

FAKE PHOTOS AND THE ARMENIAN PROPAGANDA



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FOREWORD

The Armenian narrative has been a controversy for more than a century and ever since its emergence fake documents, statistics and visual materials have been part of the controversy. And now, even more prevalently with the advent of internet and social media platforms. Today there are thousands of web sites and social media accounts that in one way or another contribute to the distribution of fake or misused images in support of the Armenian version of the events of 1915.

This short study will gather and scrutinize some of the most common fake and misused images in connection with the Armenian allegations. In case of the misused images it will also present the original image with brief contextual information as to its origins and how it was misused as part of the Armenian propaganda.

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- I -

By now the most famous of these notorious images is the one depicting “a pyramid of human skulls.” It was in fact an oil painting entitled “the Apotheosis of War” from 1872 by the famous Russian artist Vasily Vereshchagin and the original painting hangs at the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow. Vereshchagin, who died in 1904, created the painting after the Russian conquest of the Central Asia, along with many others (most of whom are preserved at the Tretyakov Gallery as well) depicting the harsh process of the conquest.



Throughout the 20th century it was used endlessly by the Armenian propagandists and their supporters in a campaign to convince the world public opinion of the alleged “Turkish barbarism” of 1915. The painting which was printed in black and white as a photograph had been enlarged and shown to the Canadian public in the 1970's, in the Yerevan Pavilion at the annual Metro International Caravan festivities in Toronto, as proof that the events of 1915 constituted a “genocide.”



In the most famous case, the alleged photograph has been printed on the cover of a book by the German scholar Tessa Hoffmann with the Ottoman Minister of the Interior Talat Pasha's photograph inserted on the upper left corner of the cover. It was then presented to the readers as evidence of the so-called genocide of 1915.

As noted before Vereshchagin created the painting in 1872 and himself passed away in 1904 and his painting could not possibly have anything to do with the events of 1915 and the abuse and misuse of Vereshchagin's portrait is thus a gross injustice to both the Turks and Vereshchagin himself.

- II -

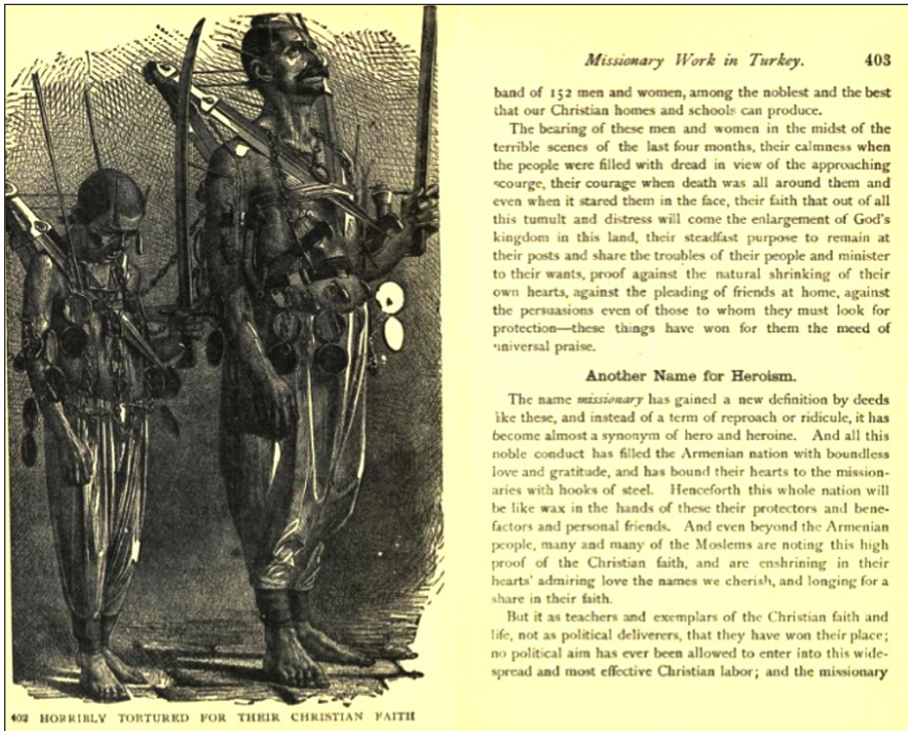
Vasily Vereshchagin's misfortunes in connection with the Armenian Question are not limited to his oil painting, "the Apotheosis of War." Propagandists of the Armenian cause seem to have made frequent use of his talent to further their despicable agenda, namely, dehumanizing the Turks.

