

THE INDUSTRIES IN ARMENIAN MUSA DAGH DURING THE 1920s-1930s

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In 1919 the Armenians of Musa Dagh in 1919 returned from the exile imposed by the World War I genocide. On arrival in their villages, namely, Bitias, Haji Habibli, Yoghunoluk, Kheder beg, Vakef, and Kabusiye, they found their homes, institutions, orchards, and fields in ruins, disrepair and/or neglect. They likewise faced existential threats of hunger, diseases, internecine bloodshed, and regional anarchy and insecurity. After oscillating between life and death for a while, they succeeded in reconstituting their shattered lives in relative peace under the French mandate. In the economic domain, they worked in agriculture and animal husbandry, hosted estivators and tourists, manufactured certain goods, and engaged in commerce. But while the future inspired some hope, global financial woes, shifting consumer demands, and changes in the regional political landscape kept the Armenian peasantry guessing and uneasy and rendered their economic progress untenable in the long run. This study sheds light on the three main industries of Musa Dagh that hinged on local resources and efforts as well as outside determinants. Comb and spoon making, other crafts, and agriculture merit separate treatment.

WOOD AND CHARCOAL PRODUCTION

The wild forests covering large swathes of Musa Dagh determined a number of occupations. Together with silk and stone, wood constituted the single most important raw material for artisans and entrepreneurs. According to an unsubstantiated newspaper report, of the 70,000 hectares (172,900 acres) of forestland in the Sanjak of Alexandretta (hereafter the Sanjak), an autonomous county in northwestern Syria, 4,000 hectares (9,880 acres) or about 6 percent covered Musa Dagh.¹ Hovhannes Dumanian, an Armenian agronomical engineer from Hajin, beginning on 23 September 1923, served as director of agriculture and forestry in the Sanjak, increasing the government's annual revenues from forestry alone from 1,800 Syrian liras to 20,000 liras.² In turn, Hagop Boyajian ("Merjume") of Yoghunoluk, formerly a sergeant in the French *Légion d'Orient*, acted as mounted ranger, having been charged by the French mandatory authorities with the patrolling of the woodlands of Musa Dagh

and Kizil Dagħ to the north. As such, he penalized woodcutters and charcoal makers who operated without license. But because of complaints lodged against him by non-Armenians alleging discrimination in favor of Armenians, in 1936 he was transferred to the Kesab-Latakia region further south.³

Occupations dependent on wood in Musa Dagħ suffered some setbacks during the first half of the 1920s. In 1921 a major fire lasting several days destroyed most of the forested and bushy areas, prompting the government to launch an investigation.⁴ Similarly, in 1924 charcoal production in the Sanjak came to a temporary halt because the government forbade its exportation; even piles ready for shipment were frozen. Three factors determined this restriction. The first involved the protection of forests endangered by unchecked felling of trees. The second was the fact that most charcoal produced in the Sanjak was exported, thus depriving the indigenous populations of its use during winter. The third pertained to a contemplated electricity plant in Alexandretta that would run on charcoal.⁵ The ban was ultimately lifted, however, and business resumed, assuming a more organized character over the years as attested by the establishment of a chamber of industry in 1935 at Antioch. Interestingly, one of its eighteen constituent members (Dikran or Aram Kazanjian) was an "entrepreneur of the small wood industry of Musa Dagħ."⁶

Charcoal making evolved in the following manner. From spring through early fall villagers from Bitias in particular left their homes Sunday evening (returning the following Saturday evening) for the *damir* (sheds) built at special locations on the mountain. Here they felled oak trees, chopped wood into pieces 2 feet long, and piled them up conically around a central log, thereby forming an *ojakh* (kiln) up to 6 feet high with a 40-foot circumference (smaller heaps were called *ojakhe lagiud*). They then arranged rocks around the circle at a distance of 10 centimeters (3.9 inches), and covered the *ojakh* first with *kazal* (dry leaves) then with earth for insulation. Subsequently they removed the central pivot, dropped fire into the resultant open *pirun* (mouth) at the top by way of an incendiary *arreot* (half-burnt wood from a previous *ojakh*), and covered the opening with a tin sheet and earth to prevent air from penetrating and causing the wood to burn to ashes. After igniting the heap from within, the charcoal makers checked the wind direction periodically in order to add new myrtle branches in case the wind had caused openings between the rocks and the wood. They similarly inspected the heap every 4-5 hours to patch up *badrudz dighir* (cleavages) with *kazal* and earth, and every 9-10 hours to *lellu pirune* (fill the mouth) with green wood to suffocate any flames before they could burst out (again to avoid incineration). This entire process lasted about three days, when the *ojakh* would finally

chekmeshenno (buckle). At this stage the charcoal makers poked an iron *khanterush* (bar) into the buckled heap from several angles, considering the *ojakh ighudz* (done) upon hearing a sound resembling that of stirred broken glass. After removing the rocks and the earth, the makers spread the *qerzilen* (pieces of charcoal) apart to cool them off for a few hours and transported them in *garmer orum debergire* (red darned sacks) back to the village on mules (carrying double sacks) or donkeys (carrying single sacks).⁷ Charcoal thus obtained in Musa Dagħ in 1923 amounted to 1,600,000 okes (4,480,000 pounds/2,036 metric tons). Of these, 1,300,000 okes (3,640 pounds/1,655 tons) was exported and 300,000 okes (840,000 pounds/381 tons) was used locally as heating fuel.⁸ For heating, charcoal was burned in a pit dug in one corner of the living room, while students took pieces of wood and charcoal to school daily to warm up their classrooms during the winter months.⁹

Initially petty traders and/or muleteers transported charcoal to Antioch. One could also encounter in the early 1920s poor young women and widows carrying loads of wood, charcoal, and potatoes on their backs to Antioch, a five- to seven-hour walking over difficult terrain, returning the same day with cereal with which to feed their families.¹⁰ Other men shipped cargoes via the Mediterranean to Beirut, and one such person went bankrupt after the boat transporting his merchandise sank in a storm.¹¹ In time, the charcoal business became concentrated in the hands of a few merchants. For some time during the 1920s Ardashes Boghigian, a deputy in the Syrian parliament from Aleppo and a political protégé of the Syrian nationalist leader Ibrahim Hanano, together with his brother, Apkar, and adopted son, Yetvart, monopolized a substantial portion of the charcoal made in Musa Dagħ, utilizing the yard of Sarkis Sherbetjian's house in Bitias as depot and distribution point. They were ultimately commissioned out of business by Jabra Kazanjian of Yoghunoluk and his son, Aram, who won the charcoal producers over with advanced credit and better pay.¹² In fact, the French authorities granted the Kazanjian brothers, Jabra and Dikran, the exclusive right to wood cutting in the entire region extending from Kizil Dagħ in the north to the frontiers of the Alawi state around the coastal town of Latakia in the south. They employed some 150 cutters and muleteers from the Armenian villages of Musa Dagħ, as well as the neighboring Turkmen villages of Chanakli, Sanderang, Sanderangen Amaje, Gumbajen, Arsuz, Ikizoghlu, and Chaghlakuz, with the headman of the latter place, a certain Hamid, acting as the foreman of the Turkmen workers. Dikran resided in Antioch to manage the export of heating wood, charcoal, planks, electricity poles, and vine supports and their marketing in various cities through a network of agents. Trucks carried loads overland to Alexandretta (agent: Nersesian), and to Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and

Damascus (agent: Artin Agha). At the same time, a special cable relay system linking Damlajik on top of the mountain to the sea below loaded the merchandise onto three ships, two owned by the Kazanjians and one serviced in partnership with an Alawi, which in turn transported the merchandise to Beirut, Lebanon (agent: Agha Baba); Jaffa, Palestine (agent: Ohannes, son of Jabra Kazanjian); and Port Said, Egypt (agent: unknown).¹³ Unfortunately, this lucrative business came to an end with the departure of the Kazanjians for Latakia and Beirut in 1938 as the crisis surrounding the Sanjak's status worsened.¹⁴

SERICULTURE AND RELATED ACTIVITIES

Sericulture was the main source of livelihood in Musa Dagħ during the first half of the 1920s, as it had been throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Weather determined the start of the silk season. Since temperature varied from one place to another, mulberry leaves, the exclusive food of silkworms, sprouted at different times in different locations. In 1923, for example, leaves began to grow on 22 March in the coastal hamlets of Chevlik below Kabusiye and Miadun in the northern foothills of Jabal Aqra/Mount Cassius, whereas the same occurred in Antioch two weeks later and in Bitias on 15 April. The reverse might happen in other years depending on nature's whims. Inclement weather would also ruin a season partly or entirely; in 1923, for instance, hail destroyed one-fourth of the leaves in Bitias.¹⁵

Because sericulture required multiple helping hands, even youngsters were utilized in some capacity. During the first half of the 1920s, when cocoon production enjoyed its heyday, the academic calendar was adjusted accordingly. In 1923 Krikor Aroyian, the principal of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Sisvan schools in Musa Dagħ, stopped classes from 1-15 May so that students could assist their parents in silk chores; lost instructional time was to be recovered in June.¹⁶ Similarly, during 1923-24 students in Haji Habibli, Kabusiye, and Vakef attended school from 6 August 1923-10 May 1924, while their counterparts in Bitias, Yoghunoluk, and Kheder Beg studied from 5-10 September 1923-10 June 1924. This arrangement, made in deference to the villagers' wishes, would allow pupils to harvest olives and bay fruit¹⁷ at their peak season as well as help parents in sericulture.¹⁸ Interestingly, the excitement generated by feeding silkworms and watching them grow and spin their cocoons kindled the entrepreneurial spirit in some children. Wrote Bitias native Alberta Magzanian:

When I was eleven years old, [my younger sister] Anna and I decided to start our own silk worm business. Failing to gain our parents['] support, we convinced an aunt to part with one

of her tiny mulberry leaves covered with a few “seeds” (larvae).

