

Award Winning Survey of Armenian Women

Sona Zeitlian's comprehensive study of Armenian women from earliest to modern times, entitled "On the Trail of Armenian Women's History" (in Armenian), was granted the Kevork Melidinetsi 2013 Award and published by the Catholicosate of Cilicia.

Beginning with goddesses reflecting national values and the prominence of women, the author discusses women's role in the consolidation of Christianity in Armenia and details the provisions of religious laws regarding women and the family.

An entire chapter is dedicated to the social and military achievements of Armenian queens. Another chapter addresses the erosion of women's primacy, following the Islamic invasions, especially in urban centers of mixed Armenian and Muslim populations. Zeitlian points out the ways in which the predominantly Armenian rural areas retained their age-old customs.

The author also examines the women's role in the cultural renaissance of Constantinople and Tbilisi, focusing on the writings of prominent female authors, and discusses the organization and impact of the first women's movement. This is followed by an account of the Armenian armed struggle and the role of women's groups as the nuclei of self-defense and relief operations. Zeitlian has researched this issue in depth in her Kevork Melidinetsi award winning study (1968) about the extensive role of women during the Armenian revolutionary uprisings.

The chapters recounting the effects of the Genocide, the mass deportations of women and children, the resilience of survivors and women's organizations' sustained relief efforts to meet the multiple challenges draw from unpublished witness accounts and extensive research.

The chapter on the first Republic of Armenia, establishes that it became one of the earliest states to grant women the right to vote. Women participated in educational and humanitarian projects and engaged in the political life of the republic. There were three women parliamentarians and a woman ambassador, a first in international relations.

An entire chapter is devoted to the changing role of women after the communist takeover of the First Republic, followed by an evaluation of the United Nations Decade of Women with three international conferences weighing on the rights of women.

Zeitlian also documents the changing status of women in the post soviet Republic of Armenia. Finally, the challenges of diasporan women are discussed and the author introduces an ambitious program for a second women's movement.

The study has also compiled interesting maps and photographs, some of which belong to personal collections and appear in print for the first time.

Sona Zeitlian's award winning survey of Armenian women throughout history records the evolving identity of a pillar of centuries-old Armenian life.

If you would like to purchase the book, please send an e-mail to Struere@aol.com. Price is \$25 + shipping cost.