In a book published in 1896 by American Protestant Missionary Frederick Davis Greene and entitled "Armenian Massacres or the Sword of Mohammed containing a complete and thrilling account of the terrible atrocities and wholesale murders committed in Armenia by Mohammedan Fanatics,"

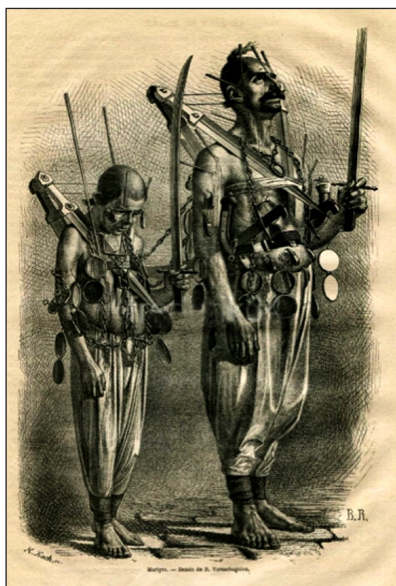
another drawing of Vereshchagin had been misused in a way that would make Vereshchagin turn in his grave. While the book itself is a typical example of the American evangelic bigotry and racism and that is why the works by American missionaries should be handled with great caution, this article will only deal with the way Vereshchagin's drawing had been misused.



On page 402 of this book the readers are presented with a black and white drawing allegedly depicting the tortures inflicted on the Armenians by the Turks during the events in 1890s.



The drawing in fact depicts ritual of mourning Imam Hussein by the Shia communities in the Caucasus. Vereshchagin made the drawing during a trip to the Caucasus in 1865 and unlike the missionary propaganda version, the original has Vasiliy Vereshchagin's initials (B.B.) in Cyrillic letters on the bottom right cornern which were conveniently removed by the propagandists. His drawing was in fact quite well-known and many contemporary books used it. Two samples provided below (one in French and one in Russian) should be sufficient to illustrate this:



In addition, it is also quite well known that a similar ritual is followed at the Hindu Religious festival of "Thaipusam" practiced by the Hindu Tamil community in India. The festival is celebrated during the full moon in the Tamil month of Thai (January/February), and it's believed to be a time to ask Lord Murugan, son of Lord Shiva, for forgiveness, good health and peace in the new year. And as part of the festival's rituals, many participants engage in various acts of devotion and control over their senses - including piercing the skin, tongue or cheeks and some walk over burning coals.