...
We pampered them!...Instead of feeding them three times, we insisted on feeding them fresh leaves five times a day. Our silk worms got big and fat! Soon, even Mom began to brag about them. They became the talk of the village. Merchants approached our parents and suggested that the cocoons should be sold for their eggs instead of their silk but for the following year’s crop.

...
...One uncle, a merchant by trade, was my most frequent visitor [when I had the measles] and each time he came, he leaned over my red face and whispered about the gold coins that the cocoon would bring. In my feverish state, I dreamt about pots of gold waiting for my sister and me.

Ultimately, my uncle did sell the cocoons in Antioch. He had promised to give us the money the following day. The tomorrows kept adding up and finally, a week after his Antioch trip, Mom gave each of us a large silver coin equivalent to half a dollar. But Anna and I knew that the money came from Mom rather than our uncle.¹⁹

The nurturing of silkworms took place in special houses built in mulberry orchards situated mainly on the village peripheries. After disinfecting the rooms—which had to be kept at a certain temperature—with chemicals to kill germs and keep mice and harmful insects at bay, cultivators constructed scaffolds and placed long wooden trays on the shelves to be able to feed the silkworms several times daily with fresh, shredded mulberry leaves.²⁰ According to a study, “it is estimated that the worms consume about 25 pounds of mulberry leaves to a pound of cocoons, or about 300 pounds of mulberry leaves to a pound of raw silk. One worm during the course of its short life will eat about 50 times its own weight... The average maximum production of a mulberry tree, which it reaches at the age of 20 years, is about 210 pounds of leaves—not quite enough to raise a pound of raw silk.”²¹

After undergoing four molting stages and reaching maturation, the moths were transferred onto *avil* (brooms) made of bushes to be able to spin their cocoons.²² An average cocoon contained “as much as 600 yards of silk filament, and it would take about 1000 miles of this filament to make a pound of silk.”²³ In Musa Dagħ, as a native observed,

Gathering the cocoons and scraping their loose threads was usually a community affair. Neighbors and relatives worked together before the silk moth tore a hole and emerged thereby making the silk thread worthless. People wanted to complete this task by dusk and transfer the responsibility of caring for the cocoons to the merchants who traveled from household to household weighing, loading and transporting the cargo to the markets in Antioch. Once the owner was paid for the cocoons, people were relieved from this intensive chore and ready for a celebration. The households who pocketed the profits supplied trays of halva [a sweet] and *tonir* [earthen oven] bread for the villagers. More halva was consumed in Bitias during those few days than for the rest of the year.²⁴

The sericultural output in Musa Dagħ in 1923 amounted to 55,000 okes (154,000 pounds/70 metric tons) of cocoons and 800 okes (2,240 pounds/1 metric ton) of raw silk,²⁵ the latter increasing by 48 percent (to about 1.5 metric tons) the following year.²⁶ In the mid-1920s the sericulturists in the six villages nurtured annually a total of 1,810 round boxes (the size of a *La vache qui rit* or The Laughing Cow cheese box each) of silkworm seeds as follows: Kabusiye, 450 boxes; Bitias, 420 boxes; Haji Habibli, 380 boxes; Yoghunoluk, 350 boxes; Kheder Beg, 150 boxes; and Vakef, 60 boxes. Each box yielded an average of 5 Ottoman gold liras, for a total of 9,050 liras.²⁷ To put things into perspective, "the mulberry plantations are measured in 'boxes,' that is to say by the quantity of trees capable of furnishing the leaves necessary for rearing one box of silkworm seed[s]. These boxes being all of the same weight, the unity that they determine is relatively constant from one region to another."²⁸ Significantly, of the 42,320 fruit trees planted in Musa Dagħ in 1925 as many as 35,000 (83 percent) were mulberry trees.²⁹

The Haji Habibli inhabitants in particular were expert weavers of silken cloth on hand-made looms placed in one corner of their homes called a *hiur* (pit or well). "By mixing their happy peasant song[s] to the fast back-and-forth traffic of the [loom's] shuttle, they toiled all day long in order to have the possibility of providing for their family's livelihood and needs with their lawfully-earned labor."³⁰ The resultant fabrics, which competed closely with European brands, were dyed naturally and gaily with vegetable dyes and made into a variety of articles such as belts, headgear, handkerchiefs, men's and women's attire, etc.³¹ Aside from local consumption, these were bartered through retailers in nearby Turkmen and Alawi villages in exchange for cereals, legumes, olives, etc., transported directly to Cilicia before its incorporation by Turkey after the withdrawal

of French troops in 1921, and/or sold to merchants in Antioch, who in turn exported them to Egypt, Italy, and France.³²

Although the majority of Musa Daghians engaged in sericulture, the village notables, constituting less than 3 percent of the population, controlled the industry with their large farms and/or means to collect the crops from ordinary peasants.³³ The Kazanjians of Yoghun Oluk were a case in point. Their fortunes in this realm rose further with the acquisition of significant real estate owned originally by Kerovpe Aslanian, a rich Armenian proprietor from Constantinople and the maternal uncle of the renowned satirist Yervant Odian. At the time of his death in 1926 Aslanian possessed a silk farm in the village of Mughayrun on the Svedia plain adjacent to Musa Dagh. The farm, situated as it was on the two banks of a river (the Orontes or a tributary) that powered two mills, included seventeen silk houses plus another structure for "awakening" silkworms, all managed by forty Alawi families, who worked as sharecroppers earning 50 percent of the profits (25 percent for residing on the farm and 25 percent for their labor). The business yielded fifty-five boxes of silkworm seeds with a growth potential of an additional ten boxes. Each mulberry grove that "fed" one box was worth 50 gold liras, for a total of more than 3,000 liras. Aslanian bequeathed his estate to his nephew, Ardavan Hovian, who in turn sold it to the Kazanjian brothers.³⁴ They appointed Mihran Ashkarian of Kheder Beg to manage their affairs at Mughayrun.³⁵

The Armenian notables were not the only large-scale dealers in sericulture. Mention is made also of Christians of the Greek Orthodox rite (Horom/Hurum) from Antioch and Levshiye, the administrative-trade center of Svedia sub-district. In the early 1920s, that is, during the period of anarchy, Christian merchants living on the Svedia plain received protection from armed Armenian men and transported their cocoon bales ready for shipment to the nearest Armenian village of Vakef for safety until the arrival of vessels.³⁶ Antioch residents Butros and Hanania Awwad, who also spoke the Musa Dagh dialect, collected cocoons while summering at their private homes in the Qaberlek neighborhood of Bitias.³⁷ Elian and Ibrahim Lavand (Lawand), known as Edlebsink (probably because they hailed from Idlib in northern Syria), owned a silk farm in Bitias proper that included five houses occupied at one time or another by sharecroppers like Krikor Kendirjian ("Khuvajig"), Sarkis Antablian ("Sereqink"), Movses Kendirjian ("Bellut"), Yenovk Nersesian, Yesayi Kadeian, and others.³⁸

