

Fragments of a Lost Homeland: Remembering Armenia

Armen T. Marsoobian



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The Armenian world was shattered by the 1915 genocide. Not only were thousands of lives lost but families were displaced and the narrative threads that connected them to their own past and homelands were forever severed. Many have been left with only fragments of their family histories: a story of survival passed on by a grandparent who made it through the cataclysm or, if lucky, an old photograph of a distant, silent, ancestor. By contrast the Dildilian family chose to speak. Two generations gave voice to their experience in lengthy written memoirs, in diaries and letters, and most unusually in photographs and drawings. Their descendant Armen T. Marsoobian uses all these resources to tell their story and, in doing so, brings to life the pivotal and often violent moments in Armenian and Ottoman history from the massacres of the late nineteenth century to the final expulsions in the 1920s during the Turkish War of Independence. Unlike most Armenians, the Dildilians were allowed to convert to Islam and stayed behind while their friends, colleagues and other family members perished in the death marches of 1915-1916. Their remarkable story is one of survival against the overwhelming odds and survival in the face of peril.

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