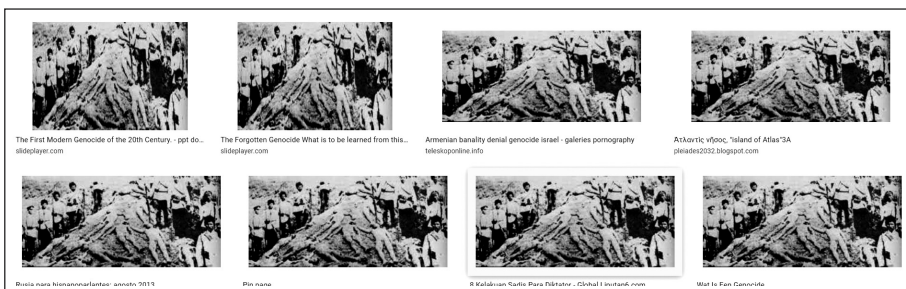


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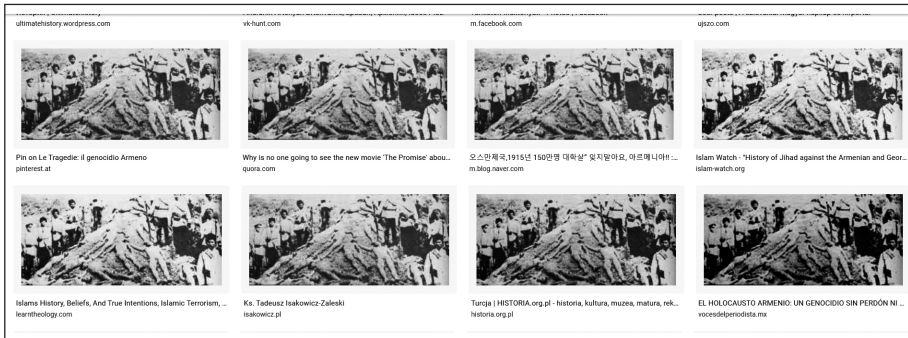
The presentation of a Vereshchagin drawing depicting a religious ritual as torture inflicted on the Christian Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was nothing but a shoddy piece of propaganda aimed at infuriating unsuspecting minds against the Turkish and Muslim people by fanatic missionaries. It is also a gross insult to religious communities whose voluntary beliefs and festivals are mocked and depicted as a form of torture.

- III -

Still another misused photo concerns a photo from 1904 depicting a pile of human bodies with a group uniformed soldiers posing around them. Many books, websites, and accounts on social media platforms use the photo in question with captions that can be summarized as “Turkish soldiers proudly posing with the Armenian corpses murdered in 1915.”



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Even a cursory look at the photo reveals that the soldiers on the photo were in fact dressed not in Ottoman but Russian uniforms. Moreover, the photo had nothing to do with the events of 1915. It was first published in a Dashnak Armenian newspaper, Pro Armenia, on 15 September, 1904 to accuse Russian Cossacks of atrocities against Dashnak Armenians.



As the highlighted date and titles make it clear, the photo first published in 1904 to condemn Russian Cossacks for atrocities and it has nothing to do with the events of 1915. Yet despite this the Armenian propaganda and its promoters have shamelessly used this photo to accuse Turkey and the Turks of "genocide" for the events of 1915.

- IV -

In addition to using various irrelevant historical images out of their contexts, the Armenian propaganda and its promoters also make use of photographic images that actually depict the victims of Armenian brutality and violence and then present them to world simply as "Armenian victims." Since Armenian propaganda believes that the Armenians are the only victims in any conflict involving them, they also want to make the world believe that any photograph containing victims and corpses belong to the Armenian victims. A case in point was the massacres of the civilian Turkish population in the Kars region.



The original of this photograph remains in the First World War Photo Collection of the Turkish General Staff Archives in Ankara, Turkey. (Full citation: (Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt (ATASE) Arşivi, Birinci Dünya Harbi Fotoğraf Koleksiyonu, Albüm No: 4, Fotoğraf Nu: 123). It depicts the women and children that were killed brutally by the Armenian bands in the village of Subatan in 25 April 1918.

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It was released to public view by the General Staff archives in several photo collections in 1980s to enlighten the world public about the Armenian Question and that this question did involve more than one group of victims. Unfortunately, in many instances the Armenian propaganda have stolen this photograph and changed captions to depict as if this photo belongs to the Armenian victims of 1915. Presented below are some samples of this.

В 1915-м гг. турецкая армия в 1915-м гг. совершила геноцид армян в Османской империи. В период геноцида членство армянской общины в Османской империи было ликвидировано, а армянские женщины, дети и старики были вынуждены покинуть родину. Многие армяне погибли в результате геноцида. В 1915-м гг. турецкая армия совершила геноцид армян в Османской империи. В период геноцида членство армянской общины в Османской империи было ликвидировано, а армянские женщины, дети и старики были вынуждены покинуть родину. Многие армяне погибли в результате геноцида.

The Muslim (Ottoman) Tyranny against the Armenians

Like the Jewish people, the Armenians were another community that has suffered genocide in horrendous proportions. While the Jews suffered at the hands of the Nazis, the Armenians suffered at the hands of the Ottomans.

<http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/muslim.html>

Among the various genocide carried out by the Muslims, that against the Armenian Christians is the most unreported and neglected. The Turks slaughtered millions of Armenians in Cold Blood in the ten centuries that they tyrannized Armenians from the year 1071 till 1915.

