

GREEK REFUGEES IN ASIA MINOR



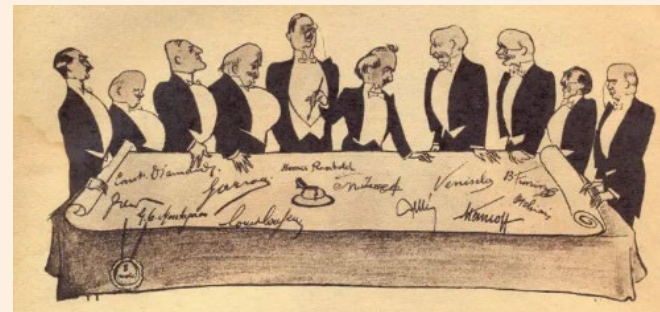
Presentations and Exhibition
March 24, 2024

1:30-3:00 pm
at John M. Burnam Classics Library
Blegen Library 417
University of Cincinnati





The Greco-Turkish War, 1919-22 (Greeks refer to it as “The Asia Minor Campaign,” and Turks as “The Turkish War of Liberation”) began when a Greek army marched into the Turkish city of Smyrna (Izmir), then with a substantial Greek population, on May 15, 1919. The Turks eventually defeated the Greeks and drove them out of Smyrna (“the Smyrna Catastrophe,” with parts of the city on fire) and other areas of Thrace and the islands of Tenedos and Imbros. The Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923, established the current borders of Greece and Turkey and compelled ca. 1.2 million Orthodox Christian Turks living in Turkey to relocate to Greece and ca. 400,000 Muslim Greeks to relocate to Turkey.



The war had been bloody on both sides. In addition to soldiers, many civilians, especially women, children, the sick, and the elderly lost their lives when whole villages were ransacked and burned. Many women and girls were raped and sold. There were mass killings also of animals. The subsequent population exchange took a tremendous toll on the surviving families as they had to leave their homes, friends, livelihoods, languages, pets, and farmed animals for an uncertain future. Many people died during the migration of drowning, starvation, hypothermia, malaria, tuberculosis, and other illnesses.



As is often the case, the historical background is long and complicated: “the Trojan War,” the Greco-Persian Wars, Alexander the Great, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Turks (1821-1829 (1832), and the Thirty Days’ War between Greeks and Turks on the island of Crete, then under Turkish dominion, in 1897, the Balkan Wars, and World War I, in which the

Ottoman Empire had been defeated. Signatories of the Treaty of Lausanne included the major powers involved in the politics of Greece, the Balkans, and other areas of the Ottoman Empire since the 1800s, Britain, France, Italy, and others, who all had a stake in territorial divisions and financial matters.



The United States had not been directly involved in the territorial disputes but lent much aid in the form of food, clothing, and medical care, e.g., the American Women’s Hospitals in Athens and on some islands, and education, e.g., the American Junior College for Girls, Anatolia College, and the American Farm School. Many students were refugees and orphans from Asia Minor.

Some American aid organizations included the Near East Relief, the American Red Cross, the YMCA, the YWCA, and the American Friends of Greece. In addition to monetary and other aid, the Near East Relief ran five orphanages in Athens, Corfu, Corinth, Oropos, and the largest on the island of Syros.

Many prominent American classicists were instrumental in these aid efforts such as Edward Capps, professor of Classics at Princeton and minister to Greece, appointed by his friend President Woodrow Wilson, and his daughter Priscilla, Bert Hodges Hill, archaeologist and Director of the ASCSA, and Carl Blegen, archaeologist and Professor of Classics at UC, and Assistant Director of the ASCSA.

The John Miller Burnam Classics Library will be hosting an event and exhibition on Sunday, March 24, 1:30-3:00 pm, commemorating the horrifying and tragic circumstances of the war and the subsequent population exchange as well as U.S. humanitarian aid. The gathering features talks and personal stories of Cincinnati descendants of Asia Minor Greeks, and an exhibition of historical documents, photographs, and artifacts such as dolls and purses handmade by orphans and other refugees, books, and posters appealing for help from the American public. A reception with rebetika music and baklava follows.

Location:
John Miller Burnam Classics Library at the University of Cincinnati
2602 University Circle, 417 Blegen Library,
Cincinnati, OH 46221
Phone: (513) 556-1316

*There is no designated parking spot for the event. The CCM Garage is the closest paid parking lot, in addition to street parking in the area.

