

VAHAN HAMBARTSUMIAN

VILLAGE WORLD

(Kiughashkharh)

AN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL STUDY
OF GOVDOON

Translated from the Armenian by

Murad A. Meneshian



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Published by Govdoon Youth of America
Providence, Rhode Island

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Printed in the United States of America

Printed on Acid Free Paper

Published by the Govdoon Rehabilitation Union

Publication Number 1

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Daron Publishing House
Paris 1927



Picture by S. Khachadrian

**The Armenian woman in her local costume of the upper Alice
River Valley**

DEDICATION

The author dedicates this book to
The Sacred Memory of Govdoon's thousands
of victims of The Great Tragedy of 1915

The Author

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

When the suggestion to translate *Kiughashkharh* was made by a few Govdoon compatriots, I was thrilled by the idea. I undertook the work as a labor of love and indebtedness to that generation, which underwent the horrible human indignities, tortures and massacres by the hands of the Turks and Kurds in the Armenians' own ancestral homeland.

During the translation, the further I progressed into the book, my admiration and appreciation for our ancestors and the survivors of the Genocide grew enormously. Although we have, time and time again, heard and read about the tragic events, which befell the Armenian population before and during The Genocide, I gained a new perspective into the horrible anguish and trauma of the survivors, who saw their children, parents, wives, husbands, brothers and sisters brutally murdered in front of their eyes. An incident described by one of the survivors from Govdoon was so inhuman that it left me stunned, because it was an act beyond the realm of one's imagination. The survivor tells us that after the Turks killed a number of people from her group, the murderers slit the bodies, took out their victims' livers and tried to sell them to the refugees. Unfortunately, such inhuman acts were later rewarded by the Allied Powers of WWI, who provided arms and economic aid to Turkey to set up the Kemalist Regime, which pulled the final curtain on The Genocide.

Yet, these survivors, who witnessed such unimaginable physical and psychological trauma, settled in new lands, learned new languages, worked diligently during good and bad economic times, prospered, excelled in every field, contributed out of their proportion to their adopted countries, and after all that, they raised a well educated generation.

Meanwhile, Turkey became indigent, because the Armenians, who filled her breadbaskets, were annihilated. Poverty stricken, Turkey began to extend her hands to her former enemy countries for help. Until today, Turkey remains dependent on Western Countries, without whose help her economy would be in shambles.

The book contains a large number of uncommon Armenian and Turkish words, some of which are provincial. I have given the

meanings of these words parenthetically, with only few exceptions. In an effort to provide a uniform pronunciation of these words, I have provided a phonetic transliteration, which at times deviates from a more familiar spelling of some Armenian words. However, in few rare cases, the more commonly used spelling has been preserved. For example, Govdoon is not spelled as Govdun. Also, a particular Armenian name, which is seen spelled as Harutium, Hrouitium, Harutiune, Haroutiune, and perhaps in many other ways, I have spelled this name as Harutium to preserve uniformity by using “iu” for the Armenian digraph, which sounds as the English word “you.” Certain errors have been preserved as they appear in the Armenian text. For example, a person’s name appears on two different lists at the end of the book.

Although the classical notation for the letters of the Armenian alphabet uses single letters or symbols, I have stayed with the more familiar notation, with the exception of using the classical symbol “ê” for the Armenian letter, which sounds as the letter “e” in the word “the,” and the letter “u” in the word “femur.”

The pronunciation of the letters which I have utilized are shown below:

a, as “a” in father.

e, as “e” in bed; at word ends, a silent “h” is added.

i, as “ee” in feet.

o, as “o” in hole.

u, as “oo” in food.

y, as “y” in yet.

iu, as “u” in tune.

ê, as “e” in the, and “u” as in femur.

zh, as “j” in the French word Jacques, or “s” in pleasure.

gh, as “r” in the French word merci.

kh, as “ch” in the German word Bach.

ts, as “z” in the German word Mozart.

ds, is pronounced somewhat similarly to “ts” with the emphasis on the letter “d.”

I have attempted to translate literally, as much as it was possible, in order to remain true to the author’s style. I have kept the transliteration of words and names as written by the author;

even though at times the English spelling of these words will look somewhat unfamiliar to the reader.

Interestingly, and coincidentally with this translation, an article on Vital Cuinet's statistics by Sarkis Y. Karayan has appeared in the *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, Vol. 11, (2000), pp. 53-63. Karayan's study deals mainly with Cuinet's serious errors and deficiencies concerning the statistics on the Armenian population in the 1880s, with special attention given to the population figures for Armenians in the central and eastern provinces of Asia Minor. It is interesting that Vahan Hambartsumian states that Cuinet's Armenian population figures are somewhat inaccurate.

My special thanks go to Professor Vahakn N. Dadrian, who dedicated his valuable time to provide the meanings of many Turkish words. Without his help, the translation would not have been as thorough. I am grateful to Harry Kushigian for reading the draft copies, and to my wife, Knarik, for her valuable suggestions and final editing of the translation.

Murad A. Meneshian
Glenview, IL, October, 2001

FOREWORD

The last decade of our history remains unique with the obscure mystery of rushing events. Not a single group of people, under any sky, was subjected to such horrible and shocking events, as did the Armenian people under its own roofs.

The Armenian people had just gotten on its own feet (after the Young Turk Revolution, Tr.), full of hope and a bright future, when the Turkish murderous pack cast us onto the tortuous bloody road. As a result, the entire Armenian population of Western Armenia does not exist anymore. Their last breaths and moans were cast to the ill winds and the hot sands of the deserts. They vanished entirely from the stage of living history.

The memory of the millions of victims of World War I instilled in the hearts of the European people the idea of a place for the “Unknown Soldier,” where people would visit to honor and reflect on the dedicated sacrifice of these soldiers.

The French Parliament, on October 25, 1919, adopted a resolution according to which the names of all those who had fallen on the battle fields were to be recorded in a golden book and placed in a Pantheon. Grieving parents could not wait. They thrust themselves forward, and established the organization of “Fathers and Mothers” in order to publish a multi volume “Golden Book.” However, we Armenians, until today, do not have anything for the memory of our countless victims. We do not even have an established date for a pan-national expression, or a physical symbol. We limp along, following the values, customs and the greatness of some nations, without reflecting on the unstable behavior of our own lives, as if the mannerism of our simplest private and public relationships were Armenian echoes from foreign lands. We don’t imitate what is noble, lasting and priceless. However strong is our forgetfulness, so strong is our assimilation. This is why the Armenian annals are devoid of subjects on the deportations. Besides some mentions in passing, few pamphlets containing incomplete works, “The Great Atrocity” has still been left to the fading conditions of time and memory. The subject of deportations in our annals and annals on our deportations are

absent from our literature. Not only have we passed quietly over our people's unenviable martyrdom, living in our peaceful adopted countries, we have very seldom written about its nature, place, virtues and faults. We do not even have a description of our regions on a wide scale.

The present work is a modest effort to study the lives of thousands of Armenian farmers of the Sebastia Region, particularly that of the Hafik Region, with respect to their social, public, economic and ethnic situations. I have attempted, under adverse community situations, to give satisfaction to the demands of my compatriots by utilizing all possible means, to restore our region, village and immortal life to the way it used to be. I do not know how much I have succeeded. I have no pretension of delivering to the general public's opinion a complete work, far away from our ever flowing spring, from where our people were forced out to never return. I can only say that whatever I have collected piece by piece, sought, found and summarized, I have done with great affection and emotion in my heart. However, there are still so many unconquerable obstacles, which prevent me from obtaining so much more evidence and documents. Let this work become a stimulus for a more complete and accomplished work.

I am indebted to give my profound thanks to Mr. S. Vratsian (the last prime minister of the Republic of Armenia, Tr.), photographer S. Khachadrian and to all those individuals and organizations, who willingly and without reservation assisted me in this work, especially The "Govdoon Rehabilitation Union" in the United States, which not only became the spirit and impetus of this work, but also saved the survivors and orphans from the deserts, without withdrawing from sacrifices and without evading from financial responsibilities.

February 15, 1927, Paris, France

V. Hambartsumian

Note: Those who have any information on the present subject, please forward them to me so that, in the event of a second edition, I will be able to expand the "Village World."

PART A

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

SEBASTIA'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Lesser Armenia has been the cradle of Eastern ethnic groups. Hittites, Khalts, Armens and other large and small groups have come to this region, mingled, neutralized themselves and assimilated with the different races. Towards the end of the seventh century B.C., persecuted and forced out by the Cimmerian and Scythian invasions, some Aryan groups, seeking to establish new homelands, were compelled to leave their native lands, and thrust themselves eastward toward Phrygia and Cappadocia. Among these groups were the Armens, not a particularly large group, who were in their early formative stages. While still in Phrygia and Cappadocia, the Armens had already implemented their unbelievable organizational abilities. Intending to increase their number, the Armens were assimilating their neighboring Hittite people by establishing friendly relationships with them. Thus, by such means they founded a homeland on the right side of the Euphrates, which later came to be known as Lesser Hayk¹ or Armenia Minor. Our first independent homeland, established by our ancestors, was not able to endure long under the constant attacks of invaders. Finally, they joined with the kingdom of Mithradates of Pontus.

Mithradates of Pontus has left numerous monuments, fortresses and landmarks in Sebastia, particularly in Zileh, Divrig, Zara, Yevtogia (Tokat) and Amasia, which until today remain in ruins as silent witnesses.

The great Mithradates ruled from 123-63 B.C. He spoke all the languages of the people, which he ruled. He was a brave and combative warrior. He was allied with Tigranes (II) The Great to resist the Romans until a victory was achieved. For almost twenty-

¹ Leo, *Vani Takavorutiumê*, page 359.

seven years, from 90 to 63 B.C., Mithradates was at war with Rome. At the end, when he was ready to advance toward Rome, his son revolted against him. As a result, Mithradates committed suicide by asking one of his slaves to kill him.

The present day city of Sebastia was not built at the spot of the old city. The ruins of the old city are found an hour's distance away between the towns of Prknik and Ghavraz. The old city was famous with its Kapira temple, which later was known as Men-Farnak. Nearby, Mithradates had a splendid palace, which like a fortress defended against Lucullus' attacks, but later succumbed.

In 66 B.C., Pompey succeeded Lucullus. During his triumphant passage through Sebastia, Pompey changed the name of Kapira to Theopolis. Sebastia became an important trade center in the Pontus kingdom, and became the inheritance of Mithradates' grandson, son of Farnas.

The constant wars and racial conflicts brought this small kingdom under the suzerainty of Polemus, who left it to his wife Bitodoris.² Under her rule, she expanded the frontiers of her state and gave her capital the name of "Sebaste." When Polemus II in 65 A.D. succeeded her mother, not being able to retain the territory, he offered it to Nero. From that time, Sebastia was joined to Cappadocia, and became part of the Roman Empire's vast possessions. Lesser Hayk made up part of Cappadocia without becoming a distinct ethnographic region. This was a disturbing situation for Armenia's administrative equality. For that reason, Armenia again was divided into two parts, first and second Hayks.

This existence did not last very long. Invasions by barbarians and the continual weakening of the Roman Empire, resulted in the loss of control on the peripheral regions of the kingdom, placing them under different administrative, geographic and ethnographic conditions.

Lesser Hayk remained under the rule of the Roman Empire. After Justinian the Great drove the invading Persians back, he turned to massive construction efforts and administrative divisions. According to the new administrative system, Lesser Hayk became divided into four regions, three of which remained within Lesser Hayk, and the fourth became part of Greater Hayk. The capital city

² Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, vol. 1, p. 670.

of the first region became Caesaria (Gesarya), that of the second, Sebastia, and the third, Malatya.³ This artificial division was not based on any geographic, historical, ethnographic or economic grounds. The division was based strictly on military reasons. For that reason, the system did not last. Fortresses and defensive structures were the only types of buildings constructed. Until today, the ruins of one of Justinian's fortresses still stand.

Until the eleventh century under Byzantine rule, Sebastia's Armenian population gradually got organized, and even attained religious high ground. When Emperor Romanus Lecapenus (919-946) started persecuting the Armenian clergy to impose the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, the Armenians of Sebastia did not relinquish their religious convictions, thus were subjected to persecution.⁴ The ruthless governors of Sebastia and Melitene (Malatya) proscribed the ringing of church bells during services, and wrote insulting letters to Khachig Catholicos (972-991).

Sebastia remained under Byzantine rule until King Senekerim Ardruni of Vaspuragan signed a mutual treaty in 1021 with Emperor Basil II, who was of Armenian origin. In order to escape from the dangerous surroundings controlled by the Seljuq Dughril Beg, Senekerim Artzruni proposed to Emperor Basil II to exchange the city of Sebastia with the region of Vaspuragan. Upon this agreement, Senekerim relocated in 1016 to Sebastia with all his family, princes, army and people, according to Greek historians, or in 1021 according to writings of Toma (Thomas) Artzruni.⁵ The displaced kingdom of Ardruni survived one century in Sebastia, surrounded by a large Armenian population whose numbers probably reached 150,000.

This unusual historical event had a unique importance for the Armenians of Sebastia for cultural and national enlightenment. The idea of establishing a homeland generated a healthy environment

³ Leo, *Hayots Badmutiun*, p. 15-195, Tiflis.

⁴ A. Zaminian, *Hay Grakanutyun Badmutiun*, p. 144.