ԼՈՒԲԱՎՈՐ ԱՄԵՏԻՍ
LUBILOV AMETIS

Հիշակարգի Է. դասարանի սաշտերտուսի Լոկ Աետիս Կ'երգը «Ils sont tombés»:

LET'S HELP GHURKANYAN FAMILY (FUNDRAISER)

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE - The Memory of All Peoples

MSNBC Armenian Genocide Survey

MSNBC is doing a survey whether the Armenian Genocide should be recognized in the US. As of a few hours ago the number showed 73% No. 76% The Turks have murdered 1.5 million.

Top 10 events during 1910-1919

APR 24, 1915
Armenian Genocide

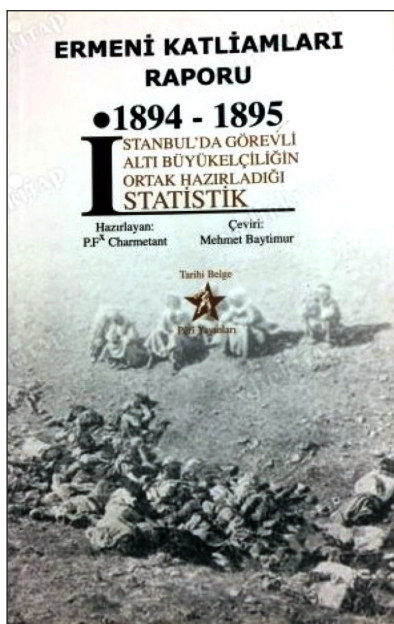
No description.

Timeline view showing events from 1910 to 1921. Other events include: May 18, 1910: Boy Scouts Established in U.S.; Nov 8, 1911: The Chinese Revolution; Jun 22, 1918: Spanish Flu Pandemic; Jun 28, 1919: Treaty of Versailles Ends WWI.

In addition to these samples presented above, hundreds of social media accounts and websites, journals and articles misuse this photograph to depict Armenian victims of 1915 and in doing so they do disrespect the actual victims in the photograph and commit a grave injustice against the memory of these people and their descendants.

- V -

Similar to the case of the previous photo in which Turkish victims of Armenian brutality were presented to the world as Armenian victims of Turkish brutality in 1915, another photo depicting Muslim peasants that had been killed by Armenian bands in July 1915 had been used by Armenian propaganda to deceive the world public opinion it actually belonged to the Armenian victims during 1890s.



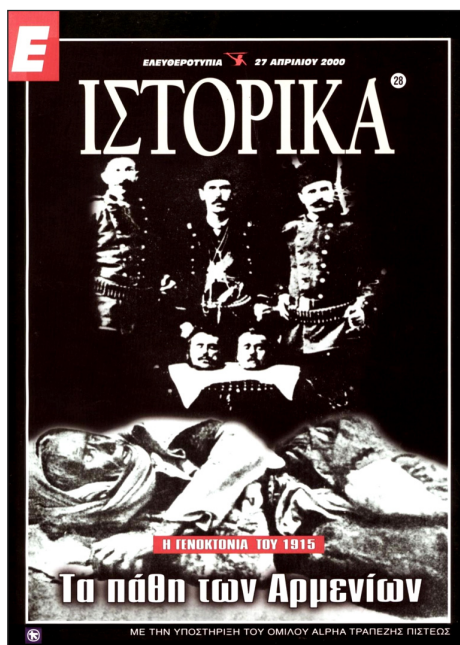
In a book entitled "A Report on the Armenian Massacres 1894-1896," the cover of the book uses the photograph of Muslim villagers killed in the village of Hızırilyas on 25 July 1915 as if it represents the Armenian victims during the events of 1894-96.



In reality the photograph was first published in 1916 in a book ("*Aspirations Et Agissements Revolutionnaires Des Comites Armeniens Avant Et Apres La Proclamation De La Constitution Ottomane*") published by the Ottoman Government in order to show the aggressive nature of the Armenian Committees in Anatolia during 1915 and it belonged to the Muslim peasants who were pitilessly killed by Armenian bands in July 1915. Once again, the misuse of such photographs is a great disrespect and injustice to the actual victims in the photograph and their descendants.

