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Double edge sword: The story of Armenians

Miriam Mikhail

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Recommended Citation

Mikhail, Miriam, "Double edge sword: The story of Armenians" (2016). *Papers, Posters, and Presentations*. 49.

<https://fount.aucegypt.edu/studenttxt/49>

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SCRIPT: Double Edged Sword:: The story of the Armenians

Miriam Edward

December 11, 2016

Fall 2016

Lead in: In 1915, first holocaust humanity has ever seen, the Armenian genocide. Many Armenians found safe haven in Egypt, and prospered here. This production is a message for all Egyptians and the Arab public, so that people never forget the Armenian genocide. And to remember that it didn't destroy them, but made them the person you are today.

MUSIC: (*Josh Groban You raise me up- 0:1- 0:17 FADE IN*)

You think you know everything. But you don't

Egypt is a melting pot of different cultures and minorities and Egyptians are known for their hospitality. Accepting different nationalities, religions and ethnicities, but we unintentionally don't fulfill the integrity we're known for,

MUSIC: (*Josh Groban "You raise me up"- 0:1- 0:17 FADE OUT*)

MUSIC: (*Zara feat. Djivan Gasaparyan "Dle yaman", 0:2- 0: 50 minutes FADE IN*)

as most people have no clue that there are 5,000 Armenians living in Egypt and some of them we meet and interact with on daily basis, not knowing who they truly are?

Michael Reimer (MR): "In 1915 we have the beginning of a genocide, against the Armenians that was perpetrated by the Turk government in Istanbul." (0:10)

That was Dr. Michael Reimer, History professor at the American University in Cairo.

MR: "There was a plan to destroy the Armenians population in the Ottoman Empire and in particular in Eastern Anatolia, which was the Armenian Homeland." (0:10)

The geopolitical term Eastern Anatolia in fact refers to western Armenia, however now it is a Turkish state.

And ended up killing 1.5 million Armenians. This caused an influx of Armenians to leave out of fear, and this day, there are numerous Armenian communities spread around the world.

MR: “ And, because there was already an Armenian community in Egypt. Many thousand of Armenians actually came to Egypt.” (0:9)

MUSIC: (Switch Trailer Music where civilization once 0:5- 1:15 minutes FADE IN)

In the 19th century, Armenians became prominent in Egypt under the rule of Mohamed Ali Pasha.

MUSIC: (Zara feat. Djivan Gasaparyan “Dle yaman”, 0:2- 0: 50 minutes FADE OUT)

MR: ”Armenians found economical opportunities, and sometimes administrative opportunities, employment opportunities in many different countries and Egypt was one of those countries.” (0:10.5)

Yet the reign of Mohamed Ali was not a unique chapter of diversity in the Egyptian history

Dr. Viken Djizmedjian (DJ): “Mohamed Ali brought in many Armenians to run the affairs when Egypt was under the Ottoman Empire.” (0:8)

That was Dr. Viken Djizmedjian, president of the Armenians General Benevolent Union in Egypt.

First, In 1837, Muhammad Ali appointed Boghos as head of the Diwan Al-Tijara (bureau of commerce)

MR: “ Basically the equivalent of his foreign minister Boghos Beih, who was an Armenian. Later on under the ismail the foreign minister was Nubar Pasha” (0:12)

It is nearly impossible to imagine an Armenian holding a political post. Well, The Armenian Nubarian became the first Prime Minister in modern Egypt.

DJ: “We had the first Prime Minister Nubar Pasha, we had Yacoub beih Artin, and we had minister of finance So the first ministry of Egypt was full of Armenians and they shaped the beginning of modern history of Egypt .” (0:22)

MUSIC: (Switch Trailer Music “where civilization once lay” 0:5- 1:15 minutes FADE IN)

MUSIC: (Embrace our world, Christian Bacyk 0:1- 0: 52 FADE IN)

Having said that, I cannot imagine how open Egypt was to embrace other cultures and ethnicities and how this made the country flourish socially and culturally

DJ: “Lebleba, Anoshka, Nelly, Fayrouz, Iman Sarkis so we had quite a lot. We had painters like Saroukhan.” (0:11)

Feyrouz, Perouz Artin child actress in the 1950s and 1960s

Lebleba,, real name Nonia Kupelian, Egyptian actress

DJ: “We had quite a lot of Armenians in Art until now.” (0:7)

And even now you can see how the Armenian culture has helped shape the artistic Egyptian scene.

MUSIC: (, Christian Bacyk “Embrace our world” 01- 0:52 FADE OUT)

MUSIC: (Armenian Folklore Traditional MusicF 0:1- 0:40 minutes FADE IN)

The Egyptian Armenian community offers services to its members, the Armenians, in order to preserve its own identity .They have their own churches, benevolent associations, newspapers, and ...

NAT SOUND: (Armenian riots in Armenian clubs 0:15 FADE IN)

Marilyn Simonian (MS): “ We have Armenian clubs, Armenian schools.” (0:3)

That was the voice of Marilyn Simonian - she stands in defense of her ancestors.

NAT SOUND: (Armenian riots in Armenian clubs 0:15 FADE OUT)

MS: “We learned Armenian language, In the clubs, we learned Armenian dance, Armenian music, Armenian culture.” (0:10)

The most important tradition Armenians keep is their language

NAT SOUND: Yekibdos eu mér metch gabri yev votch menq metcheu”

Its biggest guarantor of identity.

MUSIC: (Armenian Folklore Traditional Music F 0:1- 0:40 minutes FADE OUT)

NAT SOUND: (Church bells FADE IN)

NAT SOUND: Armenian Apostolic mass 0:28 FADE IN

In the 19th century, the Armenians formed not only one community, but two. The Catholic and Apostolic.