In addition to large-scale collectors and exporters, there existed in Bitias especially a few professionals who dealt with the scientific-technical aspects of the silk industry. Having studied at the prestigious Sericultural Institute of Bursa in Ottoman Turkey during the 1900s, licentiates like Apraham Renjilian, Taniel Chaparian, and his brother, Kevork, inspected

the silkworm seeds with microscopes in order to ensure the healthiness of the crops by detecting and discarding infected seeds.³⁹ Kevork, as a municipal employee, was likewise charged by Onnig Tospat, Director of Silk Control in the Sanjak headquartered at Antioch, to teach Turkmen and Alawi peasants living in the general vicinity the intricacies of the trade.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, sericulture spiraled downward during the second half of the 1920s and early 1930s not only in Musa Dagh but also across Syria. Statistics showed that "in pre-World War I Syria the total production of cocoons amounted to 6-7,000 tons, whereas by 1931 it had dwindled to about half or 2,850 tons. Similarly, the export of raw silk had downfallen [sic] from 1,313 tons to only 89 tons for the same interval. Finally, the number of silk spinning factories had dropped from 194 to 35."⁴¹ Comparable reductions occurred in Musa Dagh. In 1927-28 Bitias alone lost 20,000 liras, which was equivalent to its total earnings during the previous five years. By 1932 its annual income from silk-related business had plummeted to 150 liras.⁴² As for Musa Dagh in general, in 1934 it nurtured a mere 700 boxes of silkworm seeds, each box valued at one-half lira, for a total of 350 liras (down from 9,050 liras).⁴³ At the end of June 1939 the production of cocoons amounted to 15 tons, which constituted a dismal 0.3 percent of all agricultural crops (5,065 tons) in Musa Dagh.⁴⁴

Three factors brought about this steep decline. First, Japan dominated the global silk market, rendering competition from other producers difficult.⁴⁵ Second, artificial silk or rayon, whose production increased ten-fold within a decade, "from about 32,000,000 pounds in 1918 to over 300,000,000 pounds in 1928," appealed to consumers for its cheapness, attractiveness, and good quality.⁴⁶ Third, the virtual closure of the Syria-Cilicia frontier following the withdrawal of French troops from the latter region in 1921 impeded the free flow of goods to a large extent. And as Cilicia, now part of Turkey, constituted the main direct export destination for Haji Habibli manufacturers especially, they lost their jobs.⁴⁷ Wrote the local priest, Fr. Vartan Varteresian, on 1 September 1922 to Catholicos Sahag II Khabayan of Cilicia, then leading an unsettled life in exile between Syria and Lebanon: "As for our profession of sericulture, it is now dead; the workers always emerge with losses."⁴⁸ He painted the same bleak picture about four months later, on 20 December, adding, "money does not exist" anymore.⁴⁹ By mid-June 1923 hardly any buyers of Haji Habibli fabrics had shown up even though the price of 1 dirhem (000.7 pound) had decreased by 50 percent, to 2.5 silver piasters from 5 piasters three years before.⁵⁰ Circa 1930 a French official stated that "this small industry is presently in stagnation," adding, "it merits not to die."⁵¹ But for all practical purposes expire it did, and as a result many Haji Habibli men sought employment elsewhere, particularly in Beirut, where they worked

mainly as cooks, waiters, barmen, and hotel employees in the Ain Mrayse tourist-night life district, at the same time forming compatriotic associations as support mechanisms and to assist their native village.⁵²

Price fixing by Greek merchants also proved detrimental to general income from sericulture. In September 1924 such wholesale buyers, "playing games on the people," paid 20 percent less for the cocoons they had collected from the Armenians four months earlier citing price decrease in European markets.⁵³ In 1929 they machinated in unison once again to reduce the price of cocoons,⁵⁴ which fetched only 1 Syrian lira (80 cents) per 2 okes (5.6 pounds).⁵⁵ Because of this manipulative practice as well as the above reasons, the Musa Daghians resorted to another drastic measure besides migration to cope with the economic downturn—they uprooted entire mulberry orchards, replacing them with other kinds of fruit trees or converting their property into vegetable and cereal fields.⁵⁶ Consequently, by the second half of the 1930s mulberry trees, compared to other fruit trees, fetched the smallest amount of money in terms of replacement value. The following deal explains. On 19 July 1937 the brothers Serop and Mateos (a priest) Geuzelian (Giuzelian) from Kabusiye signed a lease agreement with William Alexander Campbell, the representative of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch and its Vicinity, a group that included affiliates from the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Worcester Art Museum, Princeton University, and the *Musées Nationaux de France*, allowing the said Committee to conduct digs on the Geuzelian property at Mughayrun, which encompassed Seleucid ruins. Article 1 of the agreement stipulated that the Committee would pay an annual rent of 8 Syrian liras per planted donum (about $\frac{1}{4}$ acre) and 6 liras per fallow donum. Article 2 set 31 December 1938 as the termination date of the contract. Article 4 granted the Committee the right to own all of the discovered artifacts, whereas ordinary stones would remain the property of the Geuzelians. But what is important for our purposes is Article 3, which read:

The Committee for the Excavations agrees to pay the price of each tree it destroys during its excavation based on the following rates: - Each mulberry tree of any size the amount of fifty Syrian piasters [equal to one-half Syrian lira]; each small fig tree two Syrian liras and each medium fig tree three Syrian pounds and each large fig tree five Syrian pounds; and each vine tree one-and-a-half Syrian liras; each laurel tree one-half Syrian lira; and each large peach tree four Syrian liras and the medium and the small [peach trees] one Syrian lira [each]; and each orange [or lemon] tree ten Syrian liras; and each loquat tree four Syrian liras. With the understanding that all wood

would be the property of the owner[s] of the land [of the] first [signatory] team.⁵⁷

Thus, mulberry trees were placed at the bottom of the chart on a par with laurel (bay) trees, which grew plentifully in the wilderness without human intervention.

Two related folk artworks, namely, handkerchief making and embroidery, compensated in some modest measure for the losses sustained in sericulture by becoming gainful occupations. In Yoghunoluk, the Shrikians in the early 1920s collected home-made handkerchiefs for sale in the region and as far as the United States.⁵⁸ Similarly, brothers Garabed and Setrag Tashjian ordered pre-cut fine linen and thread from a wholesale dealer in Aleppo and distributed them among women at home to make handkerchiefs in return for 3-4 piasters per dozen.⁵⁹ An average worker could produce one handkerchief per day, whereas a fast one could make two.⁶⁰ The Oflazians of Kheder Beg engaged a number of housewives in that village to produce *caneva* (cross stitch), *aubusson* (tapestry), *gergef* (embroidery made stretched on a frame), *Marash*, *makok* (tattooing shuttle), and crochet work, as well as doilies and ornamental pillow cases.⁶¹ Women in Bitias embellished handkerchiefs with *ajour* (fretwork) and sewed decorative designs like *trabson* (or *parvaz*) for Sarkis Igarian ("Mebus").⁶² His wife, Mayrum nee Taminosian, carried on the handkerchief activity after his untimely death. She took the finished products to an Evangelical pastor in Aleppo by the name of Aharon Shirajian,⁶³ who placed handkerchief and embroidery orders for sale in Europe as a means to raise funds for his lifelong mission of sheltering and rehabilitating Armenian genocide victims in Syria.⁶⁴ Also in Bitias, volunteers from the local chapter of the Syrian Armenian Relief Cross (*Suriahay Oknutean Khach*) taught girls at the parochial elementary school the art of embroidery, whereas boys practiced target shooting.⁶⁵ In Kabusiye, girls generally stayed home instead of attending school to put lace on handkerchiefs for a daily wage of 1 piaster.⁶⁶ Whether triangular or semi-circular, handkerchiefs with lace were appreciated according to the count of *khit* (stitches) that ran usually in odd numbers, for example, five, seven, or nine.⁶⁷ At any rate, a good segment of Kabusiye's population engaged in this activity, as Antranig Urfalian, the son of the local head teacher, reminisced.

We, the school children, who had almost no time to get busy with embroidery during daytime, would every evening until the wee hours carry out our share of the "plan" by working the needle, in the light of a kerosene lamp at that, around which would be huddled fifteen to twenty people. Burning a lamp

every night was a luxury for many, and [therefore] one of the well-to-do neighborhood families would generally host the embroidering and chit-chatting neighbors of both genders. I personally remember with fondness such nights, when we would learn about all the village goings on in the minutest detail and sometimes hear them transferred to the bosom of myth by a masterful story teller.⁶⁸

Besides their obvious utilitarian function, handkerchiefs played certain roles in Musa Dagħ ethnography. In the traditional betrothal process, a ring, an earring, a bracelet or a similar valuable object would be offered by the fiancé's family to the bride-to-be wrapped up in or together with a silken scarf or handkerchief. Because the modern custom of sending out printed wedding invitations had not yet become the norm, at least in some of the villages handkerchiefs were distributed in lieu of cards to relatives, neighbors, and friends during special visits. Similarly, a red handkerchief symbolizing happiness hung from the neck of the horse that carried the bride to church for those families who could afford such a luxury. Finally, a handkerchief often constituted a part of the bride's dowry alongside such items as jewelry, nightgowns, shawls, headscarves (*duluq/yazma*), combs, mirrors, towels, pillowcases, and so on. During certain religious processions, on the other hand, superstitious people threw their handkerchiefs to the ground in hopes of securing divine intervention for the healing of an incurable malady or the resolution of a predicament. On certain feasts, the leader (*yigit bashi*) of an informal voluntary association of bachelors gave a handkerchief or similar articles to the village headman in order to obtain permission for the usage of the village square for dancing, playing games, and other merriments. Indeed, the lead dancer of a group invariably waved a handkerchief.⁶⁹ Women, in particular, carried money in folded handkerchiefs (instead of purses) inserted in their bosoms.⁷⁰ The handkerchief also served as a token of reconciliation between feuding factions. Such was the case of the Haji Habibli parish council members, who in August 1926 sent Catholicos Sahag II six silken handkerchiefs to vouch for their rapprochement after a long period of bitter infighting.⁷¹ The list went on.

