

THE SAINT PAUL CAPUCHIN MISSION IN MUSA DAGH 1919-1939

VAHRAM L. SHEMMASSIAN

Vahram.shemmassian@csun.edu

The St. Paul Mission of Musa Dagh in the village of Kheder Beg was founded by Fr. Bernardino da Canetra upon assuming its helm effective June 1, 1891, followed by the official groundbreaking ceremony of the compound on the 29th. It belonged to the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin of St. Francis of Assisi. The Mission functioned under two jurisdictions: from 1891-1903, the Catholic Province of Rome, and from 1903-1914, the Catholic Province of Lyon. In both cases, Beirut was the regional headquarters.¹

The dualistic, contradictory nature of the Mission's legality hindered Catholic progress in Musa Dagh for the first decade of the congregation's existence. On the one hand, the government granted the Mission a separate formal status independent of the Apostolic community in terms of having its own village headmen (*mukhtars*) and the attendant right to gather taxes from the Catholic constituency. On the other hand, the government considered the Mission illegal and accordingly refused to issue permits for the construction and/or renovation of its fixed holdings.² This contradiction dissipated once the government recognized the Mission as a French establishment (see below).

The Capuchins handed out material assistance to the generally poor natives for the dual purpose of gaining followers and alleviating their socioeconomic misery. Therefore, the vast majority of those who converted to Catholicism did so for financial reasons, such as, to be able to pay their taxes to the government, resolve conflicts (like tax matters) with the Apostolic *mukhtars*, deal with lawsuits, and benefit from free education. In other words, confessional change did not necessarily come about because of spiritual awakening or conviction. Given their limited resources, the missionaries solicited contributions from European governments, institutions, and individuals in order to meet their needs. They also ran a clinic to tend to the physical and emotional needs of the Armenians and non-Armenians of the district alike, opened a modest museum of ancient artifacts gathered from the historical, mainly Seleucid, surroundings aiming to sell some of them in Europe to raise funds, and for a brief period tried to boost the local sericulture industry. The continuation of this unequivocal material support was eventually reconsidered and was found

¹ Vahram L. Shemmassian, *The Armenians of Musa Dagh: From Obscurity to Genocide Resistance and Fame 1840-1915*, Armenian Series, Number 11 (Fresno, CA: The Press, California State University, Fresno), pp. 130, 135-36.

² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

unsustainable, but in practice it persisted with the hope that Catholics in time would develop genuine faith vis-à-vis their adopted confession.³

In terms of size, at the time of the Mission's establishment in 1891 there were 26 Catholic families/96 persons in Kheder Beg, 24 families/107 persons in Yoghun Oluk, and 22 families/122 persons in Kabusiye, for a total of 72 Catholic families/325 persons (the spread of Catholicism in these Musa Dagħ villages happened simultaneously). By 1900, the number of Catholics had increased to 500 individuals, the highest ever. What is significant, however, is that a year later only one Catholic family had remained in Kabusiye, whereas Vakef was mentioned for the first time as having 5 Catholic families.⁴ This drastic decrease in Kabusiye may be explained by the lack of seriousness of the adherents. In the final analysis, Kheder Beg remained the center of Catholicism in Musa Dagħ throughout the pre-World War I period, as during the interwar years, trailed by the lesser parish of Yoghun Oluk.

By August 1, 1914, the Mission with its church, schools for boys and girls, cemetery, orchard, living quarters, clinic, etc. was recognized by the Ottoman government as a French establishment based on French-Ottoman accords reached in 1901 and 1913.⁵ At the beginning of World War I, however, the government expelled the three resident monks without letting them take their personal belongings or take stock of the Mission's fixed and movable properties, expropriated the grounds as "Military Manse," and locked and sealed the doors. After the departure of the Musa Dagħ Armenians for Egypt in mid-September, 1915, in October some 1000-1500 Muslim refugees from North Africa settled in Vakef, Yoghun Oluk, and Kheder Beg.⁶

Given that the Catholics were concentrated mostly in their stronghold of Kheder Beg and the lesser village of Yoghun Oluk, and because they, as part of the population of those villages, had participated in the 1915 resistance to the genocide almost to a man, they were rescued and taken to Egypt nearly intact as a group by units of the French Mediterranean fleet.⁷ At the refugee

³ Ibid., pp. 149-154.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 155, 162-63.

⁵ Capuchin Archives (henceforth CA), Maison St. François, Mtayleb, Lebanon, File *Dommages 18, Khoderbek, 1920-1926. Dégats causés aux Capucins de Khoderbek par les Turques 1914-1918*, Certification by the French Consul in Beirut, June, 1926.

⁶ Ibid., Notre complémentaire au sujet des émigrants Nord-Africains venus s'installer à Khoderbek, April 20, 1927, Beirut.

⁷ Vahram L. Shemmassian, "The Population, Setup, and Administration of the Armenian Refugee Camp of Port Said, Egypt 1915-1919," in Antranik Dakessian, ed. *Armenians of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia/1: Proceedings of the Conference (12-13 April and 29-30 May 2018)*, Beirut: Haigazian University Press, 2022, pp. 241-43; Shemmassian, *The Armenians of Musa Dagħ*, p. 325.

camp of Port Said, they did not have a resident priest to lead them; Catholic clergymen visited the camp only periodically. The first to arrive there, on September 25, 1915, was Bishop H. Kuzian, the Primate of Armenian Catholics in Egypt, together with Church Council member H. Kadifian.⁸ Not much is known about this visit. On Sunday, October 10, the “Latins” celebrated mass in the camp,⁹ as did Fr. Basil on November 5, with communion administered in the process.¹⁰ Also in October, Catholic nuns took turns “with selflessness” in touring the camp with other volunteer women to render assistance.¹¹ On Wednesday, December 8, in celebration of the dual holidays dedicated to the Armenian Catholic Church and the Sisters of Immaculate Conception in Egypt, a religious service took place at the Cairo Prelacy officiated by Bishop Kuzian in the presence of a French delegation consisting of a representative of the French government, the vice-consul, the commander of the French forces, and the chief army physician. During the reception that followed at the adjacent hall, Hovsep Ambarian, on behalf of the Prelacy, read a message in French lauding France for its humanitarianism and the rescue of Musa Dagħ Armenians. In turn, the vice-consul underscored the French contribution to humanity, concluding with a “Vive l’Arménie,” thereby reciprocating the Armenian cries of “Vive la France.”¹² Sometime in August, 1918, Fr. Vartan Khacherian not only celebrated mass in the camp, but also prepared the list of Catholic refugees, inquired about their wellbeing, and consoled them spiritually.¹³ Judging from the number of newspaper reports, it seems that Catholic activity in the camp took place more frequently in the first months of its establishment than subsequently. This paper deals with the religious aspect of the Capuchin Mission from the repatriation of the refugees from Port Said to Musa Dagħ by fall 1919 through their second exodus (to Anjar, Lebanon) by July 23, 1939. The Mission’s educational activity requires a separate study.