⁵ There are some discrepancies in the dates which have not to date been resolved. According to Armenian historians, the number of people migrating with Senekerim is estimated to be 100,000; however, according to a Greek historian, the number is 14,000. (Balasarian, *Hayots Badmutiun*, p. 420; G. Basmachian, *Isgagan Badmutiun Hayots*, p. 342.)

for the realization of national and fraternal noble characteristics to enhance civilization among the people.

Until today, on both sides of the river Alice (Halys), there exist numerous monuments, monasteries and other structures, strewn over the beautiful and impregnable valleys in the hills of the homeland. The monasteries of Saint Nshan, Hreshdagabed, Khonrgdur and Saint Hagop are clear and simple examples of Armenian architectural gems, everlasting witnesses of the Ardsruni⁶ Princedom. They all carry Armenian original characteristics. The importance of the Ardsruni dominion in the region of Sebastia renders itself to an interesting study from the historical, economic and political point of view.

During this exceptional time from 999-1080, Sebastia experienced a period of bright renaissance. However, it did not last long. Starting at the beginning of the 12th century, the Tatar (Tartar or Seljuk) invasions became more severe and frequent. The leaders of the “arched hoards,” Hulaku, Alp Arslan, Bugha, Gengis-Khan and Tamerlane (Timur) became the Red Terror of the Near East. In 1400, Tamerlane entered Sebastia from the north after marauding Amasia and Yevtogia. The defenseless Armenian people remained alone. Religion remained, as always, a strong support for survival. The ardent believers waited with utmost patience for a divine revelation. A period of austerity and servitude began, which lasted for centuries, even until the middle of the 19th century. Armenians had long ago lost their kingdom and the ability for military defenses. They did not dare to think about defending themselves. Hopelessly, the Armenians decided to implore mercy from the merciless. After a period of long contemplation, they came up with a plan and implemented it. They gathered approximately 1000 children and placed a Koran in each child’s hands. The innocent

⁶ Senekerim Ardsruni and his princes according to G. Basmachian, “*Isgagan Badmutiun Hayots*,” p. 343:

A. Senekerim Ardsruni, 999-1016, Rshduni King, deceased 1026 in Sebastia. His wife was Khushush Khatun, King Gagik’s daughter.

B. King Davit of Sebastia, 1027-1037.

C. King Adom of Sebastia, 1037-1060.

D. Abusahl of Sebastia, 1060-1080.

children, lined up in a row, were taken to Tamerlane. Upon seeing the children, Tamerlane ordered his soldiers to surround the children, take away the Korans and trample them under the hooves of their horses.

The area where the thousand children were martyred is called “Black Grounds,” the birthplace of Abbot Mkhitar (of the Mkhitarist Order, Tr.). The tragic and ruthless murders of the 1000 children was followed by the destruction of the “Forty Infants” church, the burying alive of four thousand Turkish soldiers and the plunder and burning of the city. Thus, the Armenians of Sebastia were saved, but paid a heavy toll, suffering under enslaved and servile conditions.

Sultan Bayazid, named Yildirim (lightning), and Sultan Selim unified all the feudal lords of Asia Minor and attacked Tamerlane’s marauders, defeating them. During the continuous battles between the two Turanic groups, the tormented and unprotected Armenian people collectively set on the road of migration. The homeland gradually became devoid of Armenians. The lure of safe and peaceful lands attracted them. Both the Turks and the Tatars became equally dangerous, since both had their origins from the barbaric and nomadic shepherds of central Asia.

In the middle of the 14th century when Sultan Fatih captured Constantinople, the Turkish boundaries had already expanded to the banks of the Danube River, Egypt and North Africa. The Ottoman Empire became the only heir to the ruined Byzantine Empire, the decrepit Arabian Khalifate and the fragmented Tatar marauders. The Ottoman Sultan became the captain of a vast Mohammedan sea, lacking the required responsibility and ability to rule. Only Persia remained outside of this powerful Mohammedan fist. However, Persia also in its turn was nurturing an appetite for conquest.

The Turkish-Persian wars began in 1473. The constant military movements passed through Armenian lands, causing havoc to our people. After the Turk-Tatar horrors, this was another scourge, which the Armenian people came to bear. The scourge became impossible to endure. Thus began a new migration toward Poland, Hungary, Transylvania, Mesopotamia and the shores of the Black Sea.

In the seventeenth century, Turkey was defeated at the gates of Vienna. The Ottoman Empire was collapsing in the interiors, particularly in the region of Sebastia and nearby places. In the Anatolian anarchical wasteland, the Jellalies⁷ and Cherkez again subjected the Armenians to destruction. They oppressed and murdered, then created a slavish, unbearable situation. Every minute, deportation and terror loomed over the heads of the Armenians. Hopeless and defenseless conditions existed during those desperate days.

In subsequent years, the investment of European capital in Turkey, the political interactions, commercial relationships, communications and establishment of foreign agencies became means of gradual support for the Armenian people, an oasis where it became possible, from time to time, to find safe havens and breathe an air of hopefulness.

In the nineteenth century, Turkey also awakened from its medieval slumber, and like a circus, opened its doors to everyone. Until now Turkey is an open field for speculating nations for uncertain political tendencies.

The endless expanses, villages and towns, fields and woodlands have become filled with weeds and displaced people.

Turkey is a wasteland.

The present day Sebastia has become a blind and depopulated prison, a source of nationalist partisans, thanks to the destructive character of the Turks.

⁷ Jellalies were brigand lords, who revolted against the government. They spread terror for a decade, 1598-1608, until the government crushed their rebellion.

GEOGRAPHY AND ADMINISTRATION

After a brief look at the history of Sebastia, it is imperative to present some geographic information.

Sebastia occupies the central portion of Asia Minor. It is surrounded by the Black Sea in the north; Erzerum (Garin) in the east; Gesarya, Konia and Kharpert in the south; the province of Angora in the west. The area is covered with intertwined mountains and fields. Two mountain ranges, Davros (Anti-Taurus) and Pontus, like two arms, straddle the two sides of the river Alice. Their valleys are strewn with countless villages and picturesque towns. The impervious peaks of Karabel, Giurlavik, Tejer, Chamlêbel, Yêldêz-Eli, Yêlanchi, Merekium and the Sakhar mountains remain the eternal canopy over Sebastia.

The flood raved river Alice roars down from the highlands of Habesh and Goshgir's Kzêl Dag, inundating the towns and villages of Kartuk, Alakiliseh, Zara, Koch Hisar and Govdoon. At the city of Sebastia, it turns towards the south on its way to Sher-Kshla, meandering through the mountains of Bafra in the province of Angora. After traveling a tortuous one thousand kilometers, the river empties itself into the Black Sea. The river Iris flows from the nearby highlands of Erzinga, it passes through Sadakh, Kelkit, then irrigates the vast fields of Tokat and Ghaz-Ova. After turning north, it too empties into the Black Sea. Sebastia is rich with rivers and lakes. Besides these two large rivers, there are secondary rivers, which irrigate the province's farmlands and grazing fields in the area of Chekerek-Êrmak, Ozanlu Chay, Yêldêz-Êrmak, Ters-Agan Su and other places.

There exist many lakes full of fish in the areas of Ghaz-Ova and Turghal. Near Shabin-Karahisar is found the well-known Black Lake, which name is also given to the surrounding mountains known as Ghara-Geol Dag.

The means of communication into and through the province were in very poor condition. Everything was primitive and medieval. There were no convenient means of transportation. Railroads remained a dream; the automobile and electric cars were objects of wonderment. At the start of World War I, after seeing an automobile in the city of Sebastia, the ignorant and backward

people had crowded around it, without understanding anything, had called it “jansêz araba,” meaning soulless carriage. This was not surprising, because the villagers and city dwellers had no opportunity to travel outside of their towns, nor communicate with others in far away places. In order to go someplace outside of town, one had to undertake a difficult trip for days, utilizing a donkey or a cart.

The entire export and import business of Sebastia was done by the Armenian caravan owners of Prknik and Ghavraz. For days and weeks, these caravan owners would overnight in dirty inns during their travels between Sebastia and Samson. Several times, the construction of a railroad between Sebastia and Samson was planned and announced that it was going to be undertaken by Belgian and French companies, but each time it failed. The number of roads was not enough for an expansive area as Sebastia. This was the reason for Sebastia to remain a backwards province in Anatolia, deprived of vital means of communication. Despite these conditions, Sebastia was one of the most important centers in all of Turkey, particularly for agricultural products.

Sebastia province covered an area of 83,700 square kilometers, with a population of 748,000. It was one of the largest provinces in Turkey, encompassing an area equal to the total areas of Soviet Armenia, Belgium and Netherlands. The province was divided into 4 Sanjaks (a large administrative region, coming in order of scope between a district and a province, Tr.), 26 Kavars (district), 257 towns and 4761 villages. The population consisted of Armenians, Turks, Greeks, Kurds, Kzêlbash, Yoriuk, Turkmen, Cherkez, Chechen, Karapapakh, Avshars (Armenians who were forced into Islam in the early 19th century) and Jews. According to Vital Cuinet, p. 670, or Salnameh of the 1890 census, the population distribution was as follows:

A. Turk-Turkmen (Sunni Moslems)	559,680
B. Kzêlbash (Shiite Moslems)	279,834
C. Armenians of all denominations	170,773
D. Greeks and Jews	<u>76,068</u>
Total	1,086,355

According to the Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate statistics of 1912, the population figures were as follows:

A. Armenians	165,000
B. Greeks	30,000
C. Nestorians, Khalts and Jacobites	25,000
D. Turks	192,000
E. Cherkez	45,000
F. Kurds	35,000
G. Kurd nomads	<u>15,000</u>
Total	507,000

It must be said that the Patriarchate numbers are very low because the population of the eastern and northern regions were not included in the statistics.

The eminent philologist scholar of Sebastia, Garabed Kapikian, who had personally visited most of the areas of Sebastia, based on his own searches, had presented in his 1914 publication of *Yeghernabadoum* the following numbers:

A. Armenians	350,000
B. Greeks	47,000
C. Turks, Kurds, Cherkez, etc.	<u>503,000</u>
Total	900,000

Hnchagian field worker Mihran Chukasjian, prior to WWI, with the help of Sebastia's prelacy and on his own time, had gathered Sebastia's population statistics, with the sole purpose of verifying them and recording their importance. He personally has presented to me the following numbers:

A. Armenians	262,500
B. Turks	190,000
C. Kzêlbash	125,000
D. Greeks	45,000
E. Cherkez	45,000
F. Kurds	50,000
G. Caldeans, Nestorians, Avshar, Chechen	<u>30,000</u>
Total	747,000

All the above numbers do not reflect the province's whole picture. The numbers were estimated with special purposes in mind, thus, do not have any scientific value. All four estimates show four different and creative numbers, gathered from separate regions. Therefore, no matter how disputable these numbers are, they give certain information about the population of the region. The last set of numbers may be considered the closest to the correct figures concerning the Armenian population. Yet according to the Patriarchate's 1882 statistics, Sebastia had an Armenian population of 280,000, without that of Shabin-Karahisar, which at that time was part of Trabizond sanjak.

After 1882, the Sebastia Armenians were subjected to several political crises, such as the massacres of 1895, the Kurd-Cherkez oppressions and emigration. These incidents were not catastrophic enough to reduce the Armenian population from 262,500 to 165,000 in just thirty years. There was another situation, which confirmed that the Armenian population was larger than what the Turkish government stated. That was the Armenian tradition according to which a household consisted of parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles and wives, all of whom lived together for many years, and dined at the same table. A family could consist of ten to twenty-five members. In order to show that a household had many members, the people would say that the household "uses at least 20 to 30 spoons." However, for various impelling reasons, a smaller number would be given. For such and many other reasons, the 262,500 figure must be accepted as a close approximation of Sebastia's Armenian population.

AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS

The great majority of the population of Sebastia engaged in agriculture. Life was blessed there with irrigated fields, verdant valleys, serpentine gorges, high mountains, meadows and forests spread in all directions, enchanting the human existence.

Everywhere it was the land that spoke, sang and dictated. In Sebastia, the land and agriculture constituted everything. Struggle for bread and existence, unemployment and economic chaos, famine and drought were strangers to the region. The storage bins were full and bread was plentiful. One person's efforts fed ten people. The Armenian villager, under those conditions, had created such an abundant life, which had provoked the appetites of the lazy Turks. The Turkish ruling class looked unfavorably at the Armenian farmers and craftsmen, who constantly advanced and raised their economic conditions by persistent and hard work.

The brutal governor Muammer used various themes to incite the Turks against the Armenians. To rouse the Turks' jealousy, he would utter such statements as, "Oh sons of Turks, look at the Armenian tinsmith, who by banging all day long is able to support a ten-member family."⁸ Those who were jealous of the tinsmith should have been more jealous of the farmers.

The farmer, who was dependent on the weather, had to come to terms with the climatic conditions. The weather in Sebastia was unusually unpredictable. In the northern and eastern regions, the winters were long and summers short. In the south and west, the opposite was the case. The temperature ranged from zero to thirty degrees centigrade. The snow would pile up to a person's height, and cover roads and houses. Travelers would often wander off the roads into villages and towns. They would ring bells for help.

