"IMAGE OF THE ARMENIAN WOMAN IN GRAVURES AND POSTCARDS"

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Review by Lucine Kasbarian, New Jersey, December 2022

Prepared by Hayk Demoyan
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Artwork: Image of the Armenian Woman in Gravures and Postcards - NAASR

Made possible by a grant from the Armenian Studies Program of California State University - Northridge, historian Hayk Demoyan has assembled a compendium of photographic and illustrated historical portraits of Armenian women in a variety of settings. The 200 images in this volume are unique engravings and postcards from the 16th through early 20th centuries that show Armenian women held in high esteem from all walks of life. They include aristocrats, villagers, nuns, rescued women from slavery, a fedayee, caregivers, dancers, weavers, sweet makers.

One of the striking aspects of this collection is the diversity of national costumes, jewelry, headdresses and lifestyles depicted among these females, depending on the geographical regions, social strata and eras in which the subjects lived. Here we see womenfolk from Akhlskha (Javakhk), Akoulis (Nakhichevan), Alexandropol (Gyumri), Baku, the Black Sea Coast, Isfahan; Maragha; Shamakhi, Shushi, Tiflis (Tblisi); Uti (Utik) and Yerevan. There is also representation from Cilicia, Constantinople (Istanbul), Gesaria (Kayseri), Kharpert (Elazig), Moks (Bahçesaray), Nicomedia (Izmit), Smyrna (Izmir), Timar (Erzurum), Trebizond (Trabzon) and Van.

Demoyan includes testimony from traveling foreigners—poets and writers—who commented upon how their “elegant posture, disciplined life and integrity differentiated Armenian women from the women of neighboring ethnic groups.”

This versatile collection of Armenian iconographic heritage, says Demoyan, provide “unique identity markers of the Armenian civilization as a worthy and weighty response to all attempts to deny of falsify the centuries-old Armenian heritage.” The book is a useful source for historical, ethnographic and iconographic research.

To enrich the edition, **Image of the Armenian Woman in Gravures and Postcards** also includes works of art and illustrations such as engravings supplied from French-Armenian collector Sarkis Bogossian. It is a welcome addition to the existing canon of Armenian anthropological material which leaves this reader hoping that other volumes will follow. The 180-page, glossy softcover is published in full color. The text is in Armenian, English and Russian.

Comments

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Mark Twain About Armenian women After His Visit to Smyrna "Smyrna is now flourishing… Mostly, the city is inseparably owned by the Turks, the Jews live in their quarters, the Franks in their own. With Armenians, it is the same. The latter, of course, are Christians. Their houses are large, clean, spacious, the floors are beautifully lined with black and white marble slabs, many have inner yards and gardens with magnificent flowers and fountains sparkling in the sun, where the doors of all rooms lead to. A spacious entrance hall leads to the front door, and here, women spend almost all day. When the day's heat falls, they dress up in their best clothes and appear in the doorway. They are all pretty, unusually clean and neat, and look as if they have just been taken out of the box. Some young Armenian women, I would even say many, are exceptionally gorgeous. As a rule, they are a little bit more beautiful than American women, forgive me for this anti-patriotic praise…"