Catholic life in Musa Dagħ did not resume for more than four years after repatriation in 1919, unlike the Armenian Apostolic and Protestant congregations. The reason was the uninhabitable state of the Mission properties caused by the abuses and looting that the North African Muslim settlers

⁸ *Arev* (Sun) (Cairo, Egypt), September 24, 1915, September 27, 1915. Another source indicates September 27 as the date of Bishop Kuzian’s visit to the camp. See M. Salpi [Dr. Aram Sahagian], *Aliagner yev Khliagner. Hay Vranakaghakin Darekirke* (Little Waves andhovels: The Yearbook of the Armenian Tent City), Alexandria, Egypt, A Kasabian, 1919/1920, p. 250.

⁹ *Husaper* (Hope-Bearer) (Cairo Egypt), October 14, 1915.

¹⁰ *Arev*, November 8, 1915.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, October 20, 1915.

¹² *Ibid.*, December 15, 1915.

¹³ *Husaper*, August 30, 1918.

mentioned above (probably from African Tripoli) had committed. Initial results of a survey conducted in summer 1919 to assess the damages, including olive and orange harvests for the previous four years, showed a loss of 45,570 French francs.¹⁴ In its response to a February 27, 1920, letter sent by Fr. Jérôme of Lyon, the Superior of the Capuchin Mission in Syria regarding those damages, the French Foreign Ministry Commission of Reclamations concerning private interests in an enemy or occupied country informed him that it had opened a special dossier -- No. 32 371 -- to deal with them.¹⁵ In 1922, Fr. Isidore (Victor Grousset), Director of Construction, Installation, and Repair of Buildings belonging to the Capuchin Mission in Syria, visited Kheder Beg to assess the devastation. He described the living quarters as follows: "The said building was absolutely uninhabitable, that neither doors, nor windows, nor shutters had remained and that in the rooms, apart from the four walls, [which were] dilapidated, nothing was found, absolutely nothing, not even a piece of paper."¹⁶ Fr. Jérôme, on February 25, 1924, pressed the renovation issue further by writing to the Commission of War Damages, French High Commission of Syria and Lebanon.¹⁷ The latter, within three weeks, informed Fr. Jérôme that the Capuchin claims would be examined in the near future. That discussion must have taken place by summer, presumably with a favorable outcome, for on October 17 Fr. Jérôme reported to General Maxime Weygand, High Commissioner of the French Republic in Syria and Lebanon, that repair work had "commenced and is being pursued actively," work that would continue in 1925.¹⁸ To this end, the Capuchin headquarters in Beirut sent money to Kheder Beg according to the following schedule and amounts: August 11 and October 14, 1924, 10,000 French francs each, and January 19 and March

¹⁴ CA, File *Dommages 18, Khoderbek, 1920-1926*, a very detailed list of damages/losses titled "Khoderbek." Another detailed list, signed by Fr. Jérôme, dated June 23, 1926, and titled "Khoderbek (Syrie)" gives the figure of 44,090 francs. In it, Fr. Jérôme states that Turkey was "imputable" for the damages.

¹⁵ Ibid., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Under-Direction of Unions, Commission of Reclamations concerning private interests in an enemy country or an occupied one to Fr. Jérôme, Superior of the Capuchin Mission in Syria, headquartered in Beirut, March 27, 1920; Robert de Caix, for the High Commissioner and by the order of the Secretary General, to Fr. Jérôme, April 12, 1920.

¹⁶ Ibid., Fr. Isidore, verification statement, March 17, 1925.

¹⁷ Ibid., the President (signature illegible) of the Commission of War Damages, to Fr. Jérôme, March 13, 1924, acknowledging the latter's letter of February 25, 1924.

¹⁸ Ibid., File *Ht. Commissariat No. 8. Situation de chacune de nos stations en Syrie-Liban et projets en vue pour les améliorer, Octobre 1924*, Fr. Jérôme to General Weygand, October 17, 1924.

2, 1925, 5,000 francs each, for a total of 30,000 francs.¹⁹ This sum must have been sufficient for enough repairs and replacements for livability and functionality. It was also commensurate with an affidavit in which seven Armenian individuals from Kheder Beg vouched for the value of the losses, men who had insider knowledge of the Capuchin properties by virtue of their frequent visits there prior to World War I.²⁰

In the first week of December, 1923, Fr. Jerome reported that the Kheder Beg post was occupied by Fr. Andrea da Kalasclia (André Hrenenikov, a Bulgarian), the Mission's prewar Superior. This was still a "period of material restoration and of religious reorganization." The natives, it was further stated, had remained "sympathetic" towards Catholicism.²¹ Two months later, in late January, 1924, Lyon announced the good news that the Kheder Beg Mission would reopen, which would satisfy the Superiors General of Capuchins, who had regretted its "abandonment" to date. The French authorities were ready to lend their support "to this [Musa Dagh Armenian] population so much attached to our homeland [France]."²²

Following the return of the Capuchins to Musa Dagh, the St. Paul Mission was reattached administratively to the Catholic Province of Lyon, headquartered at 14 Rue de Tourelles under Superior Fr. Simon Ribeyron.²³ At the time, two monks resided in their monastery at Kheder Beg: Fr. Andrea da Kalasclia and, probably, Fr. Léonard.²⁴ Upon reactivating their parish, they refused to recognize marriages of Catholics previously performed by the Armenian Apostolic Church and, accordingly, "regularized" those unions upon

¹⁹ Ibid., File *Dommages 18, Khoderbek, 1920-1926*, Etablissement de Khoderbek, signed on April 23, 1927, Beirut. Signatory not mentioned in the copy of the document.

²⁰ Ibid., untitled affidavit signed on March 17, 1925 by Bedros Taslakian, Nerces Mikaelian, Agop Besdikian, Mikael Mikaelian, Movses Taslakian, Henne Ohanian, and Sarkis Andonian. They estimated the amount of losses at 29,700 francs.

²¹ Archives des Capucins de France (hereafter ACF), Bibliothèque Franciscaine de Capucins, Paris, File 1R-1, *Syrie. Listes des missionnaires (province de Lyon). Notices sur les divers postes, 1916*, Fr. Jérôme to Very Rev. Father, December 7, 1923. Although the file title mentions the year 1916, the documents therein are dated through 1939. For the return of the Capuchin monks to Kheder Beg and the resumption of repair work, see also *Husaper*, October 2, 1924.