Carpet production constituted yet another attempt at diversifying the weaving industry. During the mid-1920s Fr. Khoren Geokjian of Vakef set up looms in his house to teach women and girls the art of carpet weaving. Unfortunately, his departure from the village due to a dispute with the locals brought the project to an early end.⁷² In 1932 the Syrian Armenian Relief Cross of Aleppo invested in a modest carpet venture in Musa Dagħ, but its fate remains obscure.⁷³ Also in the early 1930s a certain man from

Bitias, nicknamed "Daghjig," placed four *tezgeah* (looms) in a few homes where teenage girls wove carpets based on pictorial designs for a daily wage of 25 piasters.⁷⁴ And during 1935-37 Sarkis Igarian employed a few children, after school and with minimal or no pay, to make carpets on two looms for an Armenian merchant from Aleppo surnamed Dikranian.⁷⁵ These initiatives, however, failed to yield significant profits.

TEXTILE MANUFACTURING

While handkerchief production, embroidery, and carpet weaving generated some cash, they remained small, limited cottage industries at best, unable to replace the erstwhile prominence of sericulture in the Musa Dagh economy. Modern textile manufacturing, however, inspired hope as a viable alternative. In 1935 political activist Movses Der Kalusdian and landlord-entrepreneur Aram Kazanjian, in association with three other Armenians from Aleppo, namely, Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) leader Hrach Papazian, part-owner of the NICHARTVA Textile Company Nshan Palanjian (Nichan Palandjian), and accountant Vahe Setian, founded the Vosdayn Anonymous Textile Company of Musa Dagh (*Vosdayn Jebel Musayi Hiusvadzegheni Ananun Engerutium*) in a bid to reinvigorate and diversify Musa Dagh's economy. They had ambitious goals.⁷⁶ According to the second article of Vosdayn's by-laws, "The purpose of the Company is, directly or indirectly, the production and sale of all kinds of silk and cotton cloths in Near Eastern countries under French mandate." The company also aimed at "the creation or the purchase and exploitation of similar or textile industry-related enterprises." Finally, it sought to enter generally in "business, industrial, real estate, and financial dealings that directly or indirectly, fully or partly have to do with one of the above-mentioned activities or ones similar to or coming close to them."⁷⁷

By all indications, Vosdayn was not a hastily-conceived measure set forth to improve Musa Dagh's ailing economy, but rather it saw the light of day only after due consideration was given to the business opportunities in Syria and the marketing potentials in the Near East as a whole. More specifically, the founders' assessment of the domestic and regional economic climate had led to the following conclusions. First, not only was the textile activity in Aleppo and Damascus on the ascendancy, but it also competed qualitatively with European manufacturers. Second, thanks to Syrian customs regulations protecting industry, local textiles sold more cheaply, thereby sustaining a vibrant market. Third, given the fact that neighboring countries focused on other kinds of industries, Syria had become almost the sole supplier of textiles to the region.⁷⁸ Hence, Vosdayn's founders believed its success was assured a priori.

Vosdayn was set up for a twenty-year time period, which could be extended or shortened according to circumstances. Its starting capital amounted to 12,000 Syrian liras with 2,000 shares, worth 6 liras each.⁷⁹ The five founding members were entitled to a total of 400 shares (20 percent) and the general public to the remainder, although in fact 200 shares (10 percent) were reserved for the company employees and 1,100 shares (55 percent) for NICHARTVA, arguably the best Armenian-owned textile company in Aleppo at the time.⁸⁰ Its majority share in Vosdayn, and the close relationship between the two companies, strongly suggest that Vosdayn was a subsidiary of NICHARTVA.⁸¹ In any case, Vosdayn's fiscal year extended from 1 July to 30 June, with the exception of the first period, which lasted two years.⁸² At the end of each fiscal year there would be a general meeting attended by members holding 10 shares or more each, while several individuals owning a total of 10 shares could delegate or appoint one representative. Each person having 10 shares could cast one vote, with a cap of fifteen votes in case that individual held more than 150 shares.⁸³ At the general meeting delegates would elect a five-member executive board with broad powers to run the company for a three-year term. The first executive board consisted of the five founding members, whose term lasted two years until the summer of 1937.⁸⁴ The Syrian government ratified Vosdayn's by-laws, comprising nine chapters and fifty articles, on 15 June 1935,⁸⁵ and the sale of shares began on the 20th. A subsequent advertisement ran from 28 June through 18 July in the Beirut *Aztag* (Medium) newspaper.⁸⁶

Haji Habibli, with its expert but largely unemployed weavers, would be the logical choice for the factory's location. However, because, that village was under the influence of the Social Democrat Hnchakian Party, Vosdayn's founders, closely affiliated with the rival ARF, disregarded Haji Habibli as an option and instead chose neighboring Bitias, for three reasons. First, it had a strong ARF orientation. Second, Der Kalusdian often summered and even lived (1936-38) there. Third, being a developed estivation center in the Sanjak, it offered adequate communications in terms of road, telephone, telegraph, and mail systems.⁸⁷ After due consideration, the factory was built "in the N.E. outskirts of the village at the base of our mountain [Musa Dagh] which extended to the most western edge of the community. The major transportation road from the center of the village led to the entrance of the factory and then changed into a rough, rocky trail" leading to Chaghlaghan.⁸⁸ The facility's consecration took place on Sunday, 28 July 1935 in the presence of a large crowd that included, among others, flag-bearing boy scouts, a marching band, traditional folk instrumentalists of *davul* (a shoulder-hung drum) and *zurna* (a flute-like wooden/reed device), and dancers. After the parish priest, Fr.

Vahan Kendirjian, blessed the stones and said the *Bahbanich* (a prayer beseeching divine protection), Hrach Papazian poured cement on a cornerstone, two lambs were sacrificed, and teacher Suren Papakhian delivered the keynote speech. The celebration continued at an outdoor café near the spring of Sev Aghpiur/Kara Punar.⁸⁹

The finished compound, resting on land the size of three house lots combined⁹⁰ and purchased for 4,400 French francs,⁹¹ included a single-story rectangular building with large windows, a flower garden, and a pool where children often swam secretly.⁹² Water for drinking, gardening (which Papazian enjoyed as a hobby), the pond, and other purposes was brought from Frangen Aghpayre (the Frank's, i.e., European John Barker's, spring) near Hetum Filian's café via an underground pipe.⁹³ A fence with a gate "protected the front section of the yard with the flower garden and part of the eastern wing of the property. There was a high retaining wall to the west and south [must be northeast] which served that purpose." But "even with the fence some urchins climbed over and gathered roses, etc., as their rightful compensation for the rocks they had picked up for the construction of the factory without being paid even a single 'small baghroot' [barghut]. No regrets or guilt from this flower pilferer [Alberta Magzarian]."⁹⁴ The site likewise attracted visitors such as Protestant missionaries, French marines, League of Nations representatives, and dignitaries from Aleppo.⁹⁵

