They have been obliged to be false from habit, cringing and vile from fear, cunning and knavish from the necessity of living and existing."

Guillaume Antoine Olivier (134)

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A LAND

The Turkish presence on Armenian lands dates back to A.D. 1047, when the Seljuk Turks first arrived. By the defeat of the Byzantines in the battle of Manzikert in A.D. 1071, the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum was established and centered at Konia, west of Greater Armenia. Friar John in 1246, and William of Rubruck in 1255, place "the country of the Turks" and "Turkey" next to Armenia.⁹ Rubruck also states that in 1255 the population of "Turkey" was made up of primarily Armenians and Greeks.

By the 1330s, half a century after the establishment of the Ottoman Dynasty, Friar Jordanus describes Greater Armenia—which he places under Persian rule—as the territory extending from Sivas to the Caspian Mountains; and, referring to Turkey as Asia Minor, he identifies the area as "inhabited by the Turks, and by a few schismatic Greeks and Armenians."

The disparity between these two accounts can only mean that within a seventy-five-year period, the Greeks and the Armenians—who composed almost ninety percent of Asia Minor in 1255—were reduced to a minority population. A combination of factors seems to have contributed to the depopulation of the region's Christians: the migration in great numbers of Karakoyunlu Turks into Asia Minor; the clashes between the Mongols, Arabs, Persians, and Turks on one hand, and the Akkoyunlu Turks and the Karakoyunlu Turks on the other; the large exodus of Greeks and Armenians from Asia Minor; the conversion of the indigenous population to Islam; and massacres.

The accounts of Odoric, Ibn-Battuta, and Mandeville speak of the destruction of Erzurum as a result of clashes between antagonistic Turkish tribes. Schiltberger's and Clavijo's accounts also refer to the destruction and plunder of Armenian lands from Cilicia to Karabagh, mostly due to the wars between the Turks and the Mongols. The history of the city of Surmari presents an excellent example of the process of depopulation. Clavijo states: "Most of the population of Surmari formerly had been Armenian folk, for it is a city of Armenia, but of late years many Christians had been deported from this place by the Moslems having come in and taken possession." The desolating effects of the Turko-Persian wars on Armenian lands were witnessed through the eyes of the Italian travelers (Zeno, Barbaro, etc.).

By 1555, the Peace Treaty of Amasia set the boundaries of Ottoman rule. Leaving the smaller part under Persian control, the Ottomans took control of much of historical Armenia. Later, in the same century, the travel accounts acknowledge the increasing presence of Kurds in the area of Lake Van and farther south.¹⁰

There seems to be little doubt that the Armenian population of Asia Minor was reduced in numbers by the end of the fifteenth century. However, the accounts are also clear that until the late nineteenth century, Armenians were still the majority population in the territories known as Armenia and Armenian Vilayets or Provinces. This assertion is made despite Thomas Shirley's statement, written at the close of the sixteenth century, that in view of the desolate conditions in Asia Minor, "Armenia lies all utterly waste, without any inhabitant."

The accounts show that the decrease in population was a common phenomenon throughout the Ottoman Empire. Plague, epidemic and endemic maladies, famine, dirty habits, taxation, misgovernment, tyrannical rule, wars, and conscription have all been identified as factors that led to major fluctuations in population numbers. However, the travelers also state that the Armenians were a sedentary, reproductive race with large families, while the Turks were constantly decreasing in number and "passing away."

A logical conclusion, then, would be to attribute, at least in part, the decrease of the Armenian population in the Armenian provinces to human factors.

Many accounts characterize the Ottoman (mis)rule as one which demolished places and laid countries desolate; transplanted people and depopulated subjugated territories; converted Christians to Moslems and "Turkified" them; extirpated the nobility; and killed the indigenous populations.

As described previously, the destruction and desolation of Armenian districts, towns, villages, and churches¹¹ was prevalent.

The accounts remark repeatedly on the transplantation or deportation of Armenians, and the conversion of Armenians to Islam, whether as individuals¹² or as groups. These conversions included not only souls but architectural monuments. The texts give numerous examples of Armenian churches being converted into mosques. Such conversion seem to have been performed for the purpose of maintaining and strengthening the Ottoman rule.¹³ The accounts suggest that these conversions were more successful in Asia Minor, where Armenians were fewer in number, than in Armenia proper, where Armenians were more numerous and tended to be zealously attached to their faith.¹⁴

Forced intermarriages, through which the original Turkish stock was profoundly modified,¹⁵ also account for the reduced number of natives in occupied territories.

A major characteristic of the Ottoman Empire was the ease with which its rulers implemented massacres against both their enemies and subject races. As early as in the fifteenth century, Schiltberger witnessed the massacre of ten thousand war prisoners—an event described also by Froissart.¹⁶ In addition to information pertinent to massacres of Armenians, references to Ottoman massacres of Mameluks in Egypt, Greeks in Scio (Chios), and Maronites in Lebanon are also cited in this anthology.