²² ACF, File 1R-1, *Syrie. Listes des missionnaires*, anonymous to Very Rev. Father, January 29, 1924.

²³ CA, File *Dommages 18, Khoderbek, 1920-1926*, Declaration of the Superior of the Establishment of the Capuchin Mission in Kheder Beg, June, 1926.

²⁴ *Piunig* (Phoenix) (Beirut, Lebanon), January 28, 1925. See also *Husaper*, October 2, 1924.

the couples' "disposition" to renew their vows before a Catholic priest.²⁵ This sacrament could take place following the abjuration of non-Catholics wedded to Catholics. It could also be confirmed once the validity of the original marriages was established. The confessional affiliation of children born of mixed couples had to be determined as well. The following cases give an idea about the prevailing situation. At the Port Said refugee camp, Manoug Doumanian (Catholic) on March 5, 1917, was married to Iskouhi Djabrayan (Apostolic) by an Apostolic priest, because an Armenian Catholic priest had not come to perform the union.²⁶ Similarly, Petrus (Bedros) Taslakian of Kheder Beg and Isabella Derbedrossian of Yoghun Oluk, both Catholics of the Latin rite, were married in 1919 by an Apostolic priest because Franciscan fathers were not available to officiate.²⁷ At Kheder Beg, Ohannes Ohanian and Djehar (Juhar/Kohar) Kartachian, both Catholics, on October (or August) 19, 1919, were married by the local Apostolic priest because a Catholic clergyman was not found there at the time.²⁸ The same priest also blessed the union of Hagop Taslakian and Manouchag (Apostolic) on June 15, 1921,²⁹ and that of another Hagop Taslakian and Eva (Apostolic) on September 5, 1921.³⁰ When Ohannes Ipradjian (Apostolic) and Manoushag Kartéchian (Catholic) on July 5, 1921, wedded, the husband promised his wife that he would do "everything possible" to raise and baptize their children as Catholics.³¹ Nazar Taslakian and Dikranouhi Baljian (Apostolic) of Kabusiye tied the knot on July 17, 1921, in front of the Apostolic priest. The couple similarly pledged that their future offspring would be baptized and educated within the Catholic Church.³² Fr. Elies/Elie, a Capuchin missionary from Antioch, on December 6, 1923, was on his way to perform the wedding of Hapet Taslakian and a certain Rugina (Apostolic), but he was unable to proceed any further due to a severe storm, so the Apostolic priest of the village performed the ceremony.³³ All these marriages carried out by Apostolic priests were considered valid given the absence of Catholic

²⁵ CA, File *Khoderbey 5, 1925 surtout. Démarches et formalités de mariages, sanatio, invalidités etc.*, various documents.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, untitled document with the initials G.M.G., case no. 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, document in Latin signed by Fr. Léonardus a Massinia, April 5, 1925, Khoderbek.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, untitled document with the initials G.M.G., case no. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, untitled document with the initials G.M.G., case no. 1; Fr. Léonard to Révérendissime Seigneur, April 3, 1925, Khoderbek.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, untitled document with the initials G.M.G., case no. 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Cas de mariages de Khoderbek, case no. II.

³² *Ibid.*, case no. I.

³³ *Ibid.*, untitled document with the initials G.M.G., case no. 4; Fr. Léonard to Révérendissime Seigneur, April 5, 1925, Khoderbek.

clergymen, but still they had to be redone in the Latin rite once the Capuchins returned to Kheder Beg. Khatcher Hakissian's (Catholic) case differed: Because he was married twice, one marriage of which by a Protestant minister, his marriages were declared invalid.³⁴

Remarrying couples in the Latin rite provoked the ire of the Apostolic Church. Fr. Léonard, in particular, was the target of this anger. According to the Apostolic Archpriest Apraham Der Kalusdian of Yoghun Oluk, Fr. Léonard prevented Catholic youth from marrying Apostolic girls and boycotted all things Apostolic including even doing business with them. "Until today we had not seen a clergyman fanatical and Armenophobe to this extent in this region," wrote Fr. Der Kalusdian, adding: Fr. Léonard "has gone to Antioch and requested a firearm from the French governor for self-defense and moves around with two pistols and a guard, ostensibly being afraid of the Armenians, that they will kill him. In this manner he wants to show that the Armenians are wild, etc." Fr. Der Kalusdian then implored Catholicos Sahag II Khabayian of Cilicia, at the time visiting Lebanon, to speak to the Superior of Capuchins in Beirut to resolve this matter "in order not to harm the peace and tranquility of the [Musa Dagh] region."³⁵

Sometime in late 1925-early 1926, Fr. Benôit assumed the leadership of the Kheder Beg post. Born in 1865 to Armenian parents in Kharpert/Harput, the Ottoman province of Mamuret ul-Aziz, he had served in the Capuchin Mission of Mesopotamia-Armenia for thirty-five years, the last twenty-five of which as Superior in different hospices. During the genocide, he had endured a fourteen-month prison term with all kinds of deprivations. After the Armistice, he had been assigned by the Armenian Catholic Patriarch of Constantinople to oversee the parish of Malatia. Unable to break his tenacity in the course of five years, the Turkish government had expelled him from the country, whereby he had ended up in Beirut and was now willing to serve within the Syrian field.³⁶ Fr. Benôit was happy in his assigned Musa Dagh post. After all, he explained, "All the inhabitants are Armenian. I speak their language, which is also mine. I know their history, their traditions and their mentality. I find myself in my element, and I am content."³⁷

³⁴ Ibid., Cas de mariages de Khoderbek, case no. III.

³⁵ Armenian Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia Archives, Antelias, Lebanon, File 22/1, *Jebel Musa-Svedia 1920-1940*, Archpriest Apraham Der Kalusdian to His Holiness Sahag II Catholicos of [Cilicia] Armenians, December 21, 1925.

³⁶ CA, File *Khoderbey 5, 1925 surtout. Démarches et formalités de mariages, sanatio, invalidités etc.*, Fr. Benôit to Reverend Father, October 2, 1926.

³⁷ Ibid., Fr. Benôit to Reverend Father General, January 10, 1930.