Hrach Papazian was appointed Vosdayn's executive director, having Tateos Bakalian of Kheder Beg as his right-hand man. The latter became an expert machinist in due time, got involved in personnel matters, and held the daily accounts. When the French-made machine parts arrived via Aleppo, NICHARTVA sent one of its master machinists, George Khandzoghian ("Shashe George") and his apprentice, a certain Arshavir, to teach Bakalian how to assemble and operate the machines. When Khandzoghian and his assistant returned to Aleppo after a few months, NISCHARTVA dispatched Garabed Najarian and his son, Hovsep, on a two-year contract to fix the hand-operated machines as needed.⁹⁶ Mardiros Chaparian, a Bitias native and an aspiring machinist himself, eventually joined the team.⁹⁷ Another 30-35 young men (some of whom from Haji Habibli) and 20-25 young women worked in the factory at various times.⁹⁸ Significantly, "within a few months the change in the workforce [with women working next to men] was obvious enough that people began to notice the emergence of a 'new class' in Bitias."⁹⁹ Men operated thirty-two *Jacquard* hand machines, a man and a woman worked on one *chenage* machine, and women operated eight electrical machines, one *manusa* machine, and one spinning machine, for a total of forty-three machines.¹⁰⁰ "In no time the word *Jacquard* was absorbed into the village Armenian dialect especially after people admired the elaborate patterns of the cloth

woven on the looms," remembers Magzanian, adding: "We kids often puzzled over shreds of punctured cardboard replicated in the designs of the woven fabric."¹⁰¹ Other youths, who were not on payroll, spent time in the factory to acquire the necessary skills in modern weaving. This practice constituted part of a larger, farsighted scheme, whereby Vosdayn would eventually be able to place hand machines in homes, thus creating jobs for many families, and to increase the number of electrical machines in the factory itself, with a projected combined total of 400 machines.¹⁰²

Vosdayn acquired its raw materials such as silk, cotton, and thread from NICHARTVA, produced relatively plain cloth, and shipped it back to NICHARTVA to be dyed, pressed, and sold along with the more intricate and ornate textiles manufactured by the latter company.¹⁰³ The factory in Bitias ran six days a week, ten hours during fall-winter days and eleven hours during spring-summer days.¹⁰⁴ "For the first time...a group of young men and women reported for work at the same hour, took their lunch at the same hour and stopped work at the same hour. A simple factory schedule—was it the beginning of industrialization in Bitias?"¹⁰⁵ Pay was based on the amount of textile produced rather than the time spent at the workplace. For example, an employee working on electrical machines and producing 30-33 meters of cloth a day, received 1 Syrian piaster per meter, that is, 30-33 piasters a day. On the other hand, a person operating hand machines and producing 10-12 meters a day, pocketed 3 piasters per meter, for a total of 30-36 piasters a day. A worker at Vosdayn thus earned about one-and-a-half times more than an ordinary laborer, who at the time received a daily wage of 20-25 piasters.¹⁰⁶ In addition, sometimes women received left over fabric for personal use.¹⁰⁷ As for the remaining employees like the executive director, the machinists, and the guard, they were paid according to rank and ability.¹⁰⁸ Information is lacking as to whether disparity in pay between men and women existed.

The first general meeting of shareholders took place on Sunday, 15 August 1937 in Aleppo. According to the executive board's report, "the enterprise is on a very successful track. The monthly production amounts to 10,000 meters." Moreover, "the result of the first fiscal year [period] ending on 30 June 1937 has been 5,347.04 S[yrian] paper liras, of which, after deducting the general expenses and saving 1,200 Syrian liras, 3,320.10 Syrian liras has remained as net profit." Upon hearing the report, the general meeting decided to pay 1 Syrian lira for each share as earned profit and to transfer the balance of 422.10 Syrian liras to the new fiscal year account. The meeting also elected a new executive board which, for all practical purposes, was the same except for Nshan Palanjian, who was replaced by Vahan Ajemian (Adjamian) as NICHARTVA's representative. In addition, Toros Babigian was appointed comptroller.¹⁰⁹

Unfortunately, Vosdayn had a short life of only three years, dictated by political exigencies. In the summer of 1938, just prior to the entry of Turkish troops into the Sanjak following a French-Turkish accord respecting the status of that autonomous Syrian region, the company's management arranged hastily for the transfer of the machines and all other accessories to NICHARTVA in Aleppo.¹¹⁰ An extraordinary general meeting of shareholders scheduled for December 29 decided Vosdayn's fate.¹¹¹ NICHARTVA became the latter's sole owner after buying all shares.¹¹² Vosdayn's sudden and inglorious liquidation thus shattered all hopes that it would soon serve as a shining model of a successful industrial venture to be emulated by other entrepreneurs in establishing hydraulic, canned fruit, and other companies; or that it would be able to provide new job opportunities to many natives, thereby easing persistent economic hardships; and that it would give the young a solid reason to stay and prosper in Musa Dagħ rather than migrate.¹¹³

From a social perspective, the factory's closure deprived its employees of the chance to interact on a daily basis. Their close association had evolved in some cases into romantic relationships culminating in marriage.¹¹⁴ Only workers from Haji Habibli "arrived in the mornings and returned home immediately after work with no social interaction with the locals." Even so, the mere commuting of those youths was considered a "healthy development between the two villages" given their bloody and unforgiving relationship in the recent past.¹¹⁵ In the same social-cultural vein, natives and estivators alike lost a unique venue endowed with motor-generated electricity where public events such as film screenings were held during the summer season by an Armenian from Aleppo named Misak Bzhian (or Abajian).¹¹⁶ The author Boghos Snabian, then a young boy of twelve, on the eve of the Armenians' exodus from Musa Dagħ in the summer of 1939 wrote with nostalgia: "It was here, in this [Vosdayn] courtyard, that for the first time I had seen a movie, shot in our village [Bitias], with views, scenes from our village, familiar shepherds, toilers, children, me with my cow, [projected] on the screen."¹¹⁷

CONCLUSION

For the Armenians of Musa Dagħ the interlude between the two World Wars was marked successively by existential concerns, reconstruction, optimism, uncertainty, and despair. Such rapid shifts in the human condition within a relatively short period of two decades did not leave much room for normal transitioning and coping. Furthermore, the lack of creativity and economic savvy outbalanced some of the initiatives with a positive outlook. Indeed, a number of critical commentaries appeared in the Armenian press of the time. One newspaper bemoaned the absence of

entrepreneurial spirit that would spur and develop different branches of the economy.¹¹⁸ Another periodical decried inaction by maintaining that “a people does not grow only by drinking Bitias water, eating Kheder Beg oranges, and taking a nap in the cool shade.”¹¹⁹ And Vazken Diranian (penname of Yetvart Boyajian), a budding writer from Kheder Beg, did not mince his words when expressing his “Economic Concern”: “We have already ceased being peasants in the old sense but neither are we urbanites as yet according to the new meaning. We have colorful and huge bourgeois desires, but tell me please, are we not too grossly lazy to achieve them?”¹²⁰ These unflattering observations and remarks notwithstanding, in the final analysis outside forces ultimately sealed the fate of Armenian Musa Dagħ by putting an end to its very existence.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Husaper* [Hope Bearer] (Cairo, Egypt), 30 September 1924. This figure of 70,000 hectares of forestland in the Sanjak is 30,000 hectares less than the 100,000 hectares offered by Paul Jacquot, *Antioche. Centre de Tourisme* (Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1931), vol. I, p. 77. Therefore, the 4,000 hectares figure pertaining to the woodlands covering Musa Dagħ must also be used with caution.

² Hovhannes T. Dumanian, *Im Hhushere* [My Memoirs] (Beirut, Sevan Press, 1977), p. 171.

³ Interview with Mardiros Hagop Boyajian, 10 June 1989, Hollywood, California. See also Albert S. Temirian, *Pats Namagner ...* [Open Letters...] (Beirut, Adlas Press, 1965), pp. 123-129. Nicknames (like “Merjumeĸ,” meaning, lentil) were prevalent among adult males and some women. This sociological phenomenon in Musa Dagħ has not yet been duly studied.

⁴ *Husaper*, 8 October 1921. The outcome of the investigation remains unknown.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 30 September 1924.

⁶ Pierre Bazantay, *Enquête sur l'Artisanat à Antioche* (Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1936), pp. 83-84.

⁷ Suren Filhannesian, letter to the author, received 14 July 1993; interview with Iskender Stambulian, 5 September 1995, Fresno, California. For charcoal making at Soghukoluk, another exclusively Armenian village in the Sanjak, consult Viktorya Giuzelian, *Beylani Parpare* [The Dialect of Beylan] (Yerevan, Armenia, VMV-Print Publishing, 2007), pp. 179, 186.

⁸ *Husaper*, 6 December 1923.

⁹ Shushanig Chaparian-Papakhian, unpublished memoir, Detroit, Michigan, p. 64; Sara Kendirjian-Karkazian, letter to the author, mailed 19 November 1991.

¹⁰ Rev. Dikran Andreassian (Antreasian) letter to the Secretary of the British Friends of Armenia Society, 27 April 1920, *Friend of Armenia*, New Series, no. 77 (July 1920): 5; *Giligia* [Cilicia] (Adana), 14 July 1921; *Asbareĸ* [Arena] (Fresno, California), 26 August 1921; Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) Archives, Saddle Brook, New Jersey (now New York, New York), File 14 D, *H. P. E. Miutian Sisvan Varjaranner* (Svedia). *Tghtagtsutiunner 1923-1927* [AGBU Sisvan schools (Svedia): Correspondence 1923-1927], Krikor Aroyian to AGBU Central Executive Board in Cairo, 26 November 1922.