The Armenian Catholic Cathedral, known as the Church of the Assumption and built in 1927, serves a small, but steadfast community of Armenian Catholics in downtown Cairo, and the Armenian Orthodox Church, which was built in 1924, found on Ramses Street in Cairo.

MS: "Both churches, the Orthodox church and the Catholic church have the Armenian and Egyptian flag as a pride." (0:7)

NAT SOUND: Armenian Apostolic mass 0:28 FADE OUT

NAT SOUND: (Church bells FADE OUT)

Whether followers are Orthodox or Catholic, the church plays a unifying and executive role in the community.

MUSIC: (Armenian Folklore Traditional Music F 0:1- 0:40 minutes FADE IN)

There are two Armenian newspapers published in Egypt: Housaper and Arev. Both are among the oldest private newspapers for Armenians in Egypt.

MS: The Armenian newspaper used to be a daily newspaper, but now that Armenians are fewer in Egypt, it's monthly newspaper. There were translations from other articles of Egyptian newspapers" (0:18)

And...

DJ: They just reported what is going on. but the Armenians did not get involved in politics at all." (0:6)

MUSIC: (Armenian Folklore Traditional Music F 0:1- 0:40 minutes FADE OUT)

Always had a neutral position...

MUSIC: (Session of Epic Music 0:1- 0:54 FADE IN)

DJ: “Armenians try never to get involved in politics. .First of all because of our number is little we cannot influence in the political scene. For example in Lebanon, it's not the same. There's about 150 thousand Armenian over there, so they have to have a presence to represent the population within the government. But here, it's not the same case that's why.” (0:21)

Most of the Armenian Diaspora in Egypt are concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria. However, in 1956 saw the introduction of the “Socialist Laws” in Egypt and the nationalization of many private sectors under Gamal Abel El Nasser’s regime.

DJ: “ Well, most of the Armenians at the time had their separate businesses. If i give an example, I’ll give the example of my grandfather was the director, the General manager of Matoussian; which is the eastern company of Tobacco, which is Cleopatra. From one day to another, (3:10) he found himself kicked out and he had a depression and to leave the country. So this is the case of most of the Armenians who had many businesses” (0:27)

Which lead to a reverse migration, not to the original homelands, but rather to the west, was observed among Armenian Egyptians.

DJ:” This Nationalization affected everyone. So since they had the possibility to leave the country, so that's what they did. So 40 thousands at that time, fell down dramatically within a couple of years to 10 thousands and so on.” (0:19)

MUSIC: (Session of Epic Music 0:1- 0:54 FADE IN)

MUSIC: (Natanel Arnson, “story of legend” 0:1-0:53 FADE IN)

Today, a century after the Armenian’ mass migration from their country, the Armenian community in Egypt is again taking its standard in changing Egypt.

VOX: Egypt is a homeland that lives in us, and not nation that we live in.

MS: "This is my country and I'm not going to leave it" (0:2)

Even so, Armenians, like many fellow Egyptians, the 2011 Egyptian revolution made them belong to this place.

MS: "me as an Egyptian I have to participate in everything, elections, revolutions, everything," (0:5)

Egypt's Armenians must have their place and imprint

DJ: "We like to bring our knowledge and our input in the Egyptian society. Because we are Egyptians we don't consider ourselves as foreigners." (0:10)

Egypt and Egyptians were open to everybody and that's what made Egypt flourish.

MUSIC: (Emotional and powerful Natanel Arnson, "story of legend" 0:1- 0:53 FADE OUT)

When you come and ask a young Egyptian if they know the Armenians. The answer will be probably...

VOX: No, yes, maybe, not much, not really, what are you talking about?

MUSIC: (Jt peterson "Echoes of Pandora" 0:59- 01: 30 FADE IN)

This particular subject needs further study, especially because we do not learn much in the Egyptian curriculums on the subject of the Ottomans. Unveil the history of the Armenian genocide to the Arabs.

MS: “ Pope Tawadros, told us why do you want governments and people to recognize the Armenian genocide; God had recognize it already.” (0:9)

MUSIC: (Jt peterson Echoes of Pandora 0:59- 1:30 FADE OUT)

MUSIC: (Audio machine “ice of Phoenix” 0:7-1:25 minutes FADE IN)

Reflecting on the Armenian genocide was a way of understanding our own Egyptian history and echoing on a deeper sense of identity

This production is important not just to Egypt but also to the whole Arab world. Armenians are part of our identity. Armenians are part of our land and history.

MR: “It’s a political question not a historical question. All responsible historians have come to a conclusion that this was plan to destroy the Armenians The only question is: Now what will governments do if recognizing the Armenian genocide will endanger their relations with Turkey. “ (0:22)

For over one hundred years of SILENCE, is more than enough

The Armenians exist; the Armenian question of recognition also exists.

MUSIC: (Audio machine “Ice of Phoenix” 0:7-1:25 minutes FADE OUT)

This audio documentary was produced by Miriam Edward for the audio production course at the American university in Cairo taught by Professor Kim Fox in Fall 2016

Special thanks to Dr. Michael Reimer, Dr.Viken Djizmedjian, Mrs Marilyn Simoninan for their interviews and for Professor Kim Fox.

Credits for music goes to

Dle yaman- Zara feat. Djivan Gasaparyan

story of legend- Natanel Arnson,

Echoes of Pandora- Jt peterson

Audiomachine - ice of Phoenix

Christian Bacyk - Embrace our world

Switch Trailer Music where civilization once lay

Josh Groban- You raise me up

Thank you for listening