The arable land was entirely black earth. Clayish earth was practically non-existent. The farmer was completely ignorant of improved agricultural methods. He plowed, planted and reaped using outdated equipment. All the villages in the upper valley of the river Alice did not know how to use a large plow and its benefits. Only after the Ottoman Constitution in 1908, those who

⁸ G. Kapikian, *Yeghernabadoum*.

had traveled to foreign lands and seen advances in many fields returned home, bringing with them new ideas and knowledge. They established commercial ties, imported new equipment and caused drastic changes in their traditional living condition. There was no cooperative organization for agricultural equipment. There were no agricultural banks, credit unions, agricultural organizations or other institutions to help the farmers. The individual efforts were the bases for everything.

The Turkish populations, in general, were shepherds, and only a small number of them were farmers. The Armenian population, in contrast, engaged in all sorts of occupations. Farming, orchard growing, gardening, herding and bee hive keeping were pleasant occupations for the Armenians, specially when the earth was fertile and productive for all types of plants.

According to climatic conditions, the province could be separated into different agricultural regions. In the north and east, in the regions of Tokat and Amasia, rice, grapes and tobacco were cultivated. Various grains were cultivated in the upper and lower valleys of river Alice. Animals were raised generally in the mountainous areas.

Fertilizing the land was not considered an urgent matter. Everything was expected from God. The rain was the region's water source. The rivers and streams ran along their natural paths through the green fields without being utilized to irrigate the farmlands using canals. The use of industrial fertilizers was a rare sight. Fertilizers were used only when weeds grew instead of the expected plants. The natural fertility of the land was indisputable. The farmer planted, not only for his family, but also to sell or exchange for other commodities. The farmer's capital was tied to his agricultural products stored for difficult days as an angel.

The abundance of the province was expressed differently in different areas. Just in the Sebastia Sanjak, the yield ratio was one to seven. The arable land area was 335,320 hectares (838,300 acres). There were 461,198 pieces of land, 12,112 meadows, 10,533 orchards, 355 vineyards and 583 grasslands. The yield ratios in the various districts of the Sebastia province were as shown in the table below.

District (Kavar)	1890	1910
Sebastia	5	7
Goshgeri	7	8
Divrig	8	10
Tonuz	5	5
Giurun	5	5
Darendeh	5	5
Yêldêz Eli	5	5
Hafik	5	10
Azizieh	5	5
Kangal	7	8

The river Alice basin surpassed other regions in agricultural production. Just the wheat fields of Kangal and Hafik would satisfy all of Sebastia's needs. The Armenian villages of Dughasar, Khorsana, Gavra, Govdoon and Ulash were the granaries of the Shirak region.

The dispersion of the lands in the province of Sebastia was in a sorry state. The scythe on his shoulder, the villager had to travel a long distance to get from one field to another, a time wasting and tiring work. Under those conditions, it certainly was difficult to establish orderly economy. The village difficulties became clear, when in addition to the above, a group of villages in the shaded valleys made it difficult for the region to organize, the latter area being inhabited mostly by Turks. The farms had never received the attention as to the amount of what the land was capable of producing. The minimum yield of the land was not only enough for the farmer's family, but there was also enough left over for export.

In 1890, Sebastia and its sanjaks of Tokat, Amasia and Shabin-Karahisar produced many agricultural products as shown below.⁹ These figures remained somewhat constant during the years before WWI, when agriculture also advanced and implemented modern means by introducing plows and other machinery.

Raising of animals in general was in the hands of the Moslems. The Kurds engaged in raising cattle. Being mountainous people,

⁹ Vital Cuinet, p. 626.

both had expansive grazing lands and meadows. The highlands, in general, were theirs, and the fields belonged to the Armenians. The

Wheat	142,049,135 Okha ¹⁰
Barley	53,921,600
Oats	11,137,500
Beans	3,455,000
Corn	19,020,410
Grapes	7,450,300
Peas and apples	13,900,000
Various fruits	15,950,500

Turks and Kurds looked down from the impregnable mountains at the immense Armenian wealth and became enraged with jealousy. The Armenians utilized the good earth, but did not understand much about raising animals. They did not have even a basic knowledge of animal husbandry or how to increase an animal's weight. The herdsmen would take their animals to the mountains for grazing until evening, only to come back again the next day. The average weight of grazing animals (oxen) was 400 kilograms. Animals who grazed in the fields weighed 350 to 370 kilograms. The average weight of sheep in the mountains was 25-35 kilograms. In the entire province, there were 3,000,000 animals. By 1914, there were 3,317,000 animals.¹¹

Unfortunately, there are no possibilities of expressing with definite figure the monetary value of the Armenian villagers' lands and other possessions, such as animals and equipment. There is no doubt that the value of these possessions amounted to very large sums.

¹⁰ Okha is the equivalent of one and one half kilograms.

¹¹ Vital Cuinet.

MINERAL RICHES

Not only Sebastia, but also Turkey is one big underground cavern. The Turk has for centuries stomped over the underground wealth, swiftly passed and plundered as a predator whatever was visible on the land. Whatever had been underground, which the Turk could not see, was not appreciated and was passed over.

Sebastia, as the other provinces of Turkey, had not been considered by the Sultanate to utilize the mineral wealth. The mineral wealth had not even been a subject of curiosity. The government did whatever was obvious and necessary. Other tendencies were entirely missing.

In the north and northeast regions in areas of Tokat, Amasia, Shabin-Karahisar, Endires and Hafik, there existed several different mineral deposits, which were left in poor conditions. There was salt, saltpeter, copper, marble, coal, iron, silver mines, including oil, all of which were strewn over the hills and valleys. The local capital was not sufficient to transport the mineral products. Due to the unsafe condition of the roads, foreign companies were discouraged from investing in the area where it was necessary everyday to petition to the government about the dangerous conditions.

The mines could be divided into two parts, one, working mines, the other untapped mines. The most utilized mines were those of salt. In the whole province there were twenty springs, of which only 15 were utilized. The majority of salt lakes were located in the valleys and barren hills. Generally, fruit trees did not flourish in these regions. It is worth mentioning that most of the salt lakes of Sebastia and Hafik regions were near the Armenian villages. The large Armenian village of Duzsar or Aghdk, which was located 3-4 hours' distance east of the city, near the historic monastery of Saint Hreshdagabed, had salt lakes with an area of 500 square kilometers; it produced 257,343 kilograms of salt annually. Bingyol or Biuragn Armenian village, which was located 2 hours' distance from the city, had 634 square kilometers of salt lakes with an annual production of 524,343 kilograms of salt. The Yenijeh Armenian village had 27 square kilometer salt lakes, which produced 42,610 kilograms of salt annually; likewise, the

Ishkhan Armenian village. The total production of salt reached ten million kilograms. The government was in charge of the operations, and employed a legion of lazy officials who were called “düz memurs,” salt officials.

The salt production methods were the same and outdated, just like other methods of operations. Salt water was drawn from wells with special aqueducts and poured into sectioned areas where the water evaporated, leaving behind the salt.

New rock salt mines opened up near the village of Aghdk similar to those near the village of Gogh. Besides salt mines, there were in the region of Tokat, copper and iron mines, which remained in neglectful conditions. Geological surveys had also shown that there were also coal and oil deposits. In the southwestern region of the province, manganese mines were discovered.

Amasia was recognized as a center for molybdenum mining. There were two mines, which were operated for two years then abandoned. One was near Davshan Dag, and the other near Giumush. Shabin-Karahisar, being near the port of Girason, had become of interest to investors. The rights to two molybdenum mines were given to three Armenians of Sebastia on December 2, 1889 for a period of 99 years. This, too, did not have a bright future. Koylasar, situated within the Shabin-Karahisar sanjak had an operating molybdenum mine, which was leased to a British company named Asia Minor.¹² Despite transportation and travel difficulties, the company spent large sums and brought heavy equipment to start operating the mine. However, due to shortage of coal, the operation failed. The company produced 1,500,000 kilograms of molybdenum, which did not cover the operating expenses.

These were the reasons why foreign companies, which came to the Sebastia province, would not survive the existing medieval conditions. Thus, the city of Sebastia was relegated to a secondary village, isolated from active regions. Unutilized riches remained underground, each more productive than the next.

Whatever was visible and tangible was worthy of attention. For that reason mineral springs attracted special interest. Clear

¹² V. Cuinet, p. 633.

bubbling springs would flow with enchanting murmurs, presenting a magical sight. The water was considered a medicine for the sick. Few took advantage of these unspoiled blessings, because their daily routine lives in the fields amounted to summer vacations. The folks from the towns would go to the springs to be rejuvenated and healed. Specially, the people from Sebastia would come with their families every month to the hot springs. The springs were located 28 kilometers from the city, near the river Yêldêz.

In the region of Ghanghal, there were three hot springs called Uiuz Chermik. The villagers washed their laundry there, and would bring their diseased animals to be washed, after which they were cured. The Yêlanji spring had very strong curative properties. The hot springs of Ghavza were very famous, which resembled Erzerum's Ilijan Spring. In the summer, this little village town became a place of pilgrimage for vacationers. People came from all over to regain their lost energy. The spring water was very alkaline, and was used as medicine. Not far from there, in the region of Amasia, there was the Sulu Seleh hot spring; its water was used as laxative by the local villagers.

PRODUCTION AND TRADE

Sebastia was not only the center for grain and agricultural plants, but also for industrial products, where the Armenian craftsmen and tradesmen played a major role.

The Armenian population of the city consisted largely of craftsmen, small businessmen and money exchangers. The latter was a very small group. Certain crafts, such as blacksmith, rug weaving, painting, tinsmith and pewter works, had achieved local character and renown, due to the talented Armenian artisans. The butchers were of a special class, who were stout, broad shouldered, tall and petulant. The cutlers of Sebastia were famous as the goldsmiths of Van, with their delicate and beautiful carvings and designs. Their handiwork, without hesitation, could be exported to European countries and exhibited. Similarly, the carpets displayed beautifully picturesque colorations.

In the towns, the craft was concentrated in the hands of the Armenians. They introduced, exported and developed various products while keeping up with advancing civilization. The British Adam Gibbons had stated that “the Armenian is the golden goose” in Turkey.

Throughout Sebastia, from Tokat to Amasia, to Shabin-Karahisar, the Armenian farmer, artisan, merchant and intellectual were the pillars of progress and forerunners of civilization. The Turkish people had been warriors, soldiers, government clerks and criminals. Below is a statistical table, which shows the number of businesses engaged in trades and crafts during 1912 and 1913:

EXPORTING MERCHANTS

Region	Armenian/Turk	Armenians	Turks	Other Groups
Sebastia	50	45	5	None
Tokat	40	30	10	None
Amasia	50	45	5	None
Shabin-Karahisar	10	7	3	None
Total	150	127	23	None

EXPORT OF GRAINS AND VARIOUS PRODUCTS

Sebastia	600,000 Liras
Tokat	500,000
Amasia	500,000
Shabin-Karahisar	25,000
Total	1,635,000

SHOP OWNERS AND CRAFTSMEN

Region	Armen/Turk	Armenian	Turk	Other
Sebastia				
Shop owners	750	600	150	-----
Craftsmen	1,750	1,500	250	-----
Grocers	1,500	1,000	500	-----
Tokat				
Shop owners	600	450	100	50
Craftsmen	800	500	200	100
Grocers	700	300	400	-----
Amasia				
Shop owners	600	450	100	50
Craftsmen	1,000	700	150	150
Grocers	1,000	600	300	100
Shabin-Kar.				
Shop owners	300	250	50	-----
Craftsmen	400	350	50	-----
Grocers	500	200	300	-----
Total	9,900	6,900	2,550	450

According to V. Cuinet, the production of grains, fruits and other products in the entire province in 1890 was as shown in the following table:

Sebastia	2,028,010 Franks
Tokat	2,229,090 Franks
Amasia	6,432,600 Franks
Shabin-Karahisar	1,969,305 Franks
Total	12,659,005 Franks

IMPORTED GOODS

Values are in Ottoman Currency of “Voski” or Lira

Region	Manuf'd Goods	Leather	Metals	Cost in Franks
Sebastia	300,000	400,000	50,000	2,118,070
Tokat	250,000	300,000	50,000	1,494,100
Amasia	250,000	300,000	30,000	1,119,671
Shabin-	50,000	65,000	8,000	544,180
Total	850,000	1,065,000	138,000	5,276,027

IMPORTING MERCHANTS

Region	Armenians	Turks	Greeks	All
Sebastia				
Clothing materials	18	0	2	20
Leather goods	23	2	0	25
Metals	12	0	0	12
Tokat				
Clothing materials	15	0	5	20
Leather	7	3	0	10
Metals	3	0	2	5
Amasia				
Clothing materials	22	0	3	25
Leather	13	2	0	15
Metals	10	0	0	10
Shabin-Karahisar				
Clothing materials	10	5	0	15
Leather	4	1	0	5
Metals	4	0	0	4
Total	141	13	12	166

The amount of total trade of the province was 17,928,032 Franks. The local manufacturing establishments in 1912 consisted of as shown in the table below:

Region	Armenian	Turkish	Other	All
Sebastia				
Carpet	0	0	3	3
Woven materials of Giurin	19	1	0	20
Mills	4	4	0	8
Tokat				
Veil/scarf	22	0	0	22
Mills	3	2	0	5
Zileh				
Mills	2	2	0	4
Amasia				
Silk weavers	3	0	0	3
Ironworks	6	0	0	6
Mills	30	5	0	35
Marzevan				
Clothing	10	0	0	10
Painting	3	0	0	3
Shoe	4	0	0	4
Mills	9	1	0	10
Rope	5	5	0	10
Shabin-Karahisar				
Cotton materials	5	0	0	5
Total	130	20	3	153

The great majority of the workers in the above mentioned factories and establishments were Armenians. The total number of workers was 17,700, of which 14,000 were Armenians, 3,500 Turks, 200 Greeks and other ethnic people. The above figures show that production and services in the cities remained in primitive condition. There were no factories using modern technology. As a result, there could not be a skilled working class.