William Mitchell Ramsay remarks that "Every Armenian massacre . . . was determined in accordance with a certain plan after the old Turkish fashion."¹⁷ William Miller states that "The 'disturbances at Constantinople,' . . . convinced even the most incredulous that the previous massacres in remote parts of the [Turkish] empire had not been mere inventions."¹⁸

Edward B. B. Barker in a book dedicated to his father, Consul-General Barker, who served as British consul under five sultans in Syria and Egypt, writes: “. . . almost every page of the Koran incites them [the Moslems] to exterminate unbelievers.”¹⁹ Armenians were considered unbelievers by the Turks and were referred to as *giaours*, or infidels. Barker adds: “It is more a spirit of pride in the ancient power of the Turkish nation rather than religious fanaticism which excites the populations in Turkey against the Christians . . . Religious sentiment has little to do with this feeling; political rivalry and resentment, much.”²⁰ More important, he refers to a letter written in 1827 at Alexandria, in which his father mentions a threat made by the Grand Segnior to issue a general order to massacre all his Christian subjects should the Turkish fleet be destroyed by the British.²¹

Many accounts identify the atrocious character of the Turks. These accounts speak of the hatred against non-Moslems instilled into the Turk from infancy. Many were raised to seek celebrity in murder and piety in maltreating Christians. The “more atrocious the cruelty, the more was it meritorious” (De Tott).

The majority of eyewitness accounts, however, suggest that these hostile teachings were sparked into actions only as a result of government encouragement.

One of the greatest paradoxes presented by the accounts is that the oppressive regime of the Ottomans was strengthened and sustained by rulers who were originally from non-Moslem parentage. A tragic example of this was Sultan Abdülhamid II, the son of an Armenian woman. He is credited with organizing the massacre of the Armenians in the late nineteenth century.²²

The travelers’ accounts show clearly that the massacre of Armenians in the Asiatic domains of the Ottoman Empire under Sultan Abdülhamid II were a result of implementation, on a grand scale, of the centuries-old Ottoman policy to rid the empire of the possibility of Armenian autonomy by annihilating the Armenian people. This policy culminated during World War I, when the Armenian provinces of Turkey were almost entirely depopulated of Armenian inhabitants through massacre and deportation ordered by the Turkish government.

THE PARADOX OF RESPONSIBILITY

David Hogarth, the Duke of Argyll, William Ramsay, Edwin Pears, George Hepworth, and William Miller deal elaborately with the issue of responsibility for the Armenian massacres that occurred under Sultan Abdülhamid II in the years 1894 through 1896.

At first glance it appears that many parties shared responsibility for the massacres. Russia has been fingered for encouraging the Kurds to harass the Armenians, for exciting the Armenians in their restlessness, and for encouraging a step-up of Turkish atrocities, all so that Russia could open up an opportunity to annex the Armenian provinces. The British have been accused of encouraging the Armenians to dream about autonomy and then abandoning them in their struggle. The Turkish authorities have been charged with planning massacres, and encouraging the Kurds—in particular, organizing the Kurdish Hamidieh regiments—to legalize their raids against the Armenians. Even the Armenians have been blamed for what happened to them. Their secret societies and attempts to achieve autonomy through revolts and insurrection have often been cited as catalysts for the action taken against them.

Assuming that the Russians and British were only secondary players in the game, the accounts show that while the Armenians lacked distinctly shaped political aspirations prior to the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, policies of extermination were already well developed by the Ottoman government. Frederick Millingen wrote in 1870 that “In the geography of the Turkish Empire, amongst the numerous provinces submitted to the authority of the Sultan no such country as Armenia exists. *Delenda est Carthago* seems to have been the policy of the Turkish conquerors who decided on blotting out the name of Armenia.”

John Peters learned five years before the massacres decreed by Sultan Abdülhamid II that “The Turkish government had instructed at least one of its governors, the Wali of Erzeroum, to do nothing against the Kurds for their outrages upon the Armenians. The commander of the troops in that province confided to one of his officers his hope that the Armenians would rise, for he had everything prepared to serve them as the Bulgarians were served. He had been prominent in the Bulgarian massacres.”

By the late 1800s, revolution or armed struggle seemed to be the only alternative left to the Armenians. All other means for a dignified life, whether through reforms or through the protection by Christian powers, had been exhausted. To Albert Smith the regeneration of Turkey was an empty sound. For Humphry Sandwith the Hatti-Humayoun that declared an end to the prejudices against Christians was something “never intended to be acted upon.”²³ Projects were abundantly declared in Turkey, said Frederick Millingen, “though their execution is left to the eve of the world’s end.” All promises of reform were conceived by Charles Norman as having “been swept away.” The plight of peaceful Armenians for reforms was neglected by the Treaty of Berlin in 1878, while the plight of armed Bulgarians and other Ottoman subjects was taken into consideration. According to a “well-informed source” there was “no hope of reform for Turkey whatever” (Miller).

The story told in this anthology clearly demonstrates that the Armenian political aspirations and the Armenian revolutionary movement were the results of Ottoman misrule, not the cause of it. The accounts also clearly point out that the desire of the largely unarmed Armenians for autonomy did not pose a serious threat to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The supposed threat, however, did offer a pretext for Ottoman action against them.²⁴

The Armenian revolutionary movement may be assigned responsibility for its ill preparation and for employing adventurous tactics that unnecessarily exposed the Armenian population to greater danger and more atrocious treatment. But the accounts offer a clear picture of the Ottoman government’s responsibility for its maltreatment and oppression of the Armenians in their ancestral homeland, coupled with first-hand knowledge that the annihilation seems to have been long planned.

In conclusion, the six hundred years of Turkish rule—under which civilization literally halted at the doors of Armenia proper—was intolerant and oppressive. It was a rule that caused the depopulation of the country’s Armenian inhabitants; laid the country of Armenians to waste; subjected the Armenians and their cultural and religious monuments to Turkification; and, last but not least, paved the way for the attempt to annihilate the Armenian population in the Armenian provinces.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A PEOPLE

The accounts gathered in this anthology reveal that the study of the Armenian character over time is a most intriguing task and one ripe with paradox.

Armenians are described in the texts as the best people in the world; extremely praiseworthy in their industry, but great knaves with rudeness and want of taste to the last degree, combining in themselves the grossness of a Persian, the shamelessness of a Greek, and the tastelessness of a Turk; the most amiable and moral people of the world, who, however, lose the privilege of becoming the most estimable people because of their sordid love of wealth; a wonderful nation; the most intelligent race; one of the coarsest people in existence, and a people without whom the garden of Eden would be turned into wilderness, for every trace of civilization is due to them there; a people with whom few nations can compete in historical misery; the most national of all Asiatic races; a people with remarkably strong bond toward each other, and with the strongest family ties ever; the sharpest people in the world; and the Yankees and Quakers of the East.

In summary, the travelers to the Ottoman Empire describe the Armenians as a people of extremes—extremes that may or may not be attributed to the harshness of the geography and historical conditions under which they lived for centuries.

The intention of this anthology was not to study the character of the Armenian people; however, those who wish to do so might find a great deal of substance for their research in this book.

When considering the Armenian character, it is important to make a distinction between the different groups of Armenians based on location, levels of education, occupation, and the degree of subjugation under which a group lived.

Most travelers came into contact with more well-to-do Armenians, and those who lived in the major cities of the Ottoman Empire—Constantinople, Smyrna, Brusa, Trebizond, Erzurum. Therefore, in most cases the characteristics attributed to the Armenians do not necessarily apply to the Armenians living in the remote regions of Armenia proper.

Certain travelers were better informed or alert enough to make some of these distinctions. Charles Mac Farlane, the author of a three-volume novel about Armenians, and of many volumes on the conditions in Turkey, seemed to have disliked the Armenians in Constantinople and Brusa, but mentions that the Armenians of the province of Erzurum “differ from the meek, submissive, cowardly Armenians . . . at Constantinople and at Smyrna. They are characterized as prudent and persevering; by no means devoid of fire and courage.”

David Porter states: “The men of Armenia, in their native climate, are hardy, bold, and industrious. In Turkey they become sordid and base . . . The Armenian on his native soil, still retains the love of arms . . . The Armenian of Turkey meddles not with cold steel . . .”

William Ainsworth finds points of distinction even between Armenians of the mountains and of the plains: “. . . The Armenians here did not resemble their heartless, prostrate countrymen of the plains, but were accustomed to fight for their rights . . .”

Creagh differentiates the peasant from the trader: “There is a great distinction between the honest and laborious Armenian who cultivates his field, and the trader of the same nation notoriously the greatest cheat and liar on the face of the earth.”

William Ramsay talks about the praiseworthy characteristics of free Armenians, the Zeitunlis, who fought for centuries to maintain a semi-independent status in the empire.

Even when they consider differences between the aforementioned groups, the accounts record a change over time within the Armenian as a human being.

A chronological reading of the travelers' narratives begins with a hospitable, generous, industrious, soberly living, pious, honest, patriarchal, populous, and courageous people, whose women were "skillful and active in shooting, and managing any sort of weapon," and ends with a people often described as inhospitable and cowardly.

The Armenians of great cities, "from the confines of Tartary to Egypt," "came as near to Turkish habits as they dare," "more than any other people." Many abandoned their native language, replacing it with Turkish.

John Kinneir remarks: "The inhabitants of Karagool, like most Armenians whom we have seen, appeared to be a rude and inhospitable race." Later, James Alexander speaks of an incident he had with an inhospitable old Armenian lady.