Fr. Léonard departed Kheder Beg on November 9, 1926.³⁸ In January, 1928, the Mission had three missionaries: Fr. Benôit as Superior, a priest, and a friar.³⁹ Fr. Benôit proved to be an active cleric. For example, during the 1932-33 reporting period he delivered 58 sermons, administered 740 communions, baptized 6 children, and officiated at 3 funerals. But, at the same time, the church remained stagnant in terms of growth; there were zero marriages, conversions, and confirmations.⁴⁰ What was more, given his preoccupation with church and school life, he did not have time to also deal with civil matters such as securing a Catholic *mukhtar* for his constituency. For this reason a good number in his congregation demanded the return of Fr. Léonard in a supportive role, as they considered him a valiant and forceful man whom, they said, the Apostolic Armenians “feared” (and despised, as indicated above).⁴¹ Ten years later, in 1936, another Armenian priest, Fr. Hovhannes Kirejian, maintained that he and Fr. Benôit took turns on Sundays and holidays in delivering the sermons to a large attendance, basically in Kheder Beg “which appears to be quite enlightened” thanks to Fr. Benôit’s “extremely enthusiastic preaching.”⁴² The Yoghun Oluk church and school were not functional. No rituals were held in the other villages.

Fr. Benôit also tried to recruit youngsters for service to the Catholic Church. Two poor Catholic families, one from Vakef and another from the Surp Tovmas/St. Thomas (Sultumu), a tiny outlying farming settlement situated on the road to Bitias, between Yoghun Oluk and Haji Habibli, wanted to give their daughters, ages eight and ten, to the Sisters “for good.” Under the circumstances, Fr. Benôit explained, the girls would be deprived of even elementary education, let alone a religious one, and accordingly inquired whether they could be placed at the Sisters’ orphanage in Beirut. If admitted,

³⁸ Ibid., File *Khoderbek*. *Nommé supérieur à la place du P. Léonard il [Fr. Benôit] donne la relation de sa Mission*, Fr. Benôit to My Very Reverend Father, November 28, 1926, Koderbek.

³⁹ ACF, File 1R-1, *Syrie*, Fr. Jérôme to Son Eminence le Cardinal Pro Préfet de la S. Congrégation pour l’Eglise Orientale, January 6, 1928.

⁴⁰ CA, File *Koderbek 1932/33. Informations, statistiques, finances école Khoderbek et Yugunuluk*, Fr. Benôit, Statistique de la Mission de Koderbek et des environs 1932-1933.

⁴¹ Ibid., File *Khoderbek 1933. Les Arméniens réclament le P. Léonard (+ statistiques école P. Benôit)*, numerous signatories on behalf of the Catholic Parish of Kheder Beg to Rev. Father Jérôme, November 26, (1933).

⁴² Rev. Hovhannes Kirejian, “Perio Tem-Svedia, Khederbeg” (Aleppo Prelacy—Svedia, Kheder Beg), *Avedik* (News/Announcement), 5th Year, 1(45):1936, p. 15.

the children “will certainly be very happy body and soul.”⁴³ Similarly, a boy named Isai (Yesayi) Iskedjian expressed a desire to become a Capuchin clergyman, to which his father agreed. His attributes included the following: He was baptized by Fr. Léonard on April 10, 1925; comported himself well; had a calm character and a good, well-built physique. As for “his intellectual capacity, it is not bad.” Fr. Benôit wanted Isai to attend the seraphic seminary in Beirut, promising to personally shoulder his travel expenses because his family could not afford the fare.⁴⁴

Not everything went smoothly under Fr. Benôit’s directorship. In fact, discontent, simmering at least since 1933, erupted in 1937, when “The Latin Catholic population of Yogoun-Olouk and of Khoderbey” filed petitions airing their grievances against Fr. Benôit’s handling of the Mission affairs. On May 17, they asked Fr. Edmond, the Superior of the Antioch post, to transmit their complaint to the Capuchin Superior in Beirut about the dismissal of teacher Flora Bogossian, in their opinion unjustified.⁴⁵ But more importantly, referring to the grand scheme of things, especially concerning the situation at Yoghun Oluk, they cautioned: “If you want to maintain the existence of the [Catholic] village population and gather together those who have moved away, before anything else, send us a priest [capable of] governing the population paternally, because the Church of Yoghun Oluk being dissolved, our dead people are entrusted to Protestant pastors, becoming the reason for the Catholics to stay separated from the Church.”⁴⁶ Two days later, on May 19, five Catholic “sons of the Latin Church of Yogoun-Olouk” announced the designation of Katchadour (Khachadur) Hakissian as “our [representative] voice, to whom it may concern, regarding the subject of the local Church and of the reopening and improvement of the School.”⁴⁷

Either not having heard back from Fr. Edmond or heeding his advice, forty-three men -- twenty from Kheder Beg and twenty-three from Yoghun Oluk -- representing the Catholic population of Kheder Beg and Yoghun Oluk, on June 1, 1937, sent Fr. Louis de Gonzague, the new Superior of the Latin Catholic community of Syria and Lebanon, a similar petition. They regretted not having had the opportunity to discuss the above important issues with him during his

⁴³ CA, *Khoderbek. P. Benôit, 9 lettres*, Fr. Benôit to Very Reverend Father Superior, March 6, 1938.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Fr. Benôit to My Very Reverend Father Superior, May 8, 1938.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, The Latin Catholic population of Yogoun-Olouk and Khoderbey to V. Rev. Fr. Edmond, May 17, 1937. The letter is written both in Armenian and in French.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Vanés Adadjian, Djabra Tchapanian, Hovsep Der Bedrossian, Bogos Der Bedrossian, and Bogos Tchapanian statement, written both in Armenian and in French, May 19, 1937, Yoghun Oluk.

recent visit to Musa Dagh, and hoped that he would not turn down their demand. They asked for the following: “We desire, one day soon, to have a French priest [capable of] governing the population paternally and peacefully, a priest who knows how to govern, instead of sending away and diminishing the population, one who will augment the number.” They also expressed frustration that their earlier requests of Fr. de Gonzague had been declined with the excuses that money was lacking and that the Sanjak of Iskenderun crisis loomed. They were caught by surprise when told a convent for nuns was going to be built “immediately,” something the population had hitherto not requested. The petition also reiterated the needs of Yoghun Oluk, where the deceased were deprived of their last rites, having been taken care of by the Protestants.⁴⁸

Fr. de Gonzague was apparently aware of the situation in Musa Dagh before the June 1, 1937, petition addressed to him, because he consulted Friar Basile of Deir el-Zor in late May for his take on the root cause of the complaints. Friar Basile had sensed the restiveness in Musa Dagh while there in 1934. According to him, the Kheder Beg Catholics wanted a cleric who would intervene “in their temporal affairs, in their trial [or lawsuit], etc., with the local Franco-Syrian authorities,” or a more influential French Father (in this case, Fr. Léonard), who would have “more chance to succeed in the defense of their rights and of their interests.” Although Fr. Benôit’s “inflexible character” could have been a reason for the troubles, Friar Basile worried that people like the ones behind the démarche could, in the future, “abuse” things “to the detriment of the prestige of the missionary [in residence].” As for the discontent at Yoghun Oluk, it stemmed, in addition to the closed state of the church and school, from the fact that certain Latin families who occupied rooms within “the enclosure of the ruined church” without paying rent had been dislodged by Fr. Benôit and had to go and live elsewhere and pay.⁴⁹ Information is lacking as to how this entire episode ended. Be that as it may, it seems that Fr. Benôit felt threatened or was actually threatened, for in March, 1938, he reported: “Presently the calmness is good at night, thanks to the energetic measures that the French authority has taken against people mal-intentioned towards us.”⁵⁰ A

⁴⁸ Ibid., forty-three representatives of the Kheder Beg and Yoghun Oluk Catholic churches to Superior of the Latin Catholics of Syria and Lebanon, June 1, 1937. This petition is written both in Armenian and in French, and includes the names of all the signatories.

⁴⁹ CA, File file *Khoderbek. P. Benôit, 9 lettres*, Friar Basile to My V. Reverend Father, May 28, 1937, Deir-ez-Zor.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Fr. Benôit to Very Reverend Father Superior, March 6, 1938.

year later, on June 1, 1939, he wrote to his Superior: "Since last year, no hostile demonstration has taken place against your servant."⁵¹

Threatened, stressed out and feeling the burden of age (he was seventy-three at the time), Fr. Benôit asked his Superior in Beirut to provide him with a companion, collaborator or assistant who would be his coadjutor and eventual successor. In January, 1938, a certain Fr. Louis, who apparently was assigned to Kheder Beg, could not travel because of poor health.⁵² Soon after, another colleague, Friar Elisée, described by Fr. Benôit as a "pious, docile and hardworking" man with good housekeeping skills, arrived at the Mission as an auxiliary.⁵³ The initial positive impressions, however, proved deceptive as Fr. Benôit wrote: "Instead of being a relief for me in my solitude, [Friar Elisée] has been a heavy cross due to his reproachable conduct," for which reason he was let go after a few months. Consequently, "I now stay all alone, without a companion available here. It is quite sad, but at least I do not have inner inquietude and a troubled conscience. This is what will soften a little the toughness of my hermit life."⁵⁴ There is no indication that another Capuchin priest was dispatched to Kheder Beg thereafter.

The Capuchins from the outset encountered difficulties in making further inroads in Musa Dagh. Combating poverty could eliminate one of the obstacles. Like before, Fr. Andrea da Kalasclia sought financial assistance from his Superior as he wrote on October 1, 1923: "...There are entire villages [in Musa Dagh] that can become Catholic with little help. For this reason, V. Reverend Father, I turn to you, having already turned to God, and ask you to have pity, if nothing else, so that we can buy a little grain and distribute it to the people who are so poor and neglected." He then requested the Superior's mediation: "Say a word to His Eminence Rossum, Prefect of the Missions, and I believe that he will not refuse to send us a little help for these starving people."⁵⁵ It is not known whether succor came. What is known, however, is that certain conditions continued to hamper progress. In 1928, that is, three years after the reopening of the Mission, Fr. Jérôme regretted that these Armenians formed "an isolated bloc" that did not commingle with "other rites," had the backing

⁵¹ Ibid., File *Khoderbey. Lettres concernant le poste de Khoderbey*, Fr. Benôit to My Very Reverend Father Superior, June 1, 1939.

⁵² Ibid., File *Khoderbek. P. Benôit, 9 lettres*, Fr. Benôit to My Very Reverend Superior, January 20, 1938.

⁵³ CA, File *Khoderbek. P. Benôit, 9 lettres fr[ançais]; Fr. Elisée, 3 lettres ar[abe]*, Fr. Benôit to Very Reverend Father Superior, March 6, 1938.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Fr. Benôit to My Reverend and also Dear Father, September 17, 1938. See also letter of September 4, 1938.

⁵⁵ CA, Fr. Andrea da Kalasclia to V. Reverend Father, October 1, 1923, Antioch. This letter, found in the Catholic Archives at Maison St. François, does not have a file.

of “outside national committees,” and were “not easily penetrable to Catholic action.” Although this thankless place was quite costly, he believed that the people’s obstinacy would disappear with perseverance and God’s grace and that the words and attendant influence of the local Superior (Fr. Benôit), by virtue of being Armenian, would yield “Apostolic fruits.”⁵⁶ Fr. Benôit, himself, had this to say: “Our Latins still being neophytes, much time of work and sacrifice is needed to make them good and enlightened Catholics. We shall continue to water that which is planted while waiting for the [desired] growth by [the grace] of the good Lord.”⁵⁷

Another cleric, Friar Adrien, who around 1929-30 performed several tasks at the Mission such as teaching, introducing children to chants and devotionals, and gardening, found the inhabitants to be brave yet “very cold and full of extraordinary indifference” in regards to religion. However, women, in particular, fared “a little better.” They attended church punctually and were desirous of listening to the Superior’s sermons. While previous clerics, due to their ignorance of Armenian, preached in Turkish, a language the women did not understand, Fr. Benôit delivered his homilies in Armenian, in the simplest terms, and with “very familiar comparisons” to make his message comprehensible to these poor females who had never seen the face of school. Therefore, they must not be deprived of pity, i.e., attention.⁵⁸

Despite the encouraging signs, the overall situation did not improve as hoped. By early 1933, the Capuchins were still “fighting in this isolated and important grouping” characterized by their “genre of mortified life,” despite their “grand edification” and continued sympathies vis-à-vis Catholicism. The resident missionaries had not been able “to actively penetrate the mass. They sow, others will harvest.”⁵⁹ In August, Fr. Jérôme continued to express disappointment with a touch of optimism: “We are not discouraged despite the little fruit gathered till now. The harvest will yield well one day, we pray and work.”⁶⁰ As concrete evidence of the lack of palpable growth, only one Catholic conversion was recorded by the end of June 1934.⁶¹

⁵⁶ ACF, File 1R-1, *Syrie*, Fr. Jérôme to Son Eminence le Cardinal Pro Préfet de la S. Congrégation pour l’Eglise Orientale, January 6, 1928.