- VI -

By now it should be clear to the readers that misused irrelevant images occupy a large place in the Armenian propaganda. A perfect illustration of this concerns a supposed photograph depicting Ottoman soldiers with their supposedly beheaded Armenian victims. As usual, the image is used in hundreds of propaganda sites, blogs and accounts on social media platforms with captions alleging specifically that the victims were Armenians killed during the events of 1915. Here we provide two examples:



The supposed photograph of 1915 in fact first appeared in a French language propaganda journal, "*La Nouvelles Illustrees*," in February 1903. It supposedly depicts the Ottoman atrocities during the Macedonia conflict in the Balkan provinces in 1903. In the early 20th century, the Ottoman Macedonian provinces of Salonica, Manastir and Kosova became the scene of intense guerrilla warfare waged by political committees (or more correctly "bands") affiliated with and supported by Bulgarian, Greek and, to lesser extent, by Serbian Governments each hoping to secede from the Ottoman Empire and to unite with their respective national state. The European Press, inspired by Christian solidarity and influenced by lobbying groups as well as by the bigotry, took an extremely hostile anti-Turkish position.

As two prominent historians of the Balkans, Charles and Barbara Jelavich, noted these Bulgarian bands "did not hesitate to send raiding parties into Macedonia to terrorize villages or even to assassinate Turks with the hope that reprisals would force the population to revolt. The Greeks and Serbs responded with their own acts of violence ... Not only did the local population suffer from the action of their more fanatical members, but the Ottoman authorities also were caught in a dilemma. They were responsible for maintaining order, yet if they acted to apprehend and punish the guilty, they could find themselves pilloried in the European press as barbaric and

oppressive even when the charges were not deserved." (*The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* [University of Washington Press, 1977] p.212.).

In addition, during attacks conducted on Muslim villages by these bands, occasionally Turkish civilians were beheaded by these bandits. It is highly likely that these photographs depict such episodes rather than as this journal allege Ottoman police brutality since it belies logic to think otherwise, why would Ottoman police in such an political atmosphere would pose for a French journal in this fashion? It's more likely that these policemen assumed that they were showing the outside world what these political bands were capable of rather than, as the French-language propaganda journal, boasting with their atrocities.



Be that as it may the image in question has nothing with the events of 1915 or the Armenians as it was related to the Macedonian Conflict that did not involve the Armenians. Yet, like in many other cases, the Armenian propagandists and their supporters did not hesitate to use this image for their endless hate campaign against Turkey and the Turks. The misappropriation of this photo is another demonstration that the images promoted by the Armenian propaganda must be handled with great suspicion and circumspection.

- VII -

In addition to misappropriating and misusing irrelevant photographs for their hate campaign, the Armenian propaganda also engages in manufacturing fake visuals to incite hatred against the Turks and create sympathy of their cause. A case in point is the fake photograph specially prepared and displayed on a poster of a conference held in April 2005 by the Armenian organizations using images of the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Like many events organized by the nationalist Armenian organizations in the US, the conference in which several Armenian speakers, including Levon Marashlian, spoke on the events of 1915 was hardly an objective platform but what was even more outrageous about this event was the way the content of a historical image was distorted:



The original authentic photo, as displayed on the left side, depicts Atatürk posing with little dog puppies. The Armenian propaganda used photoshop to remove the puppies and replace them with a corpse belonging to a child and thereby trying to create the impression that the remarkable man who was the founder of the Turkish Republic not only killed a child but also proudly posed with that child's corpse. Again, the purpose of this outright and shameful deception is nothing but to create and inspire hatred towards Turkey and the Turks by targeting a very symbolic figure in the history of the nation and the country.

- VIII -

Another outright visual forgery involves a photo where an Ottoman official supposedly teases and taunts starving Armenian children by showing them a piece of bread. The photograph had been used in many propaganda websites and social media platforms but also in several books purporting to be a work of scholarship such as Donald Bloxham's *The Great Game of Genocide* (Oxford University Press, 2005), and Gérard Chaliand & Yves Ternon's *Le Genocide des Arméniens* (1980). In addition, the photograph was also prominently displayed in the "genocide" museum of Armenia and its website until recent years.