By the nineteenth century, Armenians are shown in some accounts to be indifferent toward other Armenians being abused or tortured by Turks, or Kurds, while in earlier accounts they did not hesitate to courageously assist even non-Armenian slaves, despite the risk of severe punishments imposed on people who assisted captives in flight.

William Ramsay offers an explanation. Armenians "are charged, by the voice of almost every traveler, with timidity and even cowardice; but for centuries they had the choice offered them between submission and death. So long as they were perfectly submissive, they were allowed to live in comparative quiet; so long as they had money, they could purchase some immunity from, or redress for, insult. Naturally and necessarily the bravest were killed off, they that could most readily cringe and submit survived, and all efforts were directed to acquiring money, as the only means of providing safety for family and self."

In this statement Ramsay gives one pause to contemplate not only the link between government rule and character development, but the paradox of bravery. He also offers an insightful explanation of the possible root cause of the money-loving character of Armenians. Was the desire to accumulate wealth an innate characteristic of this people, or did it develop in response to a system in which money bought the "privilege of life"?

George Forster's account, written in 1783, may contain an answer: "To palliate the evils inherent to their situation, and create a substitute for powers, honors, and national importance, they [the Armenians] pursue the different roads of traffic with unremitting ardor, and invariably measure their pleasures by the mere extent of their wealth."²⁵

In conclusion, the Ottoman rule changed the character of Armenians, so that by the nineteenth century travelers found justification to label them a "degenerate race."

PRIVILEGE AND TOLERANCE: MYTH, OR REALITY?

Two issues remain to be discussed: namely, the so-called privileged status of the Armenians and the religious tolerance of the Ottoman rule toward its subjects.²⁶

Numerous accounts leave the impression that the Armenians were privileged subjects in the Ottoman Empire, whether those privileges are directly alluded to or inferred.

The first mention of the Armenians' privileged status comes from Schiltberger in the early fifteenth century: "Machmet . . . ordered that the Christians and all those who are against his

faith, should be persecuted day and night, except the Armenians who are to be free amongst them . . .”

George Sandys adds to this that Armenians “are not subject to the Turk, if taken in wars, are freed from bondage . . .”

Then Aaron Hill expands on the same: “. . . they [Armenians] have better fortune than their fellow-slaves, the Greeks . . . they are free from that unnatural duty of delivering their children, to be sent upon triennial seizures to Constantinople, and enjoy a hundred privileges more . . .”²⁷

Alexander Rhodes and Philip Avril, two Jesuit missionaries, traveled in Turkey disguised as Armenians in order to avoid insults and enjoy greater security. Travelers stated that Armenians occupied important positions and possessed great influence in the Empire and over its rulers, although they did not exert their influence politically.

Against these privileges, the restrictions were numerous—Armenians, along with other Christian subjects, were forbidden to dress like Turks, or bear arms, or display cheerfulness, or pass a Moslem on horseback without dismounting and bowing their head to that Moslem, or paint their houses, or possess local travel passports. Moreover, Robert Macdonald says that Armenians, being Christians, did not have the same civil privileges as Turks. The Sultan’s Christian subjects were disqualified by their creed from holding civil or military appointments.

To be influential, or to enjoy a degree of importance, seemed to be a risk in itself: “Eminent posts are imminent dangers in Turkey,” says Mac Farlane, and De Tott states that “Under a despotic government, the existence of any person is necessarily precarious: No one can be ambitious without despising his own life.”

Then there was the tax called *kharaj*, which Armenians, like other non-Moslem Ottoman subjects, paid for the *privilege of living*. Adding this to the maltreatment and misrule, one can only conclude that the privilege granted to Armenians—who were “partly subject to the Turks, and partly to the Koordish begs, but equally oppressed by both” (Kinneir)—was a myth, formed on the basis of certain privileges offered to only those Armenians whose wealth enriched the coffers of the Ottoman sultans and governors.²⁸

Finally, many accounts speak of the religious tolerance present in the Ottoman Empire and, in particular, the freedom of Christians to worship openly. La Mottraye states: “The exercise of all religion is nowhere more free, or less disturbed, than in Turkey.”

Missionary Eli Smith has an interesting and thought-provoking passage in his account about Erzurum: “Though the Armenians were so numerous, and their city the largest in Armenia, it is a curious fact that they had but two churches. One of them was very small, and the other so irregular, dark and mean, as to resemble a stable almost as much as an edifice for divine worship.”

If religious tolerance meant that Armenians were allowed to maintain their Christian faith, their religious institutions, and their Patriarch, then Ottoman Turkey was indeed tolerant.

In contrast, travelers also observed that Armenians “. . . dare not, no more than all other nations that live amongst the Turks . . . make use of any clocks . . .” (Rauwolff); and that “though the Turks in many things give greater toleration to the Armenians than their other subjects, yet they use the same inhuman art to ruin their religion, never giving them permission to re-build a church, when once decayed; unless they are bribed to it at so high a

rate, that it is a very rare attempt to ask a license for that purpose from the Turkish officers” (Hill);²⁹ and that Europeans “. . . may talk of the Hatti Shereef, that vain chapter of privileges, in London or Paris, and praise the toleration and justice which it awards to all classes of the Sultan’s subjects; but beyond the immediate eye of the ambassadors, this far-famed Magna Charta is no better than a mockery” (Badger).

There are numerous accounts of Armenian Christians converting to Islam as a result of direct and indirect pressure by the Ottoman rulers and the conditions prevalent in the Empire.

In fact, the whole history of the Ottoman Empire is one of conversion—an empire and a rule which derived much of their strength through the abduction of Christian children from their parents and the subsequent Turkification of these children.³⁰

CONCLUSION

“This nation seems to have been doomed to suffer at the hands of its conquerors; and such has been its terrible experience that the wonder is that anything which merits the name of an Armenian nation still exists.”

Clara Clement (624)

This anthology unquestionably demonstrates that after six centuries of Turkish rule, Armenia and the Armenian people were transformed.

Both the people and their land were subjected to government policies aimed at destruction. The Armenian homeland was transformed into a Turkish land, and the character of the Armenian people suffered.

Survivors of the Ottoman tyranny, and their descendants, face the difficult task of exploring their character and of dealing with the many paradoxes left behind by centuries of oppressive foreign rule: timidity among strangers; love of money; viewing governments, including their own, as evils to be dealt with through deceit and mockery; indifference towards matters concerning the Armenian community and its organizations; submission to the caprices of community leaders, without question or accountability; etc.

The legacy of Ottoman tyranny on the Armenians of today is real, and healing the damage done to personal and national integrity is imperative. This anthology has been compiled in the hope that individuals or collectives will find the courage to look at themselves and to seek to repair and regenerate a character worthy of their free ancestors. But will the Armenians ever be able to recover their homeland?

V. Ghazarian

Notes to Preface and Introduction

- ¹ After the Russo-Turkish War of 1827–28 and the Protestant missionary movement which began in Asia Minor and Armenia in the 1830s, the number of travel accounts on Armenia and the Armenians increased considerably. Following is a partial list of worthy works which are not included in this anthology: Henry Van Lennep, *Travels in Little Known Parts of Asia Minor* (London, 1870); Cyrus Hamlin, *Among the Turks* (New York, 1878); H. F. Tozer, *Turkish Armenia and Eastern Asia Minor* (London, 1881); Lucy M. J. Garnett, *The Women of Turkey and Their Folk-Lore* (London, 1890); E. A. Brayley Hodgetts, *Round About Armenia: The Record of a Journey across the Balkans through Turkey, the Caucasus, and Persia in 1895* (London, 1896); Frederick Davis Greene, *The Armenian Crisis in Turkey: The Massacre of 1894, Its Antecedents and Significance, with a Consideration of Some of the Factors which Enter into the Solution of this phase of the Eastern Question* (New York, 1895); J. Castell Hopkins, *The Sword of Islam or Suffering Armenia, Annals of Turkish Power and the Eastern Question* (Toronto, 1896); Rev. Edwin M. Bliss, *Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities* (Boston, 1896); James Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat, Being Notes of a Vacation Tour in the Autumn of 1876*, Fourth edition, revised, with a supplementary chapter on the recent history of the Armenian Question (London, 1896); H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia*, in two volumes (London, 1901); etc.
- ² “The difficult and often hostile terrain combined with the severity of the climate . . . may explain why the first men to venture into Armenia and write of their impressions were driven there by necessity rather than pleasure or curiosity.” Ara Baliozian, *Armenia Observed* (New York, 1979), xiv–xv. Austen Layard in his account illustrates this well: “The large and flourishing Armenian communities inhabiting the valley between lake Wan and the district of Jezireh, appear to be unknown to modern geographers, and are unnoticed in our best maps. The difficulties and dangers of the road have hitherto deterred travelers from entering their mountains” (369).
- ³ As late as in 1818, Kinneir refers to Armenians in the plain of Erzurum—that city most frequented by European travelers—as people who “had never seen an European before” (164); or, as Sandwith states in 1856, in most of the about 1,500 villages of the province of Erzurum “a European has never trod” (387).
- ⁴ The following examples are quite illustrative:
 “I feel such an intense prejudice against Armenians that I am certain that anything I might say would only be biased and therefore not worth reading; and I think anyone who has had dealings of any kind with this abominable race would probably be in the same position. The Armenian inspires one with feelings of contempt and hatred which the most unprejudiced would find it hard to crush. His cowardice, his senseless untruthfulness, the depth of his intrigue, even in the most trivial matters, his habit of hoarding, his lack of one manly virtue, his helplessness in danger, his natural and instinctive treachery, together form so vile a character that pity is stifled and judgment unbalanced. I cannot believe, as some urge, that his despicable personality has been produced merely by Turkish tyranny. There are other nations who have been tyrannized; the Bulgarians, the Druses, and the Maronites. But not one of them shows a tittle of the abominable qualities which mark off Armenians from the rest of mankind. Even Jews have their good points but Armenians have none . . .” Mark Sykes, *Through Five Turkish Provinces* (London, 1900), 80.
 “I have confessed already to a prejudice against the Armenians, but it is not possible to deny that they are the most capable, energetic, enterprising, and pushing race in Western Asia, physically superior, and intellectually acute, and above all they are a race which can be raised in all respects to our own level, neither religion, color, customs, nor inferiority in intellect or force constituting any barrier between us. Their shrewdness and aptitude for business are remarkable, and whatever exists of commercial enterprise in Eastern Asia Minor is almost altogether in their hands. They have singular elasticity, as their survival as a church and nation shows, and I cannot but think it likely that they may have some share in determining the course of events in the East, both politically and religiously.” Mrs. Bishop (Isabella L. Bird), *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan Including a Summer in the Upper Karun Region and a Visit to the Nestorian Rayahs* (London, 1891), 336.
- ⁵ The work of Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars: 1660–1800* (Berkeley, 1962), reveals many lies and liars. James Creagh states: “Nothing is more common than the errors of a traveler who takes an individual’s opinion for the views on the same subject of the general public, or who accepts an isolated fact as an established custom . . . Nowhere in the world do such blunders occur more frequently than in Turkey . . .” (575).
- ⁶ Jack L. Vartoogian, in an introductory note, justly states: “In one sense, of course, every traveler has his own

reason for travel, but a breakdown by apparent purpose can be very illuminating. This sort of analysis must be accepted cautiously, however, since in some instances purpose is vague, while in others there are plainly more than one. Many of the missionaries, for example, clearly had proselytizing and conversion as their main goals, but were nonetheless often instructed to act as diplomats or, in some cases, spies. These considerations should be kept in mind when reading these accounts." Ara Baliozian, ed., *Armenia Observed* (New York, 1979), xxxii. He further mentions the importance of bearing in mind the "continually rising standard of living in the West *vis-à-vis* the East." *Ibid.*, xxxiv–xxxv.

- ⁷ See Kevork Bardakjian's *Armenia and the Armenians through the Eyes of English Travelers of the Nineteenth Century*, in R. G. Hovannisian, ed., *The Armenian Image in History and Literature* (Malibu, 1981), 139–153.
- ⁸ Some important works are: Jack Lewis Vartoogian, *The Image of Armenia in European Travel Accounts of the Seventeenth Century* (a most valuable doctoral thesis presented at Columbia University in 1974 and available only in facsimile form); Gorun Shrikian, *Armenians Under the Ottoman Empire and the American Mission's Influence on Their Intellectual and Social Renaissance* (a doctoral thesis presented to the Faculty of Concordia Seminary in Exile, in 1977, and available only in facsimile form); Ara Baliozian, ed., *Armenia Observed*, with an introduction by Jack L. Vartoogian (New York, 1979); Leo Hamalian, *As Others See Us: The Armenian Image in Literature* (New York, 1980); Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Image in History and Literature* (Malibu, 1981); Christopher J. Walker, *Visions of Ararat: Writings on Armenia* (New York, 1997).
- ⁹ "The country of Turks" is mentioned in earlier accounts also. Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, for example, who began his journey from Spain toward the frontiers of China in A.D. 1160, writes: "We next come . . . to Corycus, the frontier of Aram, which is called Armenia. Here are the confines of the empire of Toros, king of the mountains, sovereign of Armenia, whose rule extends to the city of Dhuchia and the country of the Thogarmim, or Turks." Manuel Komroff, *Contemporaries of Marco Polo* (New York, 1928), 268.
- ¹⁰ It needs to be emphasized that Diyarbekir and Bitlis, "the capital city of Kurdistan" (Avril), with adjacent towns and villages, although designated to the province of Kurdistan by the Ottoman government, at least in the mid-seventeenth century, were still considered "part of Armenia," and the majority of their inhabitants were Armenians (Celebi).
- ¹¹ One of the reasons for desolation perhaps is the fact that Christians tended to withdraw to less fertile but safer, more inaccessible places (Busbecq, 46).
- ¹² Alexander Pallis, *In the Days of the Janissaries* (London, 1951), 27.
- ¹³ E. C. Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks: From the beginning of their empire to the present time*, Vol. I (London, 1854), 20–24.
- ¹⁴ It must be noted that some sources find points of connection between the Armenians and the Kizilbashs of Anatolia, who "celebrate certain Armenian feasts and are thickest in the 'Armenian' vilayets." F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans* (New York, 1973), 154–156. Connections are pointed out also between Armenians and certain Kurdish tribes. Mark Sykes, *The Caliph's Last Heritage: A Short History of the Turkish Empire* (London, 1915). See also David Hogarth's account (651). It would be interesting to find out what Evliya Celebi had in mind while stating that the inhabitants of Erzurum "are all Turkomans and Armenian Kurds" (81).
- ¹⁵ E. C. Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks: From the beginning of their empire to the present time*, Vol. I (London, 1854), 32.
- ¹⁶ Stanley Lane-Poole, *Turkey* (New York, 1888), 56–59.
- ¹⁷ William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor, Some of its Causes and Effects* (London, 1917), 48.
- ¹⁸ William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire, 1801–1913* (Cambridge, 1913), 430–431.
- ¹⁹ Edward B. B. Baker, *Syria and Egypt Under the Last Five Sultans of Turkey*, Vol. I (London, 1876), 44.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, 59.
- ²² Georges Dorys in *The Private Life of the Sultan of Turkey* (New York, 1901), 1, mentions that Abdülhamid was the son of Abdülmejid and a slave of Armenian origin, and that according to some stories the sultan's father also was an Armenian, the cook of the palace of Abdülmejid (*Ibid.*, 2).
- ²³ The inclusion of a clause in the 1895 proposed reforms to the extent that "The Sublime Porte shall see that religious conversions are surrounded by all the guarantees arising out of the principles established by the Hatti-

Humayoun of 1856 . . . and too often evaded in practice” (632) strongly supports Humphry Sandwith’s statement.

- ²⁴ Ubicini mentions that the Armenians were “losing more and more all memory of their former country . . . they might have appeared almost unconscious of their own national existence, had they not been from time to time roused from their lethargy and recalled to a sense of vitality by convulsions arising from the rivalry of parties or the violence of persecutions” (407). While William Denton remarks: “The question . . . is not whether the Christians of Turkey are ever inflamed against the Government of the Sultan by ‘foreign intrigues,’ but whether, without any such ‘intrigues,’ there exist grounds for such discontent; whether every province of Turkey, from the banks of the Danube to the Red Sea, is not suffering from the gross injustice of the Government towards the people; whether the Christians of Turkey are not oppressed by such rapacious rulers, that men would cease to be men if they were not discontented” (436). In both cases the bottom line is oppression and persecution.
- ²⁵ George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol. II. [From John Pinkerton’s *A General Collection of the best and most Interesting Voyages and Travels in all Parts of the World, many of which are now first translated into English*, (London, 1811), 284.]
- ²⁶ While discussing the issue of tolerance, it should be confined to religious tolerance only, for “. . . the Mohammedan has been, on the whole, the most tolerant of all religions, as regards religious liberty, though the most intolerant as regards civil freedom” (Webster, 175).
- ²⁷ It seems that the collection of Armenian children officially ceased in certain districts as early as A.D. 1545 and eventually included other Armenian provinces until the banishment of such practice. Maghalkia Archbishop Ormanian, *Azkabadum; Hay ughghapar yegeghetswo antskere sgizpen minchew mer orere: haragits azkayin barakanerov badmuadz*, Vol. II, Part II (Beirut, 1960), 2238.
- ²⁸ It is worthy to note what is said about the nature of the so-called Armenian privileges by those travelers who first alluded to them: “. . . the true reason is, for that they are very laborious in transporting merchandise from one city to another, by which means through the customs which are paid in every city, the coffers of the Grand Signior are wonderfully enriched” (Cartwright, 59). This kind of privilege, however, was seemingly introduced by the Mongols: “Taharten agreed that it was true he especially favored the Christians throughout his country for they brought him, he said, wealth by their trade” (Clavijo, 25).
- ²⁹ William George Browne, during a journey performed through Asia Minor in 1802, discovered that “The Armenian church narrowly escaped the conflagration [of 1801] . . . It was saved by demolishing all the private houses near it. They [Armenians] assert, that it would have been impossible to rebuild it, on account of the Mahometan women of Broussa being particularly furious against Christians. On some late occasion, when it had become necessary to repair the church, a party of these amazons, together, it is said, with some men dressed in female apparel and instigated by a fanatical saint, tumultuously assembled. The saint declared, “that every nail which was driven, operated as a new wound in the body of the prophet”; and the mob destroyed all the repairs that had been made . . .” Robert Walpole, *Travels in Various Countries of the East; Being a Continuation of Memoirs Relating to European and Asiatic Turkey, etc.* (London, 1820), 112.
- ³⁰ E. C. Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks: From the beginning of their empire to the present time*, Vol. I (London, 1854), 20–24.

Texts

A.D. 1575

“[The Armenians] are pious and honest people, innocent, but very zealous in their religion, and receive strangers readily that come to them, and give them lodging, as I have often found it in my travels. They are also very much inclined to help and assist the poor slaves, that are under Turkish confinement, and ready to help them out. Their merchants, whereof there are many amongst them, are dispersed not only over all Turkey, but also Persia, the Indies, and many other countries; whereof they have in all chief towns of trading . . . their peculiar warehouses and churches . . .”

LEONHART RAUWOLFF

John Ray, *A Collection of Travels* . . . (London, 1693), 348.

A.D. 1600

“[The Armenians are] a people very industrious in all kind of labor: their women very skillful and active in shooting, and managing any sort of weapon, like the fierce Amazons in ancient time . . . Their families are very great; for, both sons, nephews and nieces do dwell under one roof, having all their substance in common . . . living in all peace and tranquillity, grounded on true love and honest simplicity.

“To discourse how populous this nation is at this day, is needless, since they inhabit both in Armenia the Greater, and Armenia the Lesser; as also in Cilicia, Bithinia, Syria, Mesopotamia and Persia. Besides the principal cities of the Turkish empire be much populated with them . . .”

JOHN CARTWRIGHT

The Preachers Travels . . . (London, 1611), 23.

A.D. 1897

“So far as the ability to protect himself is concerned, the Armenian belongs to a degenerate race.”

GEORGE HUGHES HEPWORTH

Through Armenia on Horseback (New York, 1898), 135.

“ . . . The Turks have only one way of dealing with all revolts against their own misgovernment, and that is by raising irregular troops, the greatest ruffians in their dominions, and by allowing and encouraging them to butcher men, women, and children as the sign and pledge of victory . . .”

THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

Dowager Duchess of Argyll (ed.), *Autobiography and Memoirs*
Vol. II (London, 1906), 237.

John of Pian de Carpine—1182?–?1252

*The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253–55, as Narrated by Himself,
With Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of John of Pian de Carpine.*

Translated from the Latin, and edited, with an introductory notice by William Woodville Rockhill
Printed for the Hakluyt Society, London, 1900

A.D. 1246?

*The Journey of Friar John of Pian de Carpine to the Court of Kuruk Khan, 1245–1247, as
Narrated by Himself.*

<Comania> To the south . . . has the Alans, the Circasses, the Gazars, Greece and Constantinople; also the land of the Ibers, the Cachs, the Brutaches, who are said to be Jews and who shave their heads, the country of the Zicci, of the Georgians and of the Armenians, and the country of the Turks. 12

William of Rubruck [Guillaume Rubruquis]—1220?–?1293

Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes. Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others.

Samuel Purchas

In tewnty volumes. Vol. XI, Glasgow, James MacLehose and Sons, 1906

A.D. 1255

The Journall of Friar William de Rubruquis, a French man, of the Order of the Minorite Friars, unto the east parts of the world.

144 . . . We entered the country of the Soldan of Turkey, upon the first Sunday in Lent. And the first castle we found, is called Marseugen <Marsengen/Erzincan>.¹ All in the castle were Christians, Armenians, Curgines, and Greeks: The Saracens <Turks> only have the dominion. There, the captain of the castle said, he had received commandment, that no victuals should be given to any Frank, or to the Ambassadors of the King of Armenia, or of Vastacius. So that from the place where we were the first Sunday in Lent, unto Cyprus, (whether I came eight days before the Feast of Saint John Baptist) we must buy our provision. He, who was my guide procured me horses, and took money for the victuals, and put it in his purse. When he came into the fields, seeing a flock any where, he violently took one sheep, and gave it to his family to eat, and marveled I would not eat of his robbery. In the Purification I was in a certain city called Aini, which was Sahensas, whose situation is most strong: and there are there a thousand Armenian churches, and two synagogues of the Saracens . . .

145 The second Sunday in Lent, we came to the head of Araxis, and passing beyond the top of the mountain, we came to Euphrates; by the which we descended the castle eight days, always going to the west, unto a certain castle, called Camath. There Euphrates bends to the pass into South towards Halapia. But we passing the river went through very high hilly countries, and through the deep snow to the west. There was so great an earthquake thence to there that year, that in one city called Arsengan, ten thousand persons noted by name, perished, beside poor men of whom there was no notice taken. Riding three mightily days together, we saw the gaping of the earth, as it was shaken cleft by the earthquake, and the heaps of earth which came from the mountains, and filled the valleys . . .

146 We were in Sebaste of the Lesser Armenia in Easter week. There we visited the tombs of forty Martyrs. There the Church of Saint Blase stands: but I could not go thither, because it was above in the castle. On Low-Sunday we came to Cesaria of Cappadocia; where there is a Church of Saint Basill the great. About fifteen days after we came to Iconium, making small journeys, and resting in many places: because we could not so readily procure horses. And my guide did this of purpose: taking upon him to solicit his own business three days, in every town: whereupon, I was much grieved, but dears not speak, because he might have sold, or slain me and our servants, and there was none to gain-say it. I found many Franks at Iconium, and a certain Januensian <Genoese> merchant, called Nicholas de Sancto Syrio. Who with a certain companion of his a Venetian, called Boniface de Molendino, carried all the alum out