⁵⁷ AC, Fr. Benôit to Reverend Father General, January 10, 1930, Koderbek. This letter, found in the Catholic Archives at Maison St. François, does not have a file.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Friar Adrien to Reverend Father, January 6, 1930, Koderbek. This letter, found in the Catholic Archives at Maison St. François, does not have a file.

⁵⁹ ACF, File 1R-1, *Syrie*, Fr. Jérôme to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church, January 21, 1933.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Fr. Jérôme to Very Rev. Father, August 10, 1933.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, *Missions des Capucins en Syrie et en Mésopotamie. Tableau Statistique au 30 Juin 1934.*

Not only did the Catholic population not increase; it actually constituted only about half of the pre-World War I size, most probably mainly due to migration to cities like Beirut in search of jobs. In 1928, they numbered 200 persons,⁶² and five years later, in 1933, even fewer at 150.⁶³ The most accurate census, however, was the one conducted c. 1929-30 covering Kheder Beg and Yoghun Oluk. The list included the names of each member, their age, and their gender. Of the total of 263 Catholics, 125 (48%) were male and 138 (52%) were female. It was a young population as the following percentages/age groups demonstrate (the age of two individuals is not legible): 21% were between newborn/11 months old (indicated as “0” in the list) and 9 years of age; 30% between 10 and 19; 16% between 20 and 29; 15% between 30 and 39; and 16% between 40 and 79. In short, 82% were 39 and under (see Appendix).

POST SCRIPTUM

To conclude, the overwhelming majority of Musa Dagh Armenians, including the Catholics, left the Sanjak of Iskenderun before the Turkish takeover of the province on July 23, 1939, and settled in Anjar, Lebanon. By that time the Capuchins must have relinquished their jurisdiction over the Musa Dagh Catholics to the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate of Cilicia, headquartered in Beirut, for henceforth the latter assumed the governance of that group. To start with, Patriarch (later Cardinal) Krikor Bedros XV Aghajanian (Agagianian) in the first half of September, 1939, dispatched Very Rev. Fr. Hovhannes Khalkhovian to Anjar as the shepherd of his new flock. Fr. Khalkhovian during his seventeen-month tenure performed all the religious functions, established a school, and distributed relief. For their part, Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in October, 1940, opened a kindergarten. In June, 1941, Fr. Sarkis Halajian succeeded Fr. Khalkhovian and served the Catholic congregation of Anjar for a decade.⁶⁴ Apparently, an appropriate Catholic church building did not exist until 1954, when Patriarch Aghajanian inaugurated one. He also established a boarding house for parentless boys.⁶⁵ Today, the Holy Rosary’s Mother of God Catholic Parish continues its activities in Anjar. Although the school and kindergarten do not exist anymore, the Parish is more involved in

⁶² Ibid., Fr. Jérôme to Son Eminence le Cardinal Pro Préfet, January 6, 1928.

⁶³ Ibid., Fr. Jérôme to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Church, January 21, 1933.

⁶⁴ Mesrob Hayuni [Fr. Mesrob Topalian], *Aynjari “Surp Vartarani Diramayr” Hay Gatoghige Hamaynkin Badmakrutian Hamar* (For the Historiography of the “Holy Rosary’s Mother of God” Armenian Catholic Community of Anjar), Mesrob Mashdots Series 5, Anjar, Lebanon, N. p., 2014, pp. 16-29.

⁶⁵ “Gregorio Pietro Agagianian,” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, online, retrieved March 9, 2022.

general community life than was the case previously in Musa Dagħ. The Musa Dagħ Catholic community had no separate residential streets/sectors in Anjar, only an area, like the two other denominations, for the Catholic church-school in the Kheder Beg sector of Anjar.

CATHOLICS IN KHEDER BEG AND YOGHUN OLUK C. 1929-30							
#	Name	Gender	Age	#	Name	Gender	Age
1	Bedros Taslakian	Male	32	20	Hapet Taslakian	Male	22
2	Zabel Taslakian	Female	20	21	Benjamin Taslakian	Male	18
3	Hagop Taslakian	Male	20	22	Maria Taslakian	Female	17
4	Zara Taslakian	Female	18	23	Elisa Taslakian	Female	16
5	Hovsep Taslakian	Male	17	24	Satinik Taslakian	Female	4
6	Sima Taslakian	Female	52	25	Sirvart Taslakian	Female	0
7	Hagop Taslakian	Male	25	26	Ohannis Taslakian	Male	50
8	Manoushag Taslakian	Female	18	27	Yghissa Taslakian	Female	36
9	Mariam Taslakian	Female	48	28	Makrid Taslakian	Female	16
10	Sima Taslakian	Female	23	29	Bedros Taslakian	Male	13
11	Movses Taslakian	Male	18	30	Manuel Taslakian	Male	10
12	Nazareth Taslakian	Male	26	31	Mardiros Taslakian	Male	0
13	Dikranouhi Taslakian	Female	Illegible	32	Djabra Taslakian	Male	45
14	Mariam Taslakian	Female	Illegible	33	Maria Taslakian	Female	40
15	Arminag Taslakian	Male	21	34	Bedros Taslakian	Male	20
16	Bedros Taslakian	Male	18	35	Leon Taslakian	Male	19
17	Sarkis Taslakian	Male	17	36	Moussa Taslakian	Male	17
18	Hadchir Taslakian	Male	53	37	Masraf Taslakian	Male	15
19	Sima Taslakian	Female	38	38	Sirop Taslakian	Male	12

39	Antranik Taslakian	Male	10	60	Missak Iprajian	Male	25
40	Sima Taslakian	Female	4	61	Sima Iprajian	Female	20
41	Hadchir Doumanian	Male	30	62	Manuël Domanian	Male	25
42	Sima Doumanian	Female	48	63	Iskouhi Domanian	Female	21
43	Elmasd Doumanian	Female	18	64	Maria Domanian	Female	0
44	Raphaël Doumanian	Male	13	65	Zakaria Domanian	Male	22
45	Boghos Paltadjian	Male	40	66	Nectar Domanian	Female	20
46	Maria Paltadjian	Female	33	67	Roupen Domanian	Male	18
47	Ohannes Paltadjian	Male	13	68	Avidis Koyoumdjian	Male	55
48	Simon Paltadjian	Male	9	69	Iskouhi Koyoumdjian	Female	50
49	Victoria Paltadjian	Female	0	70	Essa Simonian	Male	37
50	Iskender Paltajian	Male	39	71	Maria Simonian	Female	26
51	Iskouhi Paltajian	Female	38	72	Simon Simonian	Male	8
52	Ohannes Paltajian	Male	17	73	Hadchir Simonian	Male	7
53	Vartouhi Paltajian	Female	12	74	Azniv Simonian	Female	3
54	Djabra Iprajian	Male	65	75	Setrak Kerteshian	Male	22
55	Marta Iprajian	Female	36	76	Santour Kerteshian	Female	19
56	Iskouhi Iprajian	Female	15	77	Bedros Yakoubian	Male	15
57	Vanis Iprajian	Male	12	78	Minas Yakoubian	Male	12
58	Maria Iprajian	Female	8	79	Mariam Yakoubian	Female	37
59	Dzaghir Iprajian	Female	37	80	Movses Yakoubian	Male	38