As explained above, this forged image had been used in many platforms, online or offline, to promote hatred towards the Turks and to give credibility to the Armenian version of the events of 1915.

Jeremy Salt, a professor of Middle Eastern History at Bilkent University in Ankara, had the photograph examined by a photographic analyst and "It takes

him ten minutes to conclude that this is not a “photograph” at all but a photographic soup, composed of bits and pieces taken from other photographs.” In the words of Professor Salt the photographic analyst's findings highlighted the following:

“The technical giveaway is the pixels. Were the photograph genuine they would have to be homogeneous but they are not. They are leaning in various different directions. Otherwise the analyst concludes that the man's right arm does not belong to the body. It has come from somewhere else. His right leg seems to have disappeared altogether. The boy sitting on the ground on the man's right is not clutching anything at all. The forger simply did not take enough care when cutting the paper around the fingers in the photograph from which his figure was taken.”

Moreover, as Jeremy Salt notes, one does not need a photographic analyst to understand that this photograph is suspicious at best and most probably fake:

“Even a cursory glance is enough to show there is something wrong with this photo. One side of the man's jacket is darker than the other. A ragged line clearly runs between the two halves. The wall in the background abruptly disappears into a blank white space behind the standing man. A child lying on the ground is raising an emaciated arm. If stretched out to its full length it would fall below his knees. His scarcely visible other hand and wrist seem quite plump by comparison....

And most importantly, the supposed photograph cannot be credited to a legitimate source and no serious scholar could or should use a photographic image without first crediting to a legitimate reliable source.



A Photo-Camera in the Early 20th Century.

But the problems in presenting this photo as evidence do not end there. As Salt further noted:

“Furthermore, given the cumbersome equipment photographers had to carry around with them early in the 20th century, even if the photographer arrived on the scene just as this “Turkish official” was tormenting starving children with a piece of bread he could not have taken the photograph unless the standing man and the starving children agreed to hold their poses or to reenact the tableau when he was ready.”¹

1 Jeremy Salt, “Forging the past: OUP and the ‘Armenian question’”, *Eurasia Critic*, January 2010.

Thus, as Salt rightly noted, one has to be exceptionally biased to buy into this sort of anti-Turkish fabrications but for the Armenian propaganda and its promoters objectivity and fairness are not priority concern. It is rather to defame the Turks and Turkey which is at the top of their agenda and forging images and spreading fake visuals to generate hate seems to be a preferred or acceptable method.

- IX -

Another fictional image concerns a screenshot from a movie but widely presented to the world public opinion as a photograph of Armenian women who were killed in 1915 by being crucified. Like many other unreliable visuals utilized by the Armenian propaganda, this particular image had been used in many propaganda websites and accounts on social media platforms.



The image is a screenshot from the movie "Ravished Armenia" shot in 1919 and directed by Oscar Apfel. The scene in question contains depictions of the flogging of women and their naked crucifixion played by professional actresses and it was therefore not a photo of a historical atrocity but an enactment of a fictional plot.



Therefore, as in other cases, the use of a screenshot from a movie scene played by professional actresses as if it is a historical photo serves no other purpose than inflaming hatred against modern Turkey and the Turks.

Conclusion

The visual materials represent an extremely influential method of propaganda since their impact on the people exposed to such materials is huge. Sometimes a single image can convey emotions and thoughts that a thousand words cannot.

For almost a century the Armenian propaganda had taken advantage of the fake, forged or misused visual materials to take their historical experience out of its historical context to present it as a "genocide." This was done to blame Turkey and the Turks and portray them as completely inhuman and undeserving of any sympathy and consideration with reference to the events of 1915. Furthermore, the fake and misused visual materials had always constituted an important part of these efforts.

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There can be no doubt that the limited samples presented above will be expanded even more as scholarly research will detect new forgeries and misused images in connection with the events of 1915. Nonetheless, these examples alone are sufficient to demonstrate the necessity to be suspicious regarding the visuals provided by the Armenian propaganda and its promoters.