- ¹¹ Fr. Movses Shrikian, "Hushakrutiun Movses A. Khny. Shrikiani (Avazani Anun Yesayi) [Memoir of Archpriest Movses Shrikian (baptismal name Yesayi)], unpublished MS, Montebello, California, p. 54.
- ¹² Interview with Movses Sarkis Sherbetjian and Lusaper Makhulian-Jambazian, 24 November 1988, Thousand Oaks, California; interview with Arakel (Kbranian)-Izarian, 28 December 1991, Sunland, California. For Ardashes Boghigian's public career, see "Ardashes Boghigian," *Keghart Suriahay Darekirk* [Keghart Syrian Armenian almanac], Robert Jebejian, ed., vol. 5 (Aleppo, n.p., 1996), pp. 546-7.
- ¹³ Hrant Dikran Kazanjian, letter to the author, 22 November 1993; interview with Mardiros Hagop Boyajian.
- ¹⁴ Interview with Tateos Bakalian, 4 August 1994, Anjar, Lebanon.
- ¹⁵ Victoria Renjilian-Sarafian, private papers, Fresno, California, Movses S. Renjilian, letter to "My Dear Children" Victoria and her husband Krikor Sarafian, 2 May 1923.
- ¹⁶ AGBU, File 14 D, Aroyian to AGBU Executive Board, 6 May 1923. Aroyian announced the forthcoming two-week school closure while on a business trip to Beirut. The Evangelical (Protestant) schools of Bitias and Yoghunoluk probably followed a similar schedule during the sericultural season. The Catholics (of the Latin rite) had not yet opened their schools.
- ¹⁷ The bay or laurel fruit is similar to olives, but a much bitter one. It produces a stinking odor when boiled for the manufacture of soap. In the Musa Dagh dialect the bay fruit is called *gasle bdeogh* and its oil *gasle tzit*.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., Aroyian to AGBU Executive Board, 1 July 1924. According to the original plan, the 1923-24 school calendar would be from 1 August 1923-30 April 1924 for Haji Habibli, Kheder Beg, and Kabusiye, and from 1 September 1923-31 May 1924 for Bitias, Yoghunoluk, and Vakef. Idem, AGBU Executive Board to Aroyian, 19 July 1923.
- ¹⁹ Alberta Magzanian, Anna Magzanian and Louisa Magzanian, *The Recipes of Musa Dagh: An Armenian Cookbook in A Dialect of Its Own* (Olney, Maryland?, www.Lulu.com, 2008), pp. 157-158.
- ²⁰ For details consult *ibid.*, p. 157; Chaparian-Papakhian, memoir, pp. 9-14; Krikor Kyozalyan (Geuzelian/Giuzelian), *Musa Leran Azkakrutiune* [The Ethnography of Musa Dagh] (Yerevan, "Kidutiun" Publishing House of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, 2001), pp. 70-79; "Musa Leran Kiughatsinerun Ezpaghumneru u Arhesdnere," in Mardiros Kushakjian and Boghos Madurian, eds. (Beirut, Atlas Press, 1970), pp. 119-120. For sericulture in Musa Dagh in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Vahram L. Shemmashian, "The Armenian Villagers of Musa Dagh: A Historical-Ethnographic Study, 1840-1915," Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996, pp. 41-49.
- ²¹ W.D. Darby, *Silk—The Queen of Fabrics* (New York, Federal Printing Co., 1922), p. 23.
- ²² See information in note 18.
- ²³ Darby, *Silk*, p. 24.
- ²⁴ Magzanian, *Recipes of Musa Dagh*, p. 157.
- ²⁵ *Husaper*, 6 December 1923.
- ²⁶ *Piunig* [Phoenix] (Beirut), 30 August 1924.
- ²⁷ *Husaper*, 27 December 1934.
- ²⁸ André Latron, *La Vie Rurale en Syrie et au Liban. Étude d'Économie Sociale* (Beirut, Imprimerie Catholique, 1936), p. 24.
- ²⁹ *Husaper*, 23 April 1925.
- ³⁰ Kevork Krekian, "Haji-Habibli," unpublished MS, 22 April 1965, p. 2, National Harach-K. Giulbengian Secondary School, Anjar, Lebanon.

- ³¹ K. Kabbenjian, "Surya Kaghakagan, Grona-badmagan, Grtagan yev Dndesagan Desagedov" [Syria from the political, religious-historical, educational and economic points of view], in Ardavazt Siurmeian, ed., *Datev Gronagan Daretsuyts* [Datev religious almanac], 3rd year (Aleppo, n.p., 1927): 243; "Musa Leran Kiughatsinerun Ezpaghumern," p. 120; Jacquot, *Antioche*, I, p. 21, II, p. 400, III, p. 511.
- ³² Krekian, "Haji-Habibli," p. 2; Jacquot, *Antioche*, II, p. 447.
- ³³ For the control of the silk industry by notables, see Sima Aprahamian, "The Inhabitants of Haouch Moussa: From Stratified Society through Classlessness to the Re-Appearance of Social Classes," Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, Montreal, 1989, pp. 62-65.
- ³⁴ Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia (ACC) Archives, Antelias Lebanon, File 22/1, *Jebel Musa-Svedia 1920-1940*, Fr. Apraham Der Kalusdian (Abraham D. Calousdian) to Catholicos Sahag II Khabayan, 12 October 1926; Hrant Dikran Kazanjian, letter to the author, 22 March 1994; Mardiros Simon Boyajian, letter to the author, received 25 March 1994.
- ³⁵ Kazanjian, letter, 22 March 1994.
- ³⁶ Tateos Babigian, "Husher, Tebker u Temker" [Memoirs: events and profiles], unpublished MS, pp. 9, 18-19, Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, Dzidzernagapert, Armenia.
- ³⁷ ACC, File 22/1, Mihran Renjilian, Taniel Chaparian, Arakel Efendiian, and Armenag Kelian to Fr. Apraham Der Kalusdian and Rev. Dikran Antreasian, 3 September 1922; telephone interview with Alberta Magzanian, 24 December 2008, Granada Hills, California-Olney, Maryland.
- ³⁸ Interview with Izanian. For other Greek silkworm seed, cocoon, and silk cloth merchants in Antioch, see Jacquot, *Antioche*, II, p. 210.
- ³⁹ Chaparian-Papakhian, unpublished memoir, pp. 10-12. For Musa Dagħ students who studied at Bursa before World War I, see Shemmassian, "Armenian Villagers of Musa Dagħ," pp. 45-46.
- ⁴⁰ Shushanig Chaparian-Papakhian, two letters to the author, 26 May 1989, (received) 12 April 1989. For Tosbat's role in the advancement of sericulture in north-western Syria both before and after World War I, consult Apraham H. Renjilian, "Antakyada Ipekjilik. Ipek Beojeyi Bendinin Sonu" [Sericulture in Antioch: The end of the silkworm era], *Nor Avedaper* [New Herald], 6:17 (10 November 1933) pp. 327-28.
- ⁴¹ Norman Burns, *The Tariff of Syria 1919-1932*, American University of Beirut Publications of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Social Science Series, no. 5 (Beirut, American Press, 1933), p. 155.
- ⁴² Renjilian, "Antakyada," pp. 327-28.
- ⁴³ *Husaper*, 27 December 1934.
- ⁴⁴ France, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Nantes, Mandat Syrie-Liban, Beyrouth: Cabinet Politique 1926-1941, carton 530, Georges Burnier to R. Chambard, "Note sur la Situation des Arméniens dans le Sandjak d'Alexandrette et Leur Installation Éventuelle au Liban," 28 June 1939. The crops were listed as follows (in tons): Oranges, 4,000; cereals, 400; potatoes, legumes, and various fruits, 300; figs, 150; olive oil, 150; bay oil, 50; cocoons, 15; total, 5,065 tons.
- ⁴⁵ Burns, *Tariff of Syria*, pp. 155-58, 189-97.
- ⁴⁶ W.D. Darby, *Rayon and Other Synthetic Fibers* (New York, Dry Good Economist Textile Publishing Company, 1929), pp. 12-13.
- ⁴⁷ *Suriagan Mamul* [Syrian press] (Aleppo), 14 October 1925.
- ⁴⁸ ACC, File 22/1, Fr. Vartan Varteresian to Catholicos Sahag II, 1 September 1922.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 20 September 1922.

- ⁵⁰ AGBU, File 14 D, (first initial illegible) B. Saatjian, Investigative Report of the Six Schools of the Svedia Region and the Nubarian School of Alexandretta, 23 June 1923, Beirut, p. 1.
- ⁵¹ Jacquot, *Antioche*, III, p. 511.
- ⁵² "Jebel Musayi Hayrenagtsagan Miutun 1931-1970" [Compatriotic Union of Musa Dagħ 1931-1971], in Kushakjian and Madurian, eds. *Hushamadian*, pp. 843-44; *Ararat* [Ararat] (Beirut), 21 September 1938, 18 January 1939; *Joghovurti Tsayn* [People's voice] (Beirut), 16 October 1938, 23 October 1938. Information on the nature of Haji Habibli émigré occupations in Beirut is based on personal knowledge.
- ⁵³ AGBU, File 14 D, Aroyian to AGBU Executive Board, 22 September 1924.
- ⁵⁴ *Aztag*, 22 January 1930.
- ⁵⁵ *Hayrenik* [Fatherland] (Boston), 18 June 1931.
- ⁵⁶ ACC, File 22/1, Parish Council of Kabusiye to Catholicos Papken (Giuleserian), 15 January 1936; Renjilian, "Antakyada," pp. 327-28; *Aztag*, 8 July 1930;
- ⁵⁷ Sarkis Geuzelian, private papers, Hollywood, California, "Land Lease Agreement" between Sarkis Geuzelian (and his brother, Mateos,) and William Alexander Campbell, 19 July 1937. The agreement is handwritten in Arabic on a letterhead of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch and Its Vicinity.
- ⁵⁸ Shrikian, "Hushakrutun," p. 54.
- ⁵⁹ Interview with Sirvart Chanchanian, by Mardig Chanchanian for the author, 21 February 1993, San Jose, California; interview with Sirvart Tashjian-Hajian, 3 January 2009, Pasadena, California.
- ⁶⁰ Interview with Mari Shemmashian-Bursalian, 16 March 2008, Fresno, California.
- ⁶¹ Interview with Chanchanian.
- ⁶² Telephone interview with Florence Igarian-Harutiunian, 27 October 1991, Van Nuys, California-Glendale, California.
- ⁶³ Alberta Magzanian, letter to the author, 13 January 2009.
- ⁶⁴ Vartuhi Keshishian-Uzunian, "Trvant Demirjian-Keshishian," in Jebejian, ed., *Keghart*, vol. 5, p. 147. For the activity of Rev. Shirajian among Armenian genocide survivors, see "Rev. Aharon A. Shirajian 1867-1939," in idem, pp. 120-23; *Chanaser* [Endeavor love] (Beirut), combined issue of nos. 7-8 (1 and 15 April 1968); *Friend of Armenia* (London), 1920s-1930s issues.
- ⁶⁵ Kendirjian-Karkazian, letter.
- ⁶⁶ ACC, File 22/1, Parish Council of Kabusiye to Catholicos Papken, 15 January 1936; Antranig Urfalian, *Gianki me Hedkerov* [On the trails of a life] (Palm Springs, CA, Haig's Printing, 1990?), p. 48.
- ⁶⁷ Interview with Shemmashian-Bursalian.
- ⁶⁸ Urfalian, *Gianki*, p. 48.
- ⁶⁹ "Sovorutiunner, Havadalikner yev Avelortabashdutiunner" [Customs, beliefs and superstitions], in *Hushamadin Musa Leran*, pp. 163-64, 171; Zora Iskenderian, "Doner u Donakhmputiunner (Gronagan yev Ashkharhig)" [Holidays and festivities (religious and secular)], in idem, pp. 176, 181.
- ⁷⁰ Interview with Rosine Shemmashian-Kundakjian, 6 January 2009, Fresno, California.
- ⁷¹ ACC, File 22/1, Parish Council of Haji Habibli to Catholicos Sahag II, 9 August 1926; idem, Fr. Apraham Der Kalusdian to Catholicos Sahag II, 11 August 1926.
- ⁷² Babigian, "Husher," pp. 61-63.
- ⁷³ Armenian Relief Society (ARS) Archives, Boston, Massachusetts (now Watertown, Massachusetts), Box SOKh [Syrian Armenian Relief Cross], Syria, Beginning-1929, Dr. Toros Basmajian and Sarkis Selian on behalf of the Syrian Armenian Relief Cross Central Board to the Armenian Red Cross Central Board in Boston, 7 September 1932.

- ⁷⁴ Interview with Igarian Harutiunian. The workers were Sima Andekian, Dzaghig Bodurian, and two other persons.
- ⁷⁵ Interview with Igarian-Harutiunian.
- ⁷⁶ Tateos Bakalian, letter to the author, received 4 January 1992; *Aztag*, 28 June 1935.
- ⁷⁷ *Vosdayn Jebel Musayi Hiusvadzegheni Ananun Engerutiun.Ganonakir*[Vosdayn Anonymous Textile Company of Musa Dagħ. By-Laws] (Aleppo: A. Der Sahagian, 1935), p. 5; *Husaper*, 6 August 1935.
- ⁷⁸ *Husaper*, 15 June 1936.
- ⁷⁹ Vosdayn, *Ganonakir*, p. 6.
- ⁸⁰ Interview with Tateos Bakalian, 4 August 1994, Anjar, Lebanon.
- ⁸¹ The name NICHARTVA was formed by the initial letters of its founders' first names as follows: **N**ICHan Palandjian (Nshan Palanjian), **A**RTin (Haroutioun/Harutian) Vorperian, and **V**Ahan Adjamian (Ajemian). Founded on 1 July 1928, its factory was located next to the Giulbengian Maternity in the 4th quarter of the Meydan/Nor Kiugh sector of Aleppo, whereas its office and store were situated at 18 Hammam al-Tal in the same sector. Due to a disagreement among the founders, Vorperian on 1 January 1935 quit the company and was replaced by Mardiros Teghrarian. The company, however, retained its original name. Vorperian opened his own textile factory in the Qastal Hajerin neighborhood with twelve machines. NICHARTVA ceased to exist in 1947 or 1948, by which time Palanjian and Ajemian had died and Teghrarian had moved to Beirut. Interview with Lilly Vorperian, 29 March 1994, Glendale, California; Lilly Vorperian, private papers, NICHARTVA change of ownership document in French, 1 January 1935. For more on NICHARTVA, see "Nshartva' Hiusvadzegheni Gankhahas Engerutiun me Haleb" [An early textile company in Aleppo called NICHARTVA], in Jebejian, ed., *Keghart*, vol. 5, pp. 330-35; *Aztag*, 25 May 1939.
- ⁸² Vosdayn, *Ganonakir*, pp. 10-11.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-15; *Aztag*, 5 August 1937, 12 January 1938.
- ⁸⁵ Vosdayn, *Ganonakir*, cover page and pp. 5-25.
- ⁸⁶ *Aztag*, 28 June-18 July 1935.
- ⁸⁷ Interview with Bakalian. According to Dr. Vazken Der Kaloustian, email to the author, 19 January 2009, after his wedding on 7 May 1936 in Alexandria, Egypt, Movses Der Kalusdian moved to Bitias and lived there. He, Vazken, Movses' only child, was born during that time at a hospital in Antioch. Similarly, according to Bitias native Sara Kendirjian-Karkazian, letter, upon his arrival at Bitias with his new bride, Der Kalusdian was welcomed warmly by admirers from all over Musa Dagħ with a celebration held at Hotel Jabal Musa amid gunfire and folk music-dances with double drums, something reserved for special occasions. According to another Bitias resident, Der Kalusdian "lived in 'Bulghashintz Mayroom's' house with his wife before moving to 'Sutt Marin' Kadeian's house. The couple occupied the three interconnected second fl. [sic] rooms plus a separate kitchen. It was a two-gated structure, the entrance gate led to an outhouse and a vegetable garden. Because of its higher location, the yard, the tile-covered front balcony and the front porch were not visible from the street. It was a sheltered and private environment. Der Kalusdian, like [Hrach] Papazian, was interested in gardening and within a year he probably had the most beautiful garden at the front of the house in Bitias." Magzanian, letter, 13 January 2009. For estivation in Bitias, see Vahram L. Shemmassian, "Armenian Musa Dagħ as A Summer Resort in the Sanjak of Alexandretta during the 1920s-1930s," *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 28 (2008), pp. 209-32.