81	Mariam Yakoubian	Female	26	102	Santour Kéhulian	Female	28
82	Essa Demlakian	Male	40	103	Marsina Kéhulian	Female	7
83	Sarkis Demlakian	Male	23	104	Movses Kéhulian	Male	1
84	Marta Demlakian	Female	18	105	Movses Mikaëlian	Male	20
85	Bedros Kejderian	Male	30	106	Sima Mikaëlian	Female	41
86	Iskouhi Kejderian	Female	24	107	Mariam Hakezian	Female	26
87	Mikael Mikaëlian	Male	48	108	Apraham Hakezian	Male	6
88	Mariam Mikaëlian	Female	40	109	Cicilia Hakezian	Female	3
89	Bedros Mikaëlian	Male	18	110	Mariam Michaïlian	Female	36
90	Sarraphi Mikaëlian	Male	12	111	Boghos Iskedjian	Male	33
91	Mariam Mikaëlian	Female	15	112	Mariam Iskedjian	Female	25
92	Sima Mikaëlian	Female	71	113	Bedros Iskedjian	Male	3
93	Sarkis Andonian	Male	45	114	Ysaï Iskedjian	Male	1
94	Iskouhi Andonian	Female	35	115	Mariam Iskedjian	Female	46
95	Missak Andonian	Male	14	116	Toumas Iskedjian	Male	17
96	Elmasd Andonian	Female	12	117	Vanis Vanassian	Male	26
97	Agata Andonian	Female	10	118	Vartouhi Vanassian	Female	20
98	Agnes Andonian	Female	8	119	Yranouhi Vanassian	Female	1
99	Regina Andonian	Female	0	120	Mihran Vanassian	Male	22
100	Martha Festoukian	Female	70	121	Vectoria Vanassian	Female	18
101	Bedros Kéhulian	Male	35	122	Madehir Mardirian	Female	52

123	Toumas Akidian	Male	36	144	Sara Baïramian	Female	35
124	Nazik Akidian	Female	30	145	Nartohi Baïramian	Female	16
125	Vectoria Akidian	Female	3	146	Rousa Baïramian	Female	14
126	Veronica Akidian	Female	7	147	Azadouhi Baïramian	Female	6
127	Emilia Akidian	Female	4	148	Armenouhi Baïramian	Female	3
128	Azniv Akidian	Female	1	149	Hovsep Derbedrossian	Male	30
129	Mariam Akidian	Female	52	150	Hatoun Derbedrossian	Female	25
130	Boghos Kertéshian	Male	35	151	Boghos Derbedrossian	Male	8
131	Mariam Kertéshian	Female	28	152	Siranoush Derbedrossian	Female	3
132	Gabriel Kertéshian	Male	20	153	Setrak Derbedrossian	Male	1
133	Djouhar Kertéshian	Female	17	154	Kevork Kenbérian	Male	40
134	Michaël Kertéshian	Male	8	155	Couhar Kenbérian	Female	35
135	Sima Kertéshian	Female	4	156	Avedis Kenbérian	Male	11
136	Loucia Kertéshian	Female	50	157	Martha Kenbérian	Female	2
137	Gabriel Kertéshian	Male	12	158	Gabriél Tchaparian	Male	40
138	Andon Andonian	Male	35	159	Sima Tchaparian	Female	35
139	Rahel Andonian	Female	25	160	Vector Tchaparian	Female	12
140	Bedros Andonian	Male	7	161	Boghos Tchaparian	Male	10
141	Mariam Andonian	Female	2	162	Toumas Tchaparian	Male	6
142	Anna Andonian	Female	67	163	Vanis Tchaparian	Male	2
143	Ovnan Baïramian	Male	45	164	Bedros Derbedrossian	Male	54

165	Martha Derbedrossian	Female	40	186	Bedros Djansisian	Male	16
166	Garabed Derbedrossian	Male	18	187	Ysaï Djansisian	Male	14
167	Hagop Derbedrossian	Male	14	188	Eva Djansisian	Female	12
168	Azadouhi Derbedrossian	Female	6	189	Manuël Djansisian	Male	10
169	Sima Derbedrossian	Female	75	190	Vartouhi Djansisian	Female	8
170	Djabra Atashian	Male	60	191	Nazar Djansisian	Male	4
171	Sima Atashian	Female	40	192	Boghos Djansisian	Male	1
172	Garabed Atashian	Male	18	193	Couhar Toroussian	Female	38
173	Ovsanna Atashian	Female	12	194	Bedros Toroussian	Male	22
174	Bedros Kazandjian	Male	36	195	Emilia Toroussian	Female	20
175	Mariam Kazandjian	Female	35	196	Nectar Toroussian	Female	16
176	Elisa Kazandjian	Female	15	197	Hagop Toroussian	Male	14
177	Martha Kazandjian	Female	12	198	Antranik Tourossian	Male	7
178	George Kazandjian	Male	10	199	Marie Tourossian	Female	9
179	Apraham Kazandjian	Male	8	200	Sarkis Habeshian	Male	50
180	Vahan Kazandjian	Male	1	201	Sima Habeshian	Female	40
181	Vartanoush (no surname)	Female	11	202	Iskouhi Habeshian	Female	18
182	Siroun (no surname)	Female	13	203	Tomas Habeshian	Male	12
183	Mardiros Djansisian	Male	50	204	Makrouhi Berberian	Female	50
184	Sima Djansisian	Female	38	205	Iskouhi Berberian	Female	25
185	Toumas Djansisian	Male	18	206	Hairabed Berberian	Male	40

207	Couhar Berberian	Female	38	228	Sima Beguian	Female	12
208	Arminak Berberian	Male	22	229	Mihran Phrazian	Male	20
209	Missak Berberian	Male	13	230	Mariam Phrazian	Female	34
210	Vartouhi Berberian	Female	1	231	Sarkis Adajian	Male	53
211	Mariam Sarkahian	Female	67	232	Sima Adajian	Female	38
212	Iskouhi Sarkahian	Female	30	233	Ohannes Adajian	Male	16
213	Shouchan Sarkahian	Female	22	234	Henazant Adajian	Female	19
214	Mardiros Sarkahian	Male	35	235	Elmasd Adajian	Female	17
215	Iskouhi Sarkahian	Female	31	236	Hagop Adajian	Male	13
216	Araksi Sarkahian	Female	8	237	Adoulph Adajian	Male	7
217	Marie Sarkahian	Female	4	238	Atam Adajian	Male	3
218	Sarkis Sarkahian	Male	28	239	Ohannes Adajian	Male	18
219	Marina Sarkahian	Female	24	240	Vanis Adajian	Male	11
220	Araksi Sarkahian	Female	2	241	Vector Adajian	Female	13
221	Marina Sarkahian	Female	1	242	Mariam Adajian	Female	37
222	Hairabed Beguian	Male	45	243	Hadchir Hakissian	Male	46
223	Loucia Beguian	Female	26	244	Eva Hakissian	Female	35
224	Azadouhi Beguian	Female	7	245	Nazar Hakissian	Male	12
225	Makrouhi Beguian	Female	2	246	Mousa Hakissian	Male	9
226	Sara Beguian	Female	30	247	Olga Hakissian	Female	7
227	Thami Beguian	Female	15	248	Yevnigui Hakissian	Female	1

249	Bedros Derbedrossian	Male	44	257	Boghos Derbedrossian	Male	25
250	Mariam Derbedrossian	Female	35	258	Hagop Derbedrossian	Male	14
251	Boghos Derbedrossian	Male	21	259	Sarkis Kanberian	Male	50
252	Mihran Derbedrossian	Male	13	260	Yeghisa Kanberian	Female	40
253	Yeghisapet Derbedrossian	Female	17	261	Vector Kanberian	Female	15
254	Sima Derbedrossian	Female	11	262	Ysai Kanberian	Male	12
255	Tatéos Derbedrossian	Male	53	263	Zarouhi Kanberian	Female	10
256	Dzaghbir Derbedrossian	Female	32				

Remarks: Names spelled as in the original document

Source: Capuchin Archives, Maison St. François, Mtayleb, Lebanon

Liste du Latins Catholiques du Koderbek et Youghonolouk (Souvédia).

ՔԱՓՈՒԶԻՆԵԱՆ Ս. ՊՕՂՈՍ ԱՌԱՔԵԼՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ ՄՈՒՍԱ ԼԵՌԱՆ ՄԷՋ, 1919-1939

(Ամփոփում)

ՎԱՀՐԱՄ ՇԵՄՄԱՍԵԱՆ

Vahram.shemmassian@csun.edu

Այս ուսումնասիրությունը կ'ընէ պատմականը կաթողիկէ ներկայութեան՝ Մուսա Լեռան մէջ, գլխաւորաբար հիմնուելով առաջին անգամ օգտագործուող արխիւային նիւթերու վրայ:

Մուսա Լեռան հայոց մէջ քափուչինեան Ս. Պօղոս առաքելութիւնը հաստատուեցաւ 1891ին, Խտըր Պէկ գիւղին մէջ: Տասնամեակ մը շարունակ, օսմանեան կառավարութիւնը առաքելութիւնը ապօրէն հաստատութիւն նկատեց, միւս կողմէ սակայն, օրինական համարելով անկէ գանձեց հարկ եղած տուրքերը: Շրջանի բնակչութենէն որոշ թիւով մարդիկ - մեծամասամբ հայ առաքելականներ - իրենց հաւատարմութիւնը թեքեցին կաթողիկէ եկեղեցիին, յոյս ունենալով տնտեսական աղբիւրներ ձեռք բերել եւ բարելաւել իրենց ընկերատնտեսական վիճակը: Ա. աշխարհամարտի սկիզբին, վանքին երեք կրօնաւորները արտաքսուեցան: Պատերազմին ընթացքին հիւսիսային Ափրիկէէն բերուած իսլամ գաղթականներ գրաւեցին վանքն ու կողոպտեցին եւ աւերեցին զայն: Պատերազմի աւարտին, աքսորէն վերապրած տեղաբնիկ հայերը Համայէն վերադառնալով, Փորթ Սայիտ փոխադրուած իրենց հայրենակիցներուն հետ վերաբնակեցան իրենց տուները: Քափուչին վանականները հինգ տարի չվերադարձան Մուսա Լեռ, որովհետեւ իրենց վանքն ու միւս յարմարութիւնները վատ վիճակի մէջ էին եւ պէտք ունէին հիմնական նորոգութեան եւ կահաւորման: Վերատիրանալով իրենց կալուածներուն վանականներուն առաջին գործը եղաւ Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցիի արարողութեամբ պսակուած հայ կաթողիկէները վերապսակել լատին ծէսով, մերժելով հայ առաքելական ծէսը: Այս արարքը Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցիին բացայատ դժգհանքին արժանացաւ: Եւ քանի որ ժողովուրդին ընկերատնտեսական վիճակը չբարելաւուեցաւ, քափուչիները առաջուան նման ջանացին իրենց հօտին եւ հաւանական դաւանափոխներուն տնտեսապէս օգնել: Այդուհանդերձ, հօտը թուական աճ չունեցաւ յաջորդ քսան տարիներուն, մինչեւ Բ. աշխարհամարտ: Ընդհակառակը հօտը նուազեցաւ իր նախապատերազմեան շրջանի թիւին կէսին: Դեռ աւելին, Եողուն Օլուքի անոնց եկեղեցին ու դպրոցը փակ մնացին: Փոքր բացառութիւններով, կաթողիկէներ չկային Մուսա Լեռան միւս չորս գիւղերուն մէջ: Ընդհանրապէս, մուսալեռցի կաթողիկէները մնացին կղզիացած իրենց հայրենակիցներէն՝ բնակչութեան ընդհանրական ձեռնարկներէն հեռու:

Երբ մուսալեռցիներուն մեծամասնութիւնը, Իսքենտէրունի սանճաքի միւս հայերուն նման լքեցին տարածքը՝ Յուլիս 1939ին անոր Թուրքիոյ կցումին պատճառով, քափուչիները իրենց հաստատութիւնը փոխանցեցին Պէյրութ կեդրոնացած հայ կաթողիկէ պատրիարքութեան: Մուսա Լեռան գաղթականներուն մեծամասնութիւնը հաստատուեցաւ Լիբանանի Պէքայի հովիտին մէջ, Այնճար: Ատով ալ Կաթողիկէ Եկեղեցին վերապրումի նոր հանգրուան թեւակոխեց: