

Anna Aleksanyan

B.A., History, Yerevan State University (YSU), 2005

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Harry and Ovsanna Chitjian Fellow Anna Aleksanyan continues to make excellent progress writing her dissertation, *Gendered Aspects of the Armenian Genocide in the Experiences of its Victimized Females (1914-1918)*. The Armenian Genocide had a precise gendered logic, which is the topic of her doctoral project. First, the perpetrators targeted intellectuals and the male population through physical destruction. As women and girls represented productive and reproductive resources, the perpetrators of the genocide targeted them for physical annihilation but also for forced assimilation. From 1915 to 1916, there was a widespread and systematic campaign to abduct Armenian women and girls who were forced into servitude as slaves, concubines, and wives of Ottoman Muslim men.

The central government ordered local populations to implement forced marriages. As a result, officers and officials forcibly married girls and women from wealthy and prominent Armenian families whose property they seized while others pursued healthy and beautiful female targets. The victims had to abandon their religion and forget their names and identities in order to survive physically. Another genocidal tactic was the government's decision to exile women, children and the elderly to a remote desert in Ottoman Syria where many died in concentration camps. Mass humiliations characterized their relocation, including forced nudity and gang rape, as well as starvation and mass killings. Aleksanyan draws upon archival sources to analyze these gendered aspects of the genocide. She also investigates the impact of gender dynamics and cultural practices that were dominant prior to the genocide, which informed the motivations and implementation of the genocide. Equally significant, she shows how, under genocidal circumstances, traditional gender roles metamorphosed and then served as an important source of individual and national survival.

In addition to writing her preliminary chapters, Aleksanyan continues to conduct research. She investigated the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Archives in Watertown, MA and examined pre-genocidal materials from 1908 to 1914 related to Mush, Trabzon, and Sivas. In addition, she studied the secondary literature published on the provinces of Mush, Sivas, Trabzon, and Kharberd. These sources will shape her ideas about the lives and positions of Armenian women in these provinces. She was pleased to present her preliminary findings in a paper, "Mass Rape and Body Destruction of the

Armenian Women during the Genocide," at the conference *The Genocide of the Christian Populations of the Ottoman Empire and Its Aftermath (1908-1923)* held at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Her chapter "Between Love, Pain and Identity: Armenian Women After World War I" appeared in Ziemer's *Women's Everyday Lives in War and Peace in the South Caucasus* (2020). She is currently based in Yerevan, Armenia where she continues to work with the support of a Vartan Gregorian Scholarship.