- ⁸⁸ Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008. She writes: "Now a broad road continues to NE from the right (East) side of the remaining factory ruins avoiding the hills and valleys of the original trail." See also *Aztag*, 3 September 1937.
- ⁸⁹ *Aztag*, 3 August 1935.
- ⁹⁰ Rev. Nareg Shrikian, private papers, Montebello, California, "Djebel Moussa, Village Bitias," a detailed survey of the fixed properties and their value belonging to the Bitias inhabitants on the eve of their exodus from the Sanjak before 23 July 1939. The then-vacant Vosdayn compound was valued at 12,000 Syrian liras.
- ⁹¹ *Husaper*, 30 July 1935.
- ⁹² Boghos Snabian, *Aghkadnerun Avantutiune* [The Oral tradition of the poor] (Beirut, Hamazkayin Wahe Sethian Press, 1983), p. 30; Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008.
- ⁹³ Telephone interview with Magzanian, 3 January 2009.
- ⁹⁴ Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008.
- ⁹⁵ The information on missionaries, marines, and dignitaries visiting Vosdayn is based on photographs in my private collection. For League of Nations representatives visiting the factory, see *Aztag*, 31 October 1937.
- ⁹⁶ Interview with Bakalian.
- ⁹⁷ Mardiros Kevork Chaparian, letter to the author, 20 April 1994.
- ⁹⁸ Bakalian, letter; interview with Bakalian.
- ⁹⁹ Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008.
- ¹⁰⁰ Bakalian, letter. See also *Husaper*, 25 June 1936.
- ¹⁰¹ Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008.
- ¹⁰² *Husaper*, 30 July 1935, 25 June 1936.
- ¹⁰³ Bakalian, letter.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁵ Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008.
- ¹⁰⁶ Bakalian, letter.
- ¹⁰⁷ Telephone interview with Magzanian, 3 January 2009.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bakalian, letter.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Aztag*, 12 January 1938. For the announcement and agenda of the meeting, see *idem*, 5 August 1937.
- ¹¹⁰ Mardiros Kevork Chaparian, letter; interview with Bakalian: *Hayrenik*, 12 May 1939.
- ¹¹¹ *Aztag*, 14 December 1938.
- ¹¹² Bakalian, letter.
- ¹¹³ For the hopes that Vosdayn inspired from the outset, consult *Aztag*, 6 July 1935, 27 July 1935.
- ¹¹⁴ Bakalian, letter, puts the number of those who got married at five or six couples. Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008, mentions three of those: Yeprem Filian ("Fil") married Sara Antablian, a certain Kadeian married Mari Maghzanian ("Barzeremints Marine"), and Boghos Kelejian married Sara Kendirjian ("Kiulakhiunts").
- ¹¹⁵ Magzanian, letter, 30 December 2008. The documented account of the bloody feud between Bitias and Haji Habibli during 1920-22 and its impact on Musa Dagh society at large has not yet been written.
- ¹¹⁶ Interview with Bakalian, 14 August 1977, Anjar.
- ¹¹⁷ Snabian, *Aghkadnerun*, p. 30.
- ¹¹⁸ *Suriagan Mamul*, 14 October 1925.
- ¹¹⁹ "Musa Daghe," *Rahniuna* [True path], 9:29 (17 September 1927): 457.
- ¹²⁰ *Asttag*, 27 June 1937.

APPENDIX

*List of Employees at the Vosdayn Textile Factory in Bitias*¹²⁰

Male

From Aleppo

1. Arshavir?
2. George Khandzoghian
3. Arshag Najarian
4. Levon Najarian
6. Hrach Papazian

From Bitias

7. Armen Andekian
8. Bedros Andekian
9. Hagop Antablian
10. Mardiros Chaparian
11. Yeprem Filian
12. Bedros Frankian
13. Levon Frankian
14. Hagop Kadeian
15. Boghos Kelejian
16. Hovhannes Kelejian
17. Hagop Kelian
18. Hagop Kojayian
19. Yerem Stambulian
20. Yesayi Stambulian
21. Arakel Zobian

From Haji Habibli

22. Dikran Bakalian
23. Kevork Basambakian
24. Megerdich Der Arakelian
25. Hagop Dudaklian
26. Khachig Jerejian
27. Antranig Kerekian
28. Bedros Keshishian
29. Movses Taslakian
30. Tavit ?

From Kheder Beg

31. Bedros Bakalian
32. Mihran Bakalian
33. Tateos Bakalian

Female

From Bitias

34. Sima Andekian
35. Marinos Antablian
36. Sara Antablian
37. Sara Bodurian
38. Negtar Chaparian
39. Sara Chaparian
40. Marinos Kadeian
41. Sara Der Vahan Kendirjian
42. Sara Kendirjian
43. Hayguhi Kesablian
44. Negtar Kesablian
45. Negtar Keshishian
46. Aghavni Kojayian
47. Mari Maghzanian
48. Negtar Makhulian
49. Yeranuhi Panosian
50. Sara Serekian
51. Mayram Zobian

From Haji Habibli

52. Aghavni Mushdigian

Source: Interview with Jemile Sherbetjian Stambulian, 1 August 1994, Anjar, Lebanon; interview with Tateos Bakalian, 4 August 1994, Anjar; Mardiros Kevork Chaparian, letter to the author, 20 April 1994; Sara Kendirjian Karkazian, letter to the author, mailed 19 November 1991.

Հիմնուելով սկզբնաղբիւրներու, արխիւային եւ անձնական նիւթերու, նամակագրութեան, բանաւոր հարցազրոյցներու եւ այլ նիւթերու վրայ, ուսումնասիրութիւնը կը քննէ Մուսա Լերան հայոց ճարտարարուեստը 1920-30ականներուն: Հիմնականին մէջ ան կ'անդրադառնայ փայտի եւ ածուխի արտադրութեան, մետաքսագործութեան եւ առնչակից արտադրութիւններու եւ հիւսուածեղէնի արդիւնաբերութեան: Այլ արդիւնաբերութիւններ, կ'ենթադրեն այլ առանձին ուսումնասիրութիւն:

Թէեւ փայտի եւ ածուխի արտադրութեամբ կը զբաղէին հայ, թիւրքմէն, եւ ալեւի գիւղացիներ, այդուհանդերձ երկու հայ ընտանիքներ (սկզբնապէս Պօղոսեանները, որոնք մուսա լեռացիներ չէին, ապա եւ Եղորունօլուքի Գազանճեանները) մենաշնորհի աստիճանի հասցուցեր էին այս արդիւնաբերութիւնը:

Մասնաւորաբար Գազանճեանները, վարելու համար իրենց ընդարձակ գործողութիւնները, գործակալներու եւ գրասենեակներու ցանց մը հաստատած էին Սուրիոյ, Լիբանանի, Պաղեստինի եւ Եգիպտոսի մէջ: Դժբախտաբար այս բոլորը կանգ առին 1938ին, երբ Գազանճեանները լքեցին չրջանը՝ Ալեքսանտրէթի Սանճաքի տազնապին մագլցումով:

Շեռամարուծութիւնը Մուսա Լերան հայերուն եկամուտի գլխաւոր աղբիւրը կը հանդիսանար 1920ականներու կէսերուն: Անոր առեւտուրին կը տիրապետէին հայ եւ յոյն երեւելիներ կամ առեւտրականներ, որոնք յաճախ կը ճշդէին շերամի խոզակին գինը՝ ի հաշիւ հայ գիւղացիներուն: Մետաքսագործութիւնն ու մետաքսեայ իրերու արդիւնաբերութիւնը սուր անկում մը արձանագրեց 1920ականներու երկրորդ կէսէն սկսեալ՝ երեք պատճառներով:-

ա- Սուրիա-Կիլիկիա սահմանին փակումը 1921ին,

բ- Արհեստական մետաքսի եւ աժան ալլընտրանքներու յառաջացումը,

գ- Ճափոնի տիրապետումը համաշխարհային շուկաներուն:

Տնտեսական այս անկումը պատճառ դարձաւ գործազրկութեան, արտագաղթի եւ երկրագործական արտադրութիւններու վերափոխման: Թէեւ թաշկինակագործութիւնը, ձեռագործութիւնը եւ գորգագործութիւնը իրրեւ ալլընտրանքային արտադրութիւններ որոշ նիւթական մը կ'ապահովէին, սակայն անոնք անհամեմատ նուազ էին մետաքսագործութեան փառքի օրերուն յառաջացած շահերէն:

Ոստայն Հիւսուածեղէնի Անանուն Ընկերութեան հաստատումը Պիթիաս գիւղին մէջ 1935ին, լաւ ապագայի մը հեռանկարը կը խոստանար: Աւելի քան 50 բանուորներ կը գործէին ելեկտրականութեամբ եւ ձեռքով բանող մեքենաներու վրայ՝ հիւսուածեղէն արտադրելու համար: Արտադրանքը կը դրկուէր Հալէպ, հիւսուածեղէնի հայապատկան ընկերութեան մը՝ ՆԻՇԱՐԹՎԱ: Դժբախտաբար, սակայն, Ոստայնը լուծարքի ենթարկուեցաւ իր հիմնումէն երեք տարի ետք, 1938ին, դարձեալ՝ Ալեքսանտրէթի Սանճաքի տազնապին վատթարացումով: