

Refugees, Migrants, Citizens: Armenians in Greece from the Interwar Years until Today

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Abstract

After the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor and its disastrous withdrawal in September 1922, Greece received an influx of Christians who fled their homes in Turkey. As it is well known, the 1923 Population Exchange between Turkey and Greece decreed the compulsory exchange of the Greek Orthodox of Anatolia and the Muslims of Greece. In this lecture, I will focus on an under-researched group of refugees who settled in Greece in the 1920s; the Anatolian Armenians who faced yet another phase of uprooting and displacement after the 1915 Genocide.

Tens of thousands of Armenians arrived in mainland Greece and the Aegean islands between 1921 and 1922. While many of them left Greece for other destinations in a couple of years, others who stayed built their lives from scratch in a host society with a different language, different religious dogma, and different customs and traditions than theirs. They were lumped under the category of “refugees” together with the Asia Minor Greeks and the other newcomer groups. In my lecture, I will talk about various topics, such as the refugee camps in Greece which hosted Armenians, the forms of international aid that they received, the institutions which took care of Armenian orphans, the employment patterns of the Armenian refugees, the formation of Armenian community institutions in Greece, grant of Greek citizenship to Armenians, new waves of Armenian migration to Greece in the later decades, and finally about the Armenian identity in Greece today.

Bio

Merih Erol is currently an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Özyeğin University in Istanbul. In 2014-2015, she was Onassis Foundation Visiting Faculty in the History Department of Boğazici University. In 2012-2013, she was a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University, The Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies. She held postdoctoral fellowships at the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies, Princeton University, and the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. She is the author of the book *Greek Orthodox Music in Ottoman Istanbul: Nation and Community in the Era of Reform*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015.