

# DID YOU KNOW? (18)

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**By Jirair Tutunjian**, 10 July 2022

In 1537, when Ottoman Sultan Selim the Grim named Mimar (Builder) Sinan as the architect/construction boss to give a facelift to Jerusalem and improve its defenses, Armenian Sinan had his work cut out for him. He repaired/constructed the walls of the city, repaired Haram el-Sharif (Dome of the Rock) interior and exterior, and decorated its walls with blue and white tiles imported from Iznik, Turkey. Sinan also installed a water supply system and roadside fountains, repaired/constructed the city gates (nine) plus 17 machicolations. At the end, Jerusalem was the "most complete and finest city wall built anywhere in the world in the 16<sup>th</sup> century," according to European travelers. Most of the money for the restoration was raised through taxes in Egypt. It took two years (1537-1538) to finish the job.

Marie von Vetsera (1871-1889), the mistress of Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria, died as a result of a suicide pact with the prince. The Mayerling story is based on their love affair. Vetsera was the teenage daughter of Baron Albin von Vetsera, a diplomat in the Austrian Foreign Service. Baron was an Armenian born in Bratislava, Slovakia (1825). His wife Eleni Baltazzi came from a wealthy Ottoman Armenian family. Baron von Vetsera was Austrian consul in Smyrna, minister plenipotentiary in Lisbon and Austrian representative to the Caisse de la Dette Publique Egyptienne. He died in Cairo in 1887. At the end of WWII, Russian troops blew open Marie's tomb looking for loot. They found nothing.

There are several versions of the origins of Ataturk. Several years ago, "The Radical" restarted the discussion which alleged Ataturk was Armenian. The "evidence" is pretty thin but there you are. According to the publication ("From Mustafa to Kemal Ataturk's Big Secret" by Fatin Bayhan) Ataturk was not born in Thesaloniki as most people believe. His hometown was Malatya. The family emigrated from Malatya. His mother Zubeide Hanım was actually his aunt. He was sent to Thesaloniki when his parents died. He was adopted by Zubeida. The author says Malatya was a province heavily populated by Armenians...Turkey "bends history to the needs of our official ideology and the state's higher interests." Bayhan then pointed out that Hrant Dink was assassinated for revealing that Sabiha Gökçe, the famous woman fighter pilot, was Armenian.

The twelfth-century "Tadastanakirk" of Mkhitar Gosh is the first major Armenian written code of secular law. An eighth-century law book focused solely on the laws of the Church, and overlapped with secular law only in matters such as a divorce and inheritance. Armenian law was influenced by the Pentateuch and the New Testament. The death penalty traditionally was imposed for murder, but the Armenians permitted penance and fine when the culprit was Armenian; only a foreigner could be hanged; this was not consistent though, and if a king or a prince were attacked the culprit could be hanged, irrespective of nationality. Similarly, where the older oral law would have demanded amputation, a fine and penance were sufficient. In rape case, where earlier custom had demanded marriage without the possibility of divorce, the new law proposed a fine if the woman would not

accept marriage. There were other examples where older laws were tempered and for example, bias was shifted away from the male, to treat the woman more fairly.

In "A Peace to End All Peace" David Fromkin wrote: "There are historians today who continue to support the claim of Enver and Tal'at that the Ottoman rulers acted only after Armenia had risen against them. But observers at the time who were by no means anti-Turk reported that such was not the case. German officers stationed there agreed that the area was quiet until the deportations began. At the German and Austrian embassies, the first reports of the deportation were ignored: officials clearly believed that massacres of Christians were about to take place, but did not want to know about them. They accepted Tal'at's reassurances eagerly."

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries Crimean Tatars frequently attacked southern Poland and after pillaging returned with slaves. Among the slaves were Armenians. In 1621 the Tatars made a specific attack on Armenian settlements in Poland and took back to Crimea a large number of Armenians. Between 1645 -1650, the Tatars reached the Polish city of Bar which had a large number of Armenians. Three-hundred Armenians were taken to the Crimean cities of Kaffa, Karasubazaar, Bakhchisarai, and Orinberan as slaves. The Armenians were freed when Crimean Armenians paid a large ransom. Armenian community life in Crimea was revived in 1650 when a Rev. Kapriel was sent from Echmiadzin to restore church services. He also appointed new priests. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the community was fully restored when relations between Crimea and Russia improved.

A leading Crimean Armenian was Murad who had close connections with Crimean khans and Russian royalty. As a result, Mehmed Khan appointed him as liaison with Russia. During negotiations with the Russians, Murad wasn't sufficiently respectful of the tsar. When Murad returned to Crimea, the tsar sent a letter to the khan asking him to execute Murad. The khan refused the tsar's wish saying the tsar's accusations had not been substantiated. Murad was succeeded by another Armenian. His name was Mokolaigo (Nicholas Mansurov). He was a key personality in negotiations among the Crimean khans, the Ottoman sultans and the tsar.

With the emergence of Protestantism in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and especially John Calvin's insistence on a literal interpretation of the biblical texts, Eden had to be shown close by the Tigris and Euphrates, two of the four rivers to water it. Despite detailed knowledge of real world geography, the search continued. In 1666, M. Carver published a map in his book showing Paradise in Armenia.

A number of "Oriental" soldiers fought alongside the French forces at the famous Battle of Roncesvalles ("Chanson de Roland") against the Moors of Spain. In his review of H. T. Norris' "Islam in the Balkans" Tam Dalyell identifies the "Oriental" soldiers the Esclavoy (Slavs), Sorbies and Soy (Serbians), and Ermines and Ormadens (Armenians).

According to a number of sources, a secret meeting took place in Zurich in 1977 between Turkish Foreign Minister Ihsan Sabri Caglayangil and leaders of the three Armenian political parties

Stanley Kubrick, the original director of "Spartacus" wanted to use parts of Aram Khachaturian's "Spartacus" ballet. Negotiations failed because of politics. However, five years later, when Kubrick directed "2001: Space Odyssey", he did use Khachaturian's music.

Playgoers who have seen Swiss dramatist Friedrich Dürrenmatt's (1921-1990) famed play "The Visit" must have wondered about the name of the female lead. The character obtained the fake Armenian name from an Armenian oil magnate who frequented the brothel where she worked. He married her. Upon his death, she inherited his oil millions.

**There are no comments yet.**