Even though it was very hard under Turkish oppression to achieve a well-off personal economic condition and make it last, the Armenian capital had succeeded to establish a certain status despite many obstacles. A class of capital owners and money exchangers had been created to provide credit for extensive trade. Below is the number of capital owners and money exchangers.¹³

Region	Armenians	Turks	All
Sebastia	10	0	10
Tokat	8	2	10
Amasia	12	3	15
Shabin-Karahisar	2	0	2
Total	32	5	37

The statistical figures produce the following conclusion:

Professions	Armenians	Turks	Others	All
Grocers, Artisans	6,800	2,550	450	9,800
Exporting Merchants	127	23	0	150
Importing Merchants	141	13	12	161
Manuf'urers	130	20	3	153
Capital and Money Exchangers	32	5	0	37
Total	7,230	2,611	465	10,306

The villagers constituted 95% of Sebastia province's population. Three percent of the Armenian population and 13% of the total population were engaged in non-farm production; whereas, only 0.6% of the Turkish and overall Moslem population was.

¹³ M. L art, *La Question Armenienne* , pp. 65-67.

TAXATION SYSTEM

Taxation in progressive countries is a civil responsibility. The citizens not only have rights, but also responsibilities for the general welfare. The French philosopher and jurist, Montesquieu, had stated that taxes are a portion taken from an individual's wealth for the safety of others. The good thing about it is that the citizen's minimum sacrifice brings greater benefit to the government.

Within the scope of taxation are found beneficial functions, economic improvements, public health and safety, import and export balances and other governmental functions. With this understanding, taxation is a bridge from the government to the individual citizen, and from the individual to the government. During normal living conditions, taxes are manifested both directly and indirectly. The individual is subject to direct taxes and indirect taxes in passing. Just as direct taxation is eternal, the contrary is true of indirect taxation.

However, Turkey, being a country having a classically sickening taxation system, had an oppressive taxation system. As soon as one moved from one province, region or village to another, one was confronted with the "legally" established oppressive taxes imposed by the whims of Turkish and Kurdish "begs," "pashas" and "aghas."¹⁴ The eastern provinces of Turkey—Garin, Van and Bitlis, were the permanent arenas of unaccountable exploitation.

Sebastia was not exempted from the oppressive taxation. The sickness was contagious and ruled the rotten legal system. An unprecedented era of bondage and oppression had opened for taxation of the Armenian people. As in all of Turkey, so in Sebastia, the several direct taxes were in effect.

Ashar — one tenth (tithe): The government collected 10% of the economic production. This was the visible or only the legal side. In

¹⁴ Beg or Bey, a governor of a province; also a title of respect for military officers.

Pasha, an honorary title placed after the name, given to officers of very high rank, both civil and military.

Agha, a title of great respect. (Translator's note)

reality, the 10% was collected according to the whims of the speculators. The government auctioned off the products of the villages. Whoever paid the most would have the right to collect the taxes. Once the collection of taxes was out of the government's hands, the exploiters would put the rights of collection up for auction again and sell them to the highest bidders with a profit, always confident of the submissive Armenians. From hand to hand and exploiter to exploiter, the wheel would turn in the rut, and the original tax of one tenth would swell to the detriment of the population. Until this comedy was over, the fertile wheat would dry up under the sun, and mix with the soil along with the farmer's hopes. Eventually, the speculators' auction would come to an end. The winner, now a tax collector, would come to the village with his retinue and clerks, who were called "miuhirjies"—tax stamp sealers. These voracious packs of tax collectors were a painful burden on the villagers. They came and stayed for months in the villages, eating and drinking, dissolutely wasted the Armenian villagers' salt and bread, chickens and eggs. Who could dare to ask for compensation? The vengeance of the tax collector was a heavy cross on the villagers.

The collection would begin.

The villagers always had to be ready to meekly and obediently serve the agha and the tax collectors, with all their hard work, oxen, carts and implements. The piles of grain were divided in half. The collector's portion of grain was fraudulently taken from the best part of the piles. The villagers cringed, their eyes dimmed under their tanned and bright foreheads. They watched the stormy extortion of their labor. The collectors even searched the stored straw piles, in case the villagers had hidden some grains of wheat. The fear of being whiplashed and taken to court terrorized everyone.

Thus was the collection of the tithe, which was specified in the Koran. Here was a natural tax system, which had become an oppressive extortion for the villagers, throwing them into poverty and wretchedness.

Vergi: This was the tax imposed on immovable property value. The tax on farmland was 4%, on dwellings 5%, and 8% on

dwelling in larger towns, where the value was in the area of 20,000 ghurushes.¹⁵ Whenever a new house was built, legally a committee was formed, consisting of two community representatives and two government officials, to assess a correct and just tax. However, such committees existed on paper only. Bragging about their boundless and absolute authority, the officials decided on their own the amount of taxes, and closed the issue. No amount of complaint, dissatisfaction or appeal to the courts had any value, because what the officials had decided was the law. The tax collector was a unique example of Turkish officialdom. He was the greatest permanent scourge of the Armenian population. For days and months, he would dwell in the villagers' homes, and live at their expense. All the homes of the village were to provide the tax collector with the best food in their storages. He was a perfect untouchable parasite.

There was no way out for the impoverished villager from the unjustly imposed taxes. The tax collector would bellow and beat the villagers, take their oxen and cows, horses and donkeys as security. He was an unheard evil. The Armenians had a rhymed saying, "Oil and bread for Muhammed, loss and penalty for Garabed." With an ache in their hearts, the Armenian villagers knocked their heads from wall to wall, and hopelessly found a way to pay the taxes.

Bedel: According to the Koran, a Christian was not allowed to serve in the military or carry weapons. This passive situation continued until the Young Turk Revolution. However, in place of serving in the military, a Christian had to pay a tax. The taxes were collected from the male population, regardless of their age or health. It was enough that the men were alive. A specially assigned person from the tax office came and called the village priest to verify dates of birth and death to put the registration books in order. Supposedly, the names of the deceased were removed from the list; however, every year the taxed amounts were demanded from the families. The unfairly collected amounts were divided

¹⁵ Ghurush is a subvalue of Lira or Ottoman gold piece. 100 ghurushes equalled to 1 mejid, and 5 mejids equalled to 1 Lira. 5 ghurushes were equivalent to one Frank. (Translator's note.)

among the officials. An additional 37 ghurushes were also charged for each newborn male child.

After the 1908 Constitution, the “bedel” became a hydra, an explicit means of officially robbing the Armenian people. During the terrifying days in 1914, an eyewitness had written (as stated in G. Kapikian’s *Yeghernabadoum*): “The Armenians of 18-45 age group were conscripted. Without any distinction, storekeepers, merchants, tradesmen, laborers, writers, teachers, bank officials were all taken into the military, no less the Turkish military, to live under arduous and dire conditions. In return, for what benefit did these men serve that diseased government? As Armenians, they had not enjoyed peaceful and protected lives. During training exercises, the Turkish trainers would treat the well-dressed Armenians with disdain and hatred, torturing them by making them run farther, roll on the ground, run up and down hills until they were exhausted. Many would faint and fall to the ground. The Turkish trainer would laugh at them and say, ‘How is it now? Sitting comfortably in your shops, you know how to cheat the innocent Turkish villagers. Let’s see you now.’”

Many did not survive, others wanted to pay the tax again to be saved from the torture. The religious leaders would appeal to various government officials in order to allow the Armenians to again pay the “bedel” and be freed from the discriminatory military service. Finally, the Armenians succeeded to gain the permission to be robbed. Men struggled to come up with the 44 gold pieces per person. Thus a large quantity of gold was collected. It was said that 12 large gasoline containers¹⁶ of gold were collected.

Yol Parasi: Each male 15 to 60 years of age was taxed 12 ghurushes. Each person was allowed to decide the method of payment. They either paid in cash money or had to work for the tax, wherever the officials sent them. On the surface it seemed that Turkey was so advanced that in matters of tax paying responsibility, the government took the will of the people into consideration. However, it was a game of cat and mouse, which the pashas’ and begs’ band of thieves played with the oppressed

¹⁶ These galvanized metal containers were originally used to carry gasoline. The size of each container was approximately 5 gallons. (Translator’s note)

population. The pitiful villager, who was the quiet victim, often was obliged to pay and to labor under cruel conditions. According to the law, a person was to work three days within the area of the community. However, the officials would take the people, while whipping them, two to three days' distance away. The Armenian villager, with a bag of bread and some cheese, a hammer in his hand and with head down, followed the Turkish officials to break rocks for road building. Under the hot sun and in the dust, the Armenian worked from sunup to sundown. Leaving his home behind, the Armenian villager—"the dirty Gyavur," worked incessantly with the ever-present whip.

Many used to try bribing the officials, others waited for the end of their time. When the three days of labor was over, each person had to receive a piece of paper called "k h a l a s kaghadi"—completion paper, to be let free. It was impossible to receive that piece of paper until a bribe was paid. The villagers were obliged to give the bribe so that the next year they would not be told to work a few extra days by being accused that they owed from the previous year. In Turkey, labor was not to serve any purpose; it was there for the sole purpose of torturing the Armenian people. The abandoned roads were not meant to be means of communication, but roads to crucify the laborers. The slaved Armenians worked laboriously, and nature destroyed what was built. The roads always remained in ruin. Thus, mules, donkeys, horses and camels remained the only true means of communication.

Aghnam or Janavar Parasi: Every year at the end of February, while the snow was still piled up many feet, in the cold weather, the Turkish inspectors appeared in the villages to check on the number of animals. After checking their records and registering the animals, they collected 5-ghurush tax on each animal. This tax amounted to 15% of each animal's value.¹⁷ The Turkish tax collectors were so used to collection of these taxes that they came right to the barn doors, like a pack of wolves, to collect the taxes. The collections did not amount to much, because the village houses were constructed like labyrinths attached to each

¹⁷ Prof. V. Totomiantz, *L'Armenie Economique*, p. 71.

other for such oppressive days. This tax was well known to the Sebastia Armenians as “sayi.”

Besides the above mentioned five primary taxes, there were other taxes, which had become legitimate means of plunder. Such was the “temed,” which was a tax imposed on the workers, artisans and businessmen. Workers had to pay 4% and businessmen 6% of their income. Marriages were not exempt from taxation, even though it was not imposed that frequently. If the subject was a male, the tax was 100 paras,¹⁸ if female, 10 ghurushes.

The sporadic taxes were more numerous than the direct taxes. These were implemented under various names during legal issues.

Mahkeme Kharjêlar: Under this dubious name, 15% was collected on various drinks, 10-15 paras from newspapers and printed announcements under the pretense that these taxes were to go to retire the government bonds. Included in these taxes was the “hukuk”—court tax, which had to be paid in advance by anyone who had the misfortune of having a legal case.

These were the “generous” Ottoman Empire taxes, under the weight of which the Armenian people were burdened. For many centuries, they gave obediently and silently until taxation for their responsibilities became an inexorable demand for their blood. Below is a list of the taxes collected during the 1890s as documented by Vital Cuinet.

Region	Taxes
Sebastia	17,276,548 ghurushes
Tokat	9,697,650 ghurushes
Amasia	18,325,305 ghurushes
Shabin-Karahisar	9,261,714 ghurushes
Total ¹⁹	54,561,217 ghurushes

¹⁸ In the 1930s, it was equivalent to 1/9 U.S. cent.

¹⁹ The total amount was estimated by V. Cuinet to be equivalent to 12,000,000 Franks, contemporary valuation.

Tapu Parasi: during the sale and transfer of real estate, 2% tax was collected on the value of the land, and 1% during inheriting the property.

The above numbers were those officially recorded; however, untold unrecorded amounts were collected by illegal means.

THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT

In the dull provincial surroundings, the intellectual life and active social interactions were imprisoned and condemned to unproductive activities. The geographic location and conditions prevented the population of Sebastia from being exposed to new ideas, which needed to penetrate the region either from the capital within Turkey or from foreign lands, as if the Great Wall of China separated the province from cultural centers. The region had become an island of tortuous living conditions. The people expected to be educated and hear about their political deliverance from the monks and clergy. Life had become rotten and stagnant amidst the thick fog of monotonous and unceasingly endless repetitious prayers. The spiritual verses and hymns, lamentations and elegies, the repetition of folk tales had become the regions inseparable entertainment. The bells of the age-old magnificent churches and monasteries kept the Armenians within themselves, away from dangerous experiences.

The province had remained in the dark, away from the nation's center, Constantinople, which also was in an unenviable condition. This place of the upper class Armenians was in an even more uncertain situation, with endless conflicts between the upper and the working classes, the enlightened and the ignorant, the natives of the city and the newcomers. These elements clashed with each other, clamoring and creating stressful and stormy conditions detrimental to the community's well being. Rancor and recrimination were too common. Arduous vigor was wasted without any positive results or outcome.

In the 1860s, the first educated young generation began returning from abroad with fresh new ideas and professional education. A multitude of bright intellectuals, among them G. Utujian, K. Odian, Rusinian, Dr. Servichen, Dserents, R. Papazian, G. Kemurjian, M. Shashian, H. Balian, H. Tavukjian, stirred the stagnant life and studied the environment with a different outlook. They developed the secular language, established newspapers, introduced public speaking and literature. Inspired by the task of improving the intellectual level of the Armenian people, working feverishly, they injected new life into schools, organizations and

social activities. Due to their incessant work, the constitution of the Armenian Nation (millet) was formulated, which resulted in improvement of the organizational life of the Armenians from Constantinople to the remote provinces. This was the first time that the cornerstone of the Armenian community's internal affairs was being installed under the difficult living conditions. The people embraced the new ideas and their enlightened leaders.

During those days of enthusiasm, the Armenian population of Constantinople was approximately 100,000.²⁰ The educational institutions in and around the city had 42 elementary schools, 4,396 male students, 1,151 female students and 199 teachers.²¹ Income was generated from the Church real estate holdings, collections, philanthropists and fund raising. Monthly expenses reached 70,830 ghurushes.

Several years after the approval of the National Constitution, the Educational Council undertook in 1865 the recording of statistics on the schools, which showed that there were 36 boys' schools, 14 girls' schools, 4,007 male and 1,472 female students. The monthly expenses for these schools amounted to 70,445 ghurushes. These numbers show the educational condition of Constantinople's Armenians, who constituted 4.4% of the population during the days of rebirth.

These insipient sparks of intellectual rebirth spread throughout the remote provinces and laid the foundations of similar intellectual movements. The rare intellectuals of the remote regions did not remain indifferent to the intellectual revival in the capital. Sebastia also accepted the message of intellectual revival, and awakened from its stupor to engage in rebuilding their national life.

After the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8, the entire Armenian population lived with uncertain political conditions, hopes, and emotions. The Armenian question and the demand for reforms were raised again, becoming a subject of demands and legal issues. However, soon came the days of disappointments. Events became complicated, agitations increased and revolutionary ideas set in.

²⁰ Dr. Barunag Bey Kntabed, "Basis of National Education," *Masis*, No. 435, 1860; No 471, 1861.

²¹ *Masis*, No. 696, 1865, "Report of the Educational Council."

In Sebastia, Garabed Ghumrikian,²² who was one of the leading revolutionary personalities, based on M. Portugalian's teachings, taught the oppressed people of his birthplace about the intellectual movements abroad in order to link them to a single general ideology. Guyr—blind Patriarch Tateos Geozirian joined Garabed to help him.

The revolutionary ideology became a tangible perception and sacrifice due to efforts of individual patriots and the Hnchagian Party. The repressed patriotism of the Sebastia Armenians urged them on to abandon their churches and build new ideological edifices with an unassailable will. Despite being far from revolutionary arenas of the Caucasus, Sasun, Van and Mush, from the fields of heroism, Sebastia remained interested in the revolutionary activities.

Already in 1890s, Sebastia Armenians had contributed several well-known revolutionary personalities. These were Taniel Chavush of Gamish, Haji Beg of Armdan and Toros, who, with small bands of partisans, had become the glories of the mountains, the terrors of the travelers and the heroes of popular songs. The revolutionaries became more brutal and unsparing when they saw the terrible massacres of 1895-6 and the slaughter of their people. The agony of seeing the suffering of the Armenians had given flight to their souls. Their activities awakened the people of Sebastia and converted them to the ideology of emancipation. Again, it was the same generation, which became the apostles of the revolutionary movements and the inextinguishable flame of provincial dull reality. People of different generations were educated and imbued by the teachings of intellectuals and freedom fighters. The Armenians of Sebastia moved towards their future with confident steps, opening numerous schools, dependent on their individual sacrifices. Freedom was their motto.

In the 1890s, in the whole of Sebastia province, without ethnic distinction, there were 3,595 schools with 54,493 students and

²² Upon the urging of Khrimian Hayrig, Izmirlian and Nerses Varzhabedian, for the first time, Garabed Ghumrikian and a band of volunteers were sent to the Bitlis-Van region to bring about a movement for the demands of the Armenian people. G. Ghumrikian was the forefather of revolutionary groups.

3,709 teachers. The Armenian population of all denominations had the following number of schools, students and teachers:²³

Region	Schools	Students	Teachers
Sebastia	90	5,918	99
Tokat	105	1,220	109
Amasia	313	1,890	319
Shabin-Karahisar	500	2,060	503
Total	1,008	11,088	1,030

Note: These numbers may be exaggerated. According to statistics collected by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1901-2, the figures are given below. However, these figures are not complete, because they do not include all the areas of the province. In the later years, especially during the relatively free days of 1908, the educational efforts had doubled. Unfortunately, there are no statistical documents to show the improvements.

Districts	Schools	Male Students	Female Students	Teachers
Sebastia	46	4,072	549	73
Divrig	10	757	100	20
Derendeh	2	260	70	5
Giurun	12	736	78	20
Tokat	11	1,408	558	50
Amasia-Marzuan	9	1,524	814	11
Shabin-Karahisar	27	2,040	105	42
Total	117	10,797	2,374	221

After the Ottoman Constitution, an ardent movement of “towards the provinces” had been inflamed among the few intellectuals and the new generation of the provinces to spread the new ideas. The atmosphere was filled with enthusiasm and

²³ V. Cuinet, *La Turquie d'Asie*, p. 621.

excitement. The enlivened spirits and sweetness of those days were boundless. Moved by homesickness, the peerless Taniel Varuzhan and the lionhearted Murad of Sebastia, the leaders of the new generation, had established themselves in Sebastia. They poured their efforts to raise the intellectual standard of the Armenians in the districts and teach them to become more sophisticated. They nurtured selflessly those willing to improve under their tutelage.

A nucleus of idealists of both intellectuals and advocates of self defense had formed in Sebastia, consisting of Reverend Shavarsh, Yegho, Bidsa, Vahakn, Chukaszian, Kapikian, Grdodian, V. Shahbaz, Hovhaness Poladian, Dr. Arshavir Boghosian and countless others, without regard to any political affiliation. New reading and lecture centers were established. New organizations and societies were formed. The old organizations from the days of Sebastia's "Hayrig," Archbishop Bedros, assumed new forms and were revived. Centers of regional writers, literary presentations and weekly newspapers were created in Sebastia, Tokat, Marzuan, Amasia and Shabin-Karahisar. The Armenian people experienced a rebirth, the region awakened, life became vibrant, and the intellectual horizon expanded on a daily basis. Sebastia was living days of blossoming and enthusiasm.

Sadly, today, all those efforts and advances have been ruined. They remain only in the tortuous memory of the survivors, wherever they are, as a constant kindling fire.

PART B

HAFIK DISTRICT

Hafik district was situated on the southeastern part of Sebastia province. Its center was Kochasar, or the town of Bedros, on the right bank of the river Alice. The main highway passed through the town and joined the Yerzinga-Garin-Kars road on one side and Sebastia-Samson road on the other. The district was divided into sixteen village clusters called Nahiahs and 175 villages. The population consisted of Armenians, Turks, Kzêlbash, Kurds and Greeks. The Armenians constituted the majority, and because of it, an Armenian was appointed delegate of the governor, according to the new reformation dispositions.

The Hafik district was blessed with natural beauty. On both sides of the river Alice, on hills and fields, there existed a string of Armenian villages. The district was a dense and massive area of Armenian people, established during many centuries. From Gharabel-Seyfeh to Sakhar-Ghavrzu-Pur, on extensive dark fields, the Armenian homes were full of life and sounds. The district was a pure fountain of national mores, patriarchal customs, countless traditions and beliefs, which existed during the centuries. The tall, dark, industrious, patient, simple and gracious peasant toiled for a small piece of land. Every Armenian village had its own virtues. People of Khorsana were polite and pleasant; those of Aghdk were valiant and selfless; revolutionary and brave were those of Govdoon; clever were the people of Ghavraz; hospitable were those of Gavra; frank were the people of Khorokhon, Gamis and Yarasar; stubborn were those of Khandsar. All of these people were related and intertwined with each other by their language, costumes, customs, behavior and habits. They were a magical flock and an inseparable entity. Govdoon, situated in the fields among the hills, was the center of the Hafik district's villages. With minor exceptions, the people engaged in farming.

The population of the Hafik district, according to the 1890 Salnameh (government census), consisted of 37,349 Turks, 18,674

Kzêlbashs, 6,494 Armenians and 3,246 Greeks, adding to a total of 65,763 people.

The population in 1914 prior to WWI was as shown in the tables below.

MIXED POPULATION VILLAGES

Villages	Armenian Homes	Popula- tion	Turkish Homes	Popula- tion
Khorokhon	100	1,000	50	350
Chay-Kurt	10	100	90	630
Bardizag	20	200	30	210
Ornovud	10	100	90	630
Prapert	50	500	30	210
Kochasar	200	2,000	150	1,500
Gamis	100	1,000	10	70
Yarasar	100	1,000	100	700
Todorag	100	1,000	50	350
Janjin	50	500	100	700
Tavshanlu	20	200	50	350
Stanos	70	700	30	210
Barjin	10	100	20	140
Tevodsa-Devekseh	70	700	50	350
Total	910	9,100	850	6,400

ARMENIAN VILLAGES

Armenian Villages	Households	Population
Govdoon	300	3,000
Gavrah	150	1,500
Aghdk-Saraji	400	3,500
Khorsana	150	1,500
Kotni + Khandsar	100+100=200	2,000
Keotiu-Yenijeh	50	500
Bingeol-Piuragan	150	1,500
Ak-Goiu + Ishkhani	30 + 150=180	1,800
Têtmaj + Ghavraz	200 + 90=290	2,900
Total	1,870	18,200

TURKISH AND KZÊLBASH VILLAGES

Turkish Villages	Homes	Popula- tion	Kzêlbash Villages	Homes	Popula- tion
Fİndur	100	700	Omiur	20	140
Soflar	50	350	Emreh- Kiugh	50	350
Bashêbo- iuk	60	420	Gharlu	100	700
Bey- Punghar	100	700	Orchayil	40	280
Klkhêdegh	70	490	Sarêkegh	5	35
Êzhgha	25	175	Diuger	150	1,050
Torosa	40	280	Oragiul	50	350
Gerneh	30	210	Mermer	40	280
Jihin	100	700	Mazan	30	210
Ghereiuk	100	700	Tokhaj	28	175
Ak- Punghar	100	700			

The population in the district consisted of 30,000 Armenians, 11,825 Turks, 4,575 Kzêlbashes and 3,000 Greeks for a total population of 49,400. Garabed Kapikian had estimated the Armenian population at 34,080.

The Hafik district was adjoined to the districts of Svaz, Kochger, Kangal and Divrig. The Turkish government policies had established such an administrative structure so that the Christian population, particularly the Armenian, would not constitute a majority and request reforms. The roads were built in such a way that the Christian villages were connected to Moslem villages. Ethnographically, certain Armenian villages, such as Tavra, Ishkhani and the immortal T. Varuzhan's birthplace Prknik, should have been connected to Hafik rather than the district of Svaz. Likewise, the large and wealthy Armenian village of Ulash should have been connected to the district of Svaz rather than Kangal. However, the intentional administrative division did not prevent the establishment of harmonious existence between the Armenian villages of the upper valley of the river Alice.

KZÊLBASHS

The Kzêlbash population of the Hafik district, who were in constant contact with the Armenians, had very interesting characteristics. They were uncivilized and uneducated people belonging to the Shiite Moslem sect. They had no alphabet, nor literature. They spoke Turkish. An educated Kzêlbash person was a rarity.

They had special gathering places and Tekkes (Moslem cloisters). There were special roving religious leaders who were called Dedehs. They also had few secondary officials, such as Dilji, one who called the people to prayer, and Chaghan, a religious official. During weddings, the presence of the Dedeh, who played the saz (a stringed musical instrument), was imperative. They kept their private lives very secret. Neither the Turks nor the Christians were allowed to observe their ceremonies. In case a stranger wandered among them by mistake, the Kzêlbashs would immediately deviate from their normal behavior. During washing themselves, they would place the towel over their left shoulder. When sitting down, they would fold the corner of the mat. During bread making, they would imprint the sign of the cross on the dough. Whenever they would give water to a stranger, they would either spit or put their fingers in the water. They would go in groups to their holy mountain, which was called Zeohiur-Gechesi. They had special ceremonies, which they kept secret.

The Kzêlbashs had multiple wives, but they did not treat them as the Turks did theirs. They did not divorce their wives. Unlike the Turkish wives, Kzêlbash women did not cover their faces. They would cover their mouths with their hands, just as an Armenian peasant bride did in front of her father-in-law. Kzêlbash women were more open in the presence of Christians than Turkish women. They did not, in general, marry with Turks. Their religion prevented them from mingling with Turks, who were considered non-believers. In general, the women were shy, hard working and strong. They would not speak in front of their fathers and mothers-in-law. They were obsequious, obedient and voiceless creatures. Wife beating was a customary affair. They would work in the

fields just as hard as the men. The hard work had robbed them of their feminine beauty.

The Kzêlbash men, in general, were lazy. They lived in the mountains, engaged in sheep herding and bee keeping. They were timid and isolated people. During Sultan Selim Yavuz's reign, the government massacred forty thousand of them. The fear still lived within them, suppressing any collective undertaking. They were an oppressed and slavish people.

The products from the mountains were exchanged with those of the fields from Armenian villages. Timber, honey, butter, cheese and eggs were exchanged with wheat and barley. The reciprocal contact between Armenians and Kzêlbash people had good consequences. Many of them spoke Armenian, just like the Yezidies of Armenia. They had a pitiful economic condition, and were constantly destitute and hungry.

During the unfortunate days of the deportations and massacres of the Armenians, the Kzêlbash people, along with the Turks, were blindly involved in killing their Armenian neighbors.

RELICS OF ARMENIAN BELIEFS

It is difficult to refer to the Armenian people without mentioning their beliefs.

The religious ceremonies, the spiritual manifestations and verses, the monasteries, churches and saints had remained unshaken and firm among the peoples' ethical and social relationships, constituting an immaculate historical possession. The Armenian faith was of utmost holiness in itself.

Since the 1860s, during the half-century leadership of Archbishop Bedros, not only the Hafik district, but all of Sebastia, lived exemplary Christian lives. The believers' passive and self-defeating condition did not let them see anything else outside of the churches. The people were oppressed both politically and by Christian morals.

The monasteries and nunneries, sanctuaries, missionaries' sermons and exhortations had created an ascetic atmosphere and puritanism against imaginary evil feelings. The religion's fog had expelled the bright light and knowledge. Until the 1880-90s, there still were vegetarian individuals, resenting worldly ways, living in the caves of Mayrakom, Seyfeh, Hreshdagabed and Kochasar regions. The peoples' wrath did not tolerate the existence of different religious denominations, thus persecuted them and called them "Prod" (Protestants), "Koharaba," and "Jizwit" (Jesuit).

The puritan beliefs had incorporated into the Armenians' Christian beliefs several pagan customs, be they festive, mythological, romantic, or historical. The people had embodied the memory of its religious beliefs in churches, cross stones and chapels. There are countless monuments in the Hafik district spread among the mountains, valleys and fields. The people had woven many spiritual songs, which until now are sung by the survivors of the massacres.

Sanctuaries

The principal pilgrimage destination for the Hafik Armenians was the Saint Hreshdagabed Monastery. It was a beautiful monastery, fortified and situated on top of a mountain. The monastery had been the summer dwelling of King Davit, son of the Armenian King Senekerim. Across from the monastery, on a hilltop, there were several ancient graves covered with dirt and moss.

In 1871, on the said hill, a box had been found, which contained the bones of the Kohariniats virgins. A white cover was placed on the box, with the following inscription: "These martyrs, who were slain with swords for their Christian faith, are Radios and Koharineh, Dngig and Dsamides." On the other side of the stone cover was inscribed the following: "They were put in this place by the holy Vartabed Barsegh in the (Armenian) year 636 (1187 A.D.)." The relics of the martyred were taken to the monastery and buried along the right wall of the church, in front of St. Hreshdagabed's painting.

For a long time the monastery had remained empty due to the constant attacks by the pillaging Kurds. Archbishop Bedros had appointed to the monastery an abbot, who was of large stature and also brave, named Movses Vartabed from Zara. He spread great fear among the Kurds, who left the area for good. He remained the abbot of the monastery for many years, visiting all the villages of the Hafik district, preaching and encouraging the people, meantime collecting donations for the improvement of the monastery. In a short time, the monastery had become filled with people, prospered and flourished.

At one time, several children from Hafik, and even from the villages of Aghdk district, were brought to the monastery to be taught in the school, which Movses Vartabed had opened. The school and the children had enlivened the place. Dr. N. Daghavarian, Murad and other intellectual leaders developed a nice plan for the people of Sebastia and its villages. Unfortunately, the plan remained unfulfilled. The plan was to establish a school of higher education for the study of village economy, in order to teach the people various needed specialties. This dream of the Armenian

villages and leaders did not materialize; agriculture remained in its primitive state.

On the holidays of Vartevar, Transfiguration of Christ, the people from villages of the upper regions of the river Alice came to the monastery of St. Hreshdagabed. They came in groups from Govdoon, Aghdk, Khorsana, Ghavraz, Bingyol, Svaz, Gavara, Gamis, Khorokhon, Kotni, Todorag and Yarasar, riding on horses and donkeys. A huge crowd of ladies and girls, young and old men, dressed in their best, lined in caravans, singing and dancing, shooting their rifles, advanced towards the monastery in the thick cloud of dust. The monastery was the sanctuary of the Hafik district, as Etchmiadsin in Armenia, St. Garabed in Mush, the Varaka monastery in Van, the Armash Charkhapan of Izmir. All over the hills and fields, the offerings were prepared and smoke from the fires filled the skies.

The prelate of Sepastia province performed holy mass, and encouraged the people with his words pertaining to the occasion. In the monastery, the hard working peasants of Hafik heard the speeches of Bishop Bedros, Movses Vartabed of Zara, Prelate Torkom, and especially the sinewy revolutionary Shavarsh Vartabed Sahagian. Outside the monastery, the people listened with great interest to numerous intellectual speakers.

After the Ottoman constitution of 1908, students of Murad's training school, the young people of the new generation and the intellectual class celebrated Vartevar with greater splendor, interjecting into the pagan practice the newly-found political freedom of the Armenian people. Those days were unequaled, when the religious hierarchy was infused with the ideal of sacred political freedom.

The public's rejoicing had reached new heights. People danced. In every village, the young men, ladies and young girls, separately gathered together in the green fields to sing and dance carefreely to the tunes of their musical instruments. The monastery and its white walls cried no more for being abandoned not too long ago. The joyful and exuberant life filled the mountains and the valleys. Family friends from the towns and villages came to visit each other and feast together.

There were several intolerant, rude and contemptible customs, which degraded the meaning of a holiday and the peoples' joy.

Often certain simple and innocent incidents escalated to fights among separate villages and even family members. The young men of one village or town did not have the right to lustfully look at the young ladies of another village or town for courting purposes, or to comment on the ladies' circle dancing, or even to look at them. I remember one time a photographer had come to Sebastia in order to photograph a group of peasant girls during their dancing. His motivation was to study the Armenian costumes. The village young men attacked the venturous photographer with stones and sticks, breaking his equipment and his bones. He barely escaped with his life.

Vartevar was celebrated for three days and nights.

Besides St. Hreshdagabed monastery, there were many secondary sanctuaries and pilgrimage destinations, where the devout Armenian peasants went to burn incense and candles, entreating for hope and grace. They placed pieces of rags in a crevice of a tombstone (Khatchkar). Such places were Surp Garabed in Govdoon, Surp Asdvadsadsin of Khorsana, Surp Toros of Heyig, Surp Varvar of Khandsar, Surp Dig of Ghavra and the Gabud Khach of Gavra. These were the holy places of daily visits, not only by Armenians, but also by the Kzêlbash people of the surrounding areas.

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VILLAGES AND THE CITIES

For many long years the towns, villages and cities were isolated due to poor economy, oppressed conditions of cities and lack of adequate transportation means. Products from the villages and cities were transported to each other's markets in an inefficient manner, without sufficient profit. There existed a large wall between the villages and the cities. It was the motivated peddler, with two boxes on a donkey, who roamed from village to village to trade his needles, threads, rings, buttons and ribbons. Without doubt, traveling long distances, he was the link between villages and cities.

Commercial ties, intellectual relations and cultural exchanges were altogether visions. As fascinating was the city to the village, so disparaging was the village to the city. There existed an unhealthy psychological disdain for each other. Often the peasants did not know what the city was, and those of the city did not know what the village was. The city and the village would have been completely isolated from each other with their walls had it not been necessary, from time to time, for them to interact. The most and least enlightened villages of the Hafik region had no choice but to bring necessities from the city.

The peasants were obliged to bring from the city the equipment, such as shovels and rakes, which were needed for their daily work. They transported by donkeys their farm implements from the city. There was not a single post office in the whole of Hafik district for the villagers to send letters to their loved ones in other regions. Only on very rare occasions did the peasants go to doctors. In case of illnesses, the first and last words were the prayers of the clergy. In cases of injury, the bonesetter was the healer.

Going to the city was an insult to the villagers. When in the city, barely escaping from being hit with stones and profanities thrown at them by young Turkish rascals, the villagers had to endure name-calling by their own Armenian brothers with such insulting words as "dirty villager." The outlandish peasant barely dared to respond. This intolerable situation was wide spread. Those of Constantinople threw insults at the villagers with such words as

“stupid” and “porter,” just as the people of Yerevan used the word “refugee” for those who came from outside.

In Sebastia, there was no exoneration from the popular insults of the peasantry. The outlandish costumes worn by the villagers were conspicuous, rendering the peasantry to be derided by the ignorant segment of city dwellers. The seeds of discord had been planted, subtly or outwardly, between the villages and towns. There was a chasm of hatred and sarcasm, ignorance and criticism between the two. Peoples’ uncivilized character and sickening habits had weighed heavily on the Armenian peasantry. Where ignorance was the rule, and oppression a responsibility, it was capable of engendering permanent injustices.

Indeed, there were no warm relationships between the villages and the cities of Sebastia. There was only isolation. Despite the great efforts by intellectual field workers of the regions to combat this evil, and educate the populace, their words had no effect outside of the villages. There were no visionaries and thinkers to shake the ignorant populace and put an end to such damaging behavior, making them see their mutual benefits.

The traditional and partly independent Armenian villages had become the slaves of their unhealthy instincts. Not only the cities were in bad terms with the villages, but also the villages with the cities. The general lack of cooperation had generated a disgraceful abyss for constructive thinking. The Armenian villages of the Hafik district were strengthened and led by their customs for a long time. Sending brides from one village to another was very rare, to the point where the transplanted bride was always known by the name of her village. If she were from Govdoon, in Khorsana, she was called one from Govdoon, and vice a versa. Although, generally in the villages of Sebastia, girls were less numerous than boys, because the majority of births were boys, the prevalent practices and prejudices could not be ignored.

Until the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution, the villages and cities had not transferred any intellectual advances to each other. Only after the new constitutional era did the mutually contemptible attitude disappear. The people mingled and became familiar with each other, in a friendly and pleasant spirit. They came to have feelings for each other. However, the villages still remained dependent on the cities.

REGIONAL FIELD WORKERS AND VILLAGE ASSEMBLY HALLS

Under the degenerative days of the Sultanate, the Sebastia province did not have the healthy movement of “towards the village” or “towards the provinces,” as had happened among other ethnic groups, because all of our thoughts and efforts were occupied with the Armenian Case and sufferings. Our people were drained by their efforts for freedom, but remained chained. The peasantry of the Hafik district had a monotonous world—its farmland. Due to the extreme isolation, the Armenian peasants were thrown among their animals, thirsty for changes and convincing rhetoric.

The modest field workers of the Hafik district gave speeches in schools and churches in the popular language, addressing the peasants’ sufferings and pointing to their painful condition. These intellectual leaders showed the ways by which the Armenians could achieve their essential rights. The exhortations and encouragements of the intellectuals were followed by teachings of Hnchagian field workers. Led by a packman in the bitter cold of the winter, the field workers went to the village homes and taught the peasantry how to prepare themselves for unforeseen circumstances. There was no one who had not seen and not known the assembly halls where people gathered to hear news, and engage in deliberations. All the official news originated and was edited in those halls for dissemination. The assembly halls were the villagers’ gathering places. They sat on the floor, by the crackling fire, smoking and puffing on water pipes. They told long stories from their past experiences dealing with their farms and animals. A modest, simple and huge village world had fallen asleep by the murmur of the river Alice. The villagers had no opportunity to see the reality of life.

The priests, teachers and those who were educated outside of the village had become the modest teachers of the villagers. Until the Ottoman Constitution, Hafik district had just a few field workers such as Barunag Efendi, Haji Sarkis, Murad Giurigian, Parsegh Efendi Tarpinian, Mgrdich Simonian, teacher Nigoghos and Nshan Efendi Chimenian.

After the Ottoman Constitution, a new impetus for advancement and enlightenment entered the villages. A new generation came about and became the foundation and the soul for revival of new movements. Murad of Govdoon became the central personality in both Svaz and Hafik districts. His training school produced an enlightened and bold generation. Murad left deep and lasting impressions, particularly in his birthplace, Govdoon. On his advice and encouragement, a group of young people was sent to Svaz to receive higher education in the Armenian schools. Garabed Muradjian, Abraham Hagopian, Garabed Topalian, Harutiun Topalian, Hovhaness Begian, Kevork Mushmulian, Harutiun Terzian, Harutiun Vartanian, Vartan Giurgenian, Hayg Kralian, Nshan Kshigian and Atom Sirabian were to be educated to teach only in Govdoon. Another group was sent, again on Murad's advice, to Echmiadsin's Kevorkian School. There were only three graduates in the Hafik district, who were prepared to work for the education of the villagers. Unfortunately, the war thwarted their efforts. One of them, Vramshabuh Baligian, remained in the village of Aghdk as a teacher, and later was killed.

There was rising enthusiasm in every large and small village. From day to day, and from year to year, the villages were waking up and being transformed. When one returned to the village after several years' absence, one deeply felt how the village had changed and culturally improved. There was a competitive tendency among villages to excel and surpass each other with pride. People brought their monetary contributions, knowledge, experiences, beliefs and sacrifices for the improvement of the village. The struggle was implacable against the old ways, prejudices and mentalities, and against illiteracy. This was a huge movement. The youth was joyful and full of vigor, volunteering for every need. This was such a splendid and captivating movement that represented our people's freedom-loving spirit.

This cultural and liberal movement was a rebirth for our peoples' lives and fatherland. It brought golden promises and sweet political dreams. The youth was exuberant and rejoicing. The intellectuals led the movement with their speeches and writings. In the Hafik district, Govdoon became the center and

flame for all the other villages in the district. It was the signpost for all movements attributed to Murad.

Taking Govdoon as the example and observation post for all the Armenian villages in the river Alice valley, I will attempt to describe the people of our lost native lands, with all its convictions, customs, traditions and cultures. The other villages, more or less, resembled Govdoon, because they collectively represented a single body.

THE CONCEPT OF ARMENIA'S EMANCIPATION IN THE ALICE RIVER'S UPPER VALLEY

After the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, when the Armenian case attained international status by Article 61 (of the Berlin Congress and Treaty of 1878, Tr.), a wave of liberation spread throughout the Hafik district. The endless promises made to the Armenians were shattered when their silenced complaints erupted.

Many revolutionary personalities and parties became well known. The first of these was the Hnchagian Party due to its militant position. It found a wide spread acceptance among the people. In the Sebastia province, people supported the Hnchagian Party, as they all instinctively had similar ideas. Under the terror of the Sultan, there was an Hnchagian nucleus in every Armenian village in the Alice River valley. The field workers, facing every difficulty, brought their sermons to the villages. During its first decade, the Hnchagian Party had left deep impressions among the Armenians of Sebastia. All the intellectual field workers in the villages were Hnchag Party members.

Several intellectual field workers had become well known in Govdoon. I will present them based on their biographical notes in my possession.

PERSONALITIES

Nshan Chimenian: Born in 1870 in Govdoon, he was the first person to have left home to go and study at the Surp Nshan Monastery of Sebastia. After his graduation, he had returned to Govdoon and was appointed teacher at the village school. He had an assistant, Nigoghos, from the village of Narvir in the Agn region, who had established the Hnchagian Party chapter in Govdoon. Nshan Efendi (title of a gentleman, esquire) was a prudent and intelligent person, enjoying an authoritative position. He organized the whole village under the Hnchagian Party's ideals. Murad of Sebastia, as a young man, joined the Hnchagian Party.

Nshan Efendi was the first intellectual of Govdoon, thus the whole village was under his authority. As the Hnchagian influence spread in the upper valley of river Alice, so did the importance of Nshan Efendi, because Govdoon became the center of the Hnchagian Party. During the 1890s, everyone in that valley region, without doubt, had Hnchagian inclinations. The revolutionary work and words attracted a large number of people, and spread deep roots in the region.

Nshan Efendi did not remain in the confines of his surroundings, but left for Egypt. He remained in Egypt as an inconspicuous Hnchagian intellectual field worker. He and the well-known Mushegh of Mush executed a bloodthirsty criminal Kurd, who, prior to and during the 1895 massacres, had killed numerous Armenians. As a result, Mushegh was sent to the gallows. Nshan Efendi was sentenced to life imprisonment in Sudan. He remained chained in prison until the Ottoman Constitution in 1908, when he was pardoned. On his way to his birthplace, when he reached Constantinople, due to his poor health, he was admitted to the Armenian Surp Prgich Hospital for treatment. Tuberculosis had already worn him down. Despite the efforts of his friends and compatriots, he died there without seeing his beloved Govdoon again.

Arevi Stepan: He was a truly popular personality, the son of a poor Govdoon family. He did not have any formal education. Unfortunately, his prison experience had become his education.

Since his early youth, he had been defiant and rash. No matter how much the village elders, Ter-Khacharian, Myudur Artin and Ghngo Artin, tried to restrain him, it was to no avail. One day, a rich and pompous Turkish shepherd had dishonored the Armenians of Khandsar with profanities. To restore the honor of the villagers, Stepan and Davit Chimenian (Nshan Efendi's brother) assassinated the Turk, who was named Mehmet, in the nearby fields. They buried his body by the road so that the surrounding Turks will be terrified. This incident became the subject of a popular village song, sung by all with the words: "Mehmet's fields are on the mountain, his body is on the road, etc."

Encouraged by his first attempt in resisting the Turks, saying goodbye to The River's murky waves, he left the village and moved to Bolis (Constantinople, Tr.). For a short time, he worked as porter and sent his earnings to his family. He endured the accustomed abstinence and suffering to the point of exploding from anger against the enemies of his fatherland. A young man, full of energy and restlessness, he became an impatient intimidator.

In 1896, during the occupation of Bank Ottoman, Stepan transported dynamite and ammunition from house to house. He joined and helped Papken Siuni, Armen Garo, Knuni and others. After assassinating Simon Maksudian (an Armenian informer, Tr.), he was captured and imprisoned. After the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution by the Young Turks, he was released from the dungeon, returned to Govdoon and remained there until the deportations. He had learned to read and write in the prison. His eyesight and lungs had deteriorated. He, too, became a victim along with thousands of others during the massacres.

MURAD'S TRAINING SCHOOL

Murad

The freedom fighters represented just one part of the Armenian people's multifaceted qualities. There was fire in their veins. They thirsted for freedom. They had fiery hair, blazing beards and bright eyes. Murad was one of them, one of a kind.



Murad of Sebastia

Murad's life was very stormy and colorful, as the history of his ancestors. He was of medium height with broad shoulders, powerful arms and thick hair. His fawning and smiling eyes

glimmered like two deep lakes. He had a friendly countenance, which revealed intelligence and sincerity. With a discreet and penetrating mind, he was observant and impressionable. Murad was a convincing speaker, pleasant to crowds and intellectuals. He was a loved and appreciated freedom fighter.

Murad was born in Govdoon in 1872. His parents were among those who lived on the outskirts of town. They had settled in Govdoon during the 1870s. They were sieve makers, who were called gypsies by the local people.

In the region of Western Armenia, the Armenian sieve makers constituted a large segment of the population, spreading from Vezir-Kepru to Boybad and Yevtogia. In the spring, they spread out in different directions. In the winter they came back to their homes. They were very patriotic Armenians, with their separate habits and mores. These were Murad's ancestors. Among them was an impressive looking man by the name of Keok (root), who was Murad's grandfather. They had settled in Govdoon. Sieve making did not bring sufficient income; for that reason some of them were hired as farm hands by the rich farmers, and others were hired as musicians. Murad's father, grandfather and brothers were skillful davul (drum) and zurna (a shrill wind instrument) players, who played at weddings and holidays. He was as modest as his origins during his 25 long years as a freedom fighter.

Murad's childhood was like a sweet dream. Along the river Alice and in the vast fields of Govdoon, he had herded animals, plowed lands and harvested as an accomplished farmer. Herding water buffaloes was his favorite work. Two buffaloes owned by Lame Sukik had the reputation of being wild and furious animals. When the buffaloes bellowed in the fields and their eyes turned red, it was a sign for trouble. Only Murad was able to restrain them.

Up to the age of twenty-one, Murad had not learned to read. One day, he left the village and went to Bolis to join his villagers in hell. He lived the harsh life of a porter, working in the streets and sleeping on merchandise to help his parents with his meager earnings. Murad's new environment and harsh life, the news of Sultan Hamid's massacres, the activities of the freedom fighters, the Armenian press of Bolis, Raffi's novels, and the public

meetings churned like a storm within him, thrusting him into the bloody struggle for freedom. He participated in the famous demonstration of Babeh-Ali. After assassinating an Armenian by the name of Karageozian, he escaped to Greece, then to Egypt. From then on, Murad became one of the volunteer freedom fighters, who willingly sacrificed their lives. Their monuments have become the pride of the Armenian mountains and valleys.

Murad outside of his birthplace: After staying in Egypt for a while, Murad left with his friend Zhirayr of Zeytun (Garabed Mkhjian) for the Caucasus region, and joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation freedom fighters. The two became the only responsible field workers and organizers in the Kars region, and especially they were the heart and soul of the region's resistance activities. Due to their dependable and selfless work, they were entrusted with the organization's munitions storage to arm the freedom fighter groups going "Tebi Yergir." Murad terrorized traitors and police chiefs without being captured.

In 1902, Murad became the best-known soldier of his group named Shant. He loved to fight, and loved his weapons. In 1903, with Tuman Tumanian's group, he left for Sasun to join Antranig. After that, Murad's bravery during the fightings in Sasun, Mush, Shnig, Gelieguzan and Dalvorig became well known to everyone. He became Antranig's right arm. Fighting with Antranig in the Sasun region were Sebu, Avo, Gaydsag Arakel and others.

During a skirmish in the mountains of Sasun, Murad with his small group of fighters became surrounded by the Hamidiya troops. Breaking through the chain, he went to Persia and joined in the fighting at the Surp Arakelotz monastery. During the well-known Armenian-Tatar conflict, he again moved to the Caucasus.

With several comrades, he went to Echmiadsin and met Khrimian Hayrig, who was moved by the sight of the handful of brave fighters. He blessed them by saying, "My sons, may your arms be strong and your swords be sharp; go and fight against our enemies." Murad became deeply affected by the words of the Catholicos. From that day on he adopted the surname Khrimian; thus, his name became Murad Hagopian-Khrimian.

The Armenian-Tatar War erupted in the Caucasus. Gantzag, Shushi, Goris and Ghapan became fighting fields. Gharabagh was

the center of Armenian lion-hearted inhabitants. The area was fiercely and boldly defended. The experienced braves Vartan, Ishkhan, Sebuhan and Hamazasb were also there.

The memories and wounds were still fresh in Zangezur, and in many places, the people still refer to the battlegrounds as “Murad’s Peak” or “Murad’s Rock,” which were the proud and silent monuments of those days. After the fighting, Murad moved on to the Akulis region, and then to Nakhichevan, Asdabad and elsewhere with special assignments.

After participating in the general meeting (of the ARF) in Vienna, he returned to the Caucasus, then Van, Mush, Bitlis and Sasun, where he remained until the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution.

Murad’s return to the homeland: After the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution, the political prisoners were released, who, with the exiled and those in hiding, were allowed to return to their homelands. Murad hastened to his birthplace. Homesick and longing for his parents and loved ones, he returned to his family’s bosom. Sebastia put on an unusual reception for her distant brave and heroic son. Officials from various establishments, teachers and alumni, merchants and people from every walk of life went to greet him with songs and speeches, and brought him to the city. With him were Barmakhsêz Garo, Parsegh Shahbaz and others.

Murad’s entry to his birthplace, Govdoon, was more elaborate and ingenuous. The young men of the village, riding horseback, went all the way to Seyfeh to greet him, and brought him back to the village. The entire village waited breathlessly on top of their roofs, waiting for Murad’s arrival. In Govdoon, and generally in the villages of the Hafik district, it was customary for the entire village to receive someone who had been absent for a long time. Joining the crowd were the school children, who sang various national songs. A song composed by a minstrel was sung with these beginning words: “Welcome to you brave hero, the bright beacon of Armenia.”

The procession gradually approached his native home. It was winter. The streets and rooftops were covered with snow. There was a large snow mound in front of Murad’s home, which served as a stage. The first speaker was Parsegh Shahbaz, a fiery young

man, who introduced Murad by speaking of his heroic freedom-fighting deeds. The second speaker was one of the heroes of Bank



Vahakn

Ottoman, Vahakn (Krikor Nalbandian²⁴), who emotionally introduced his comrade-in-arms. The last stirring speech belonged to Murad, who was surrounded by his family members, his mother,

²⁴ Krikor Nalbandian was one of the surviving freedom fighters, who had prepared the young men of Svaz and greatly helped Murad.

brothers and relatives, who wanted to talk to him after such a long absence. Murad stood on the snow mound and spoke with the following encouraging words.

“I have come to you with longing, emotion and enthusiasm after such a long time, my dear villagers. I am again among you, again for you, to serve all of you. With you, I have drunk the waters of our country, herded the water buffaloes, roamed the surrounding countryside, and one day I wandered away. I have come to know the pain and agony of our people, I have vowed to sacrifice my life for them, and always fight against those enemies who deny the right of their existence. From the day I left, the mountains became my parents, stones and caves my bed.”

Murad as a field worker: The backward Armenians of Sebastia needed a dauntless and famous personality in order to destroy the old ways and infuse them with the new. Murad became the central figure, not only of his own village, but that of the whole Sebastia province. His headquarter of activity was the Svaz and Govdoon districts. Riding on his fervent horse, Pekas (Pegasus), he had no rest, moving from village to village, town to town, giving speeches, organizing the people and informing them. Due to his natural ability for eloquence, he had a great and popular following, which he kept under his charm. Murad produced a new hard working, strong and vibrant generation. Murad was behind every national, political and educational movement, encouraging the people; yet he always remained in the background, dismantling the old and building the new. Sebastia was awakened from its ancestral mores and centuries old prejudice, took new life and got to work. Murad became a shocking element in the region.

The rebuilding started from his village, Govdoon. Murad closed the “Der Totik”²⁵ style school, and went to the city to bring teachers who were trained with modern teaching methods. Instead of learning from the Bible and church liturgy, students were given new books to study within new buildings. Murad became the living bridge between the city and his village. In a short time, Govdoon

²⁵ Der Totik schools were referred to those where the style of teaching was by threatening and beating the students whenever they did not learn well. (Translator’s note.)

was transformed, and a vibrant generation went to work. The movement became infectious. All the villages in the river Alice valley embraced the constructive spirit.

Even though Murad had not attended any school, he knew the value of education in advancing the Armenian culture. He would declare aloud, “My school is the Armenian mountains, and my teachers are my weapons and beliefs.” Truly, he had acquired from the school of life such rich lessons that very possibly a formal education would not have given him. His intent was to prepare such a generation, which would not be like the old. Not only was he the personification of a hero, but also the founder of numerous educational institutions. For a very long time, Sebastia had not had such a dedicated person endeavoring for a single ideal, a single belief and a single case as Murad. He spread his work with magical powers into every cottage, instilling in the people defiant ideas for improvement. Night and day, he secretly transported arms into the villages without being noticed by the Turkish authorities. He awakened the peasantry and made them hang several arms from their blackened cottage walls. He sang the praises of “the wonderful iron with a hole,” in order to be ready for coming scourges.

Murad was not satisfied just by the work in the district. He moved to Bolis, where there was a group of displaced young men from Govdoon, who struggled to make a living. He went among them, gathering them around him and convinced them with a single slogan, “Away from the homeland, but for the homeland.” He transferred the unproductive and stagnant funds of the compatriotic organization to Govdoon to create building activities. The villages awakened, one after another, built schools, churches and water mills, which became witnesses for their collective sacrifices. Each village excelled and surpassed the other in building, education and organization.

Murad’s comrades-in-arm: Murad had formed a loyal group of comrades-in-arm, whose members were filled with boundless enthusiasm and dedication. The group consisted of two distinct personalities. The first was formed by the more experienced older freedom fighters, such as Yegho of Zimara, Bidsa (Mkrdich), Vartan Shahbaz of Divrig; from the new generation Krisdosdur,

Kalust, Arutjan, Nshan, Armenag, Vartan and Voskian. The second group consisted of field workers and intellectuals, such as Shavarsh Vartabed, Vahan Vartanian, Dr. Arshag Boghosian, Dr. Hanranian, Khachadur Grdodian, Nerses Kaprielian, Aram Yeranorian, Hovhaness Poladian, Mardiros Kaprielian of Mush, Vahan Medsaturian, Dikran Kavatjian, Boghos Aghpar and Karekin Mazmanian. I will describe the lives of a few of those men, who were martyred along with the population during the massacres.

Bidsa of Zimara: He was one of the earlier freedom fighters, who gambled with his life all along and became one of the immortals of our struggle for freedom. Divrig, Zimara and Bingian villages had from the early days been the birthplaces of revolutionary figures, due largely to the efforts of immortals such as Zhirayr, Hagop of Russia, Dr. Garabed Khan Pashayan and Shmavon. Papken Siuni's birthplace, Bingian, was the fountain of many freedom fighters.

Bidsa came from a wealthy family. He had not experienced any of life's difficulties. From his early youth, he loved to be rebellious. In 1890, when the Hnchag Committee was founded in Zimara, he had become one of its ardent members along with Khachig Agha.

A tragic event had taken place in Zimara, involving Bidsa's father, Narin Hovhaness, who had become at odds with a few of his Hnchagian friends. The conflict became so serious that Bidsa's father, with another villager named Ghugas, betrayed the Hnchag Committee and its activities in Divrig. As a result, the government arrested 10-12 people and imprisoned them. Later, the prisoners were taken to Sebastia. Among them was a teacher from Govdoon, named Nigoghos of Narvir.

One winter night, two young men from Divrig, Natan and Sarkis, went to Zimara to assassinate Bidsa's father and Ghugas. First they entered Ghugas's house and inflicted wounds on Ghugas and his wife. During the cries for help and the commotion, Natan's knife accidentally cut into Sarkis' artery. Wounded, both men fled from the house. Bidsa rushed to the scene. Thinking that the attackers were Turks, he pursued them. Sarkis, losing considerable amount of blood and weakened, surrendered. A few days later he

died. Natan was captured and sent to prison in Sebastia. That incident spread throughout the Sebastia province, and became the subject of popular songs.



Murad's Comrades

In 1894, Natan was tried and condemned to death. In July of that year, he was hanged at the main road to the city. The Armenians of Sebastia were shaken by Natan's execution. They honored him with an elaborate burial and erected a monument. The Turks destroyed the monument, saying that people like Natan did not deserve respect, even one of stone.

After this incident, Bidsa went to Bolis where the Hnchagians wanted to assassinate him, because of his role in Natan's death. However, after hearing his explanation, the decision was changed. As a punishment, he was ordered to assassinate the Alashgerd Prelate, Mampreh Vartabed Belian, who was considered a spy for Nazim Pasha. Bidsa accomplished the given task, and left for the Caucasus. He undertook several executions in the region of Alexandrapole.

In 1908, Bidsa joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. After the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution, as an ARF field worker, he visited Sebastia, Hafik and nearby regions. He was Murad's trusted comrade and one of Sebastia's bright fighting stars.

In Shabin-Karahisar and its environs, Bidsa organized and armed the people. He was one of those who worked to prepare for the defensive battles of Karahisar. He had the premonition that a misfortune was in the making; thus, preparations were to be made beforehand. The deceitful and ruthless Muammer, using flattery, wanted to invite Murad, Bidsa, Vartan Shahbaz and Vahan Vartanian in order to get his bloody paws on them. However, Bidsa, with his small group, had already found refuge in the caves around Divrig.

The military officer and his troops surrounded Bidsa, who after an extended resistance, surrendered with 2000 bullets and a few rifles, knowing that because of him, Muammer would spread death in the village of Divrig. Bidsa was brought to Sebastia, condemned to death by the military court, and in 1916 was hanged in a public square.

Yegho of Zimara: He was an experienced fighter of large stature, strong with muscular arms. He was a fun loving person, who enjoyed kidding around, but was quiet and thoughtful during work. He would always console and encourage those around him, even during the most desperate and grievous times.

Yegho had been a freedom fighter for a long time. In the 1890s, he had left for the Caucasus, and joined Sarkis Gugunian's first fighting group. He had been captured and sent to Siberia, where he had endured great suffering. One day, suddenly, he became free. Yegho joined the ARF and became one of its fiercest members.

After several executions, he left for the United States. Several years after the declaration of the Ottoman Constitution, he returned to Govdoon and lived in disguise near Murad.

Yegho stayed in Govdoon until Muammer's attempt to arrest Murad. Murad, with a skillful move, tricked the Turkish officials, and ordered Yegho and his other comrades not to be arrested. Together with several villagers, Murad and Yegho escaped to Rizeh, where they overwhelmed a rowboat owner. Taking his boat, they all jumped in it.

Yegho had always kept the spirit of his comrades high by his wit, jokes and pleasant conversations, during fighting, deportations and dreadfully terrible days. Likewise, even on the huge waves of the Black Sea, he started to deride life, and describe man's insignificance as a tragicomedy, thus breathing hope and vigor into his discouraged friends.

While traveling by moonlight, hiding in caves, and in the loneliness of forests, Yegho, full of tears and emotion, wrote down the trials and tribulations of his comrades. He had written in pencil, with the accuracy of a diary, all the events and deplorable caravans of refugees, during the seven months of their escape. It was Yegho's memoirs, which Murad completed and gave to Zabel Yessayan for publication.²⁶

In order to express the grief and mourning of his people, Yegho found a symbolic means of mourning. He ripped the flour bag, which was found in the boat, made a black cross, and raised it on the boat as a sign of deep mourning. This symbol became a well-known metaphor to all Armenians of Turkey. Regrettably, the black cross also became his misfortune. Near Rizeh, the group engaged in a battle with a Turkish steamboat. The enemy was defeated and steamed away. While celebrating the victory with several extra shots at the steamboat, he was hit in the forehead by the enemy's last bullet and died. The boat, full of these fiery freedom fighters and Yegho's body, arrived in Batum to the surprise and admiration of the people.

²⁶ Zabel Yessayan was an authoress in Bolis, who later became the first female member of the Armenian Republic's Parliament in 1918. (Translator's note.) The narratives of Murad's travels were first published in *Kortz* monthly, and later separately as a book.

Shavarsh Vartabed: He was a fiery young man, a capable and vehement clergyman, dedicated to his people. He was the representative of Sebastia's prelate, and Bishop Torkom's student and assistant. Shavarsh Vartabed was later appointed prelate of Yevtogia. He was more of a revolutionary than a clergyman.

Shavarsh Vartabed traveled from village to village and town to town, not only bringing to his flock spiritual comfort but also revolutionary ideas and songs. In place of the Bible, he had adopted the "bible" of dedication to the freedom of the Armenian people; instead of the cross, he carried a rifle. He was a skillful orator, deep thinker and a hard worker. He would travel from village to village and share the sufferings and living conditions with the people in their lice-infested, soot-covered cottages. He encouraged and educated the backward people and their clergy.

Without doubt, Shavarsh Vartabed would have had a bright future, if he had lived. During the 1911-13 election of the Catholicos, together with Bishop Torkom, they represented Sebastia at the election meeting. It was at this meeting that he came to know and be known by the Armenian intellectual class. He had attracted the attention of many of those present that listened to his oration with interest and admiration. When WWI broke out, also he was captured by Muammer, the executioner.

One day, several Turkish brigands came to town under the pretense of inviting him to Sebastia in order to "confer with Muammer." During the trip, only a few miles from Yevtogia, near the Giun-Geormez spring of Ghêzêl-Enish, the bandits got him down from the carriage and killed him in a horribly barbaric manner. They gouged out his eyes and tore his body apart.

Vahan Vartanian: He was a pharmacist, a revolutionary in spirit. Formerly, a Hnchag, he joined the ARF when the latter attained pan-national fame. Vahan was a fanatic member of the ARF. He had melded with the ideals of the organization to the point where whatever belonged to him also belonged to the ARF. He was completely dedicated to the ARF, working enthusiastically for it. He was one of the conspicuous personalities of Sebastia's Central Committee of the ARF. He was everywhere and strove to find a solution for every problem. He was Murad's staunchest

assistant. He feverishly and with great impetus spread the ideals of the ARF from Sebastia to the far away villages and regions.

Vahan was either directly or indirectly involved with libraries, meeting halls, theater groups, fighting groups, newspapers, lectures, youth groups, national education and military organizations. Vahan had a large part in peaceful and constructive works. Together with Hovhaness Poladian, he assisted in the publication of the *Hoghtar* newspaper. He wrote about and spread ARF's ideals among the people. He was a decisively impressive personality. He was neither a capable speaker nor did he have a special talent; however, he was one of the area's self sacrificing model field workers. He looked at life from within the ARF, he felt by it, understood by it and worked by it.

One day, Olkinin,²⁷ a reporter for several Russian newspapers, came to Sebastia from Dikranagerd in order to gather information on the six Armenian provinces. The secret police swarmed around the hotel where Olkinin stayed. No one came to see him. He remained alone, but later complained to Muammer. As a result, the surveillance decreased. Several Armenian community leaders and editors of the *Hoghtar* newspaper approached Olkinin and presented him with several documents of the current conditions of the Armenians.

Muammer organized demonstrations along the road where Olkinin took his walks. Feigning that he was not aware, Muammer confidentially asked Vahan, "What are these things that are taking place along the roads where this man is passing, some incidents are happening?"²⁸ Sensing Muammer's purpose, Vahan evaded the question, knowing well that the Turk wanted to find out the real reason for Olkinin's visit, and to attribute an ulterior motive to the Armenian organizations.

During those days, one of the well-known professors of the American College, Holbrook, was assassinated. That event became the beginning of terrifying events. Muammer was already in control. He had ordered arrests, beatings and heinous criminal acts. The blood of Armenians and the stench of death were everywhere.

²⁷ *Mshag* newspaper printed during 1915-1916 Olkinin's report titled, "Disappearing Armenia."

²⁸ G. Kapigian, *Yeghernabadoum*, p. 24-25.

At the beginning of April 1915, suddenly, Vahan was arrested along with Mardiros Kaprielian of Mush, Hovhaness Poladian, Deveh Dikran, Murad Giurigian and other community leaders. A few days later, a short distance outside of town, they were killed outright, and their bodies were torn apart by the barbaric Turks.

Karekin Kshigian: He was a brave and revengeful young man. He had emigrated to the U.S. Karekin was the youngest of his extensive family. The Kshigian clan was one of the largest in Govdoon. A whole neighborhood was named after them. Each house had almost twenty members. There are several members of this large family still living in Bolis, France and the U.S. Karekin left the U.S. to go and join Antranig's troop.



Karekin Kshigian

In 1915, the volunteer groups, advanced towards Van, during the days of uprisings in the Vasburagan region. Antranig from Persia, Vartan, Keri, Dro and Hamazasb from Igdir were hastening to assist those in Van.

Van was liberated.

The volunteers were advancing towards Bitlis. During the bloody battles of Sorp, many of the volunteers sustained heavy casualties of killed and wounded. Also, Karekin was killed there on June 1916.

These were Murad's braves, who rushed to the battlefields and died for the liberation of our people. It is hard to mention everyone, because they are so numerous.

Khachadur Grdodian: He was originally from Tavra, the village of millers. He had been orphaned at a young age, and had experienced much bitterness. By some luck, Khachadur wound up

in the Sanassarian School in Garin (Erzerum). He graduated, returned to his village and became a teacher at the Armenian community school. As a kind hearted, dedicated and enthusiastic personality, he was appreciated by the school trustees, and well known by the public. Until 1908, he was an excellent and modest teacher. Teaching was his career and purpose. The generation was much indebted to Khachadur. Not only did he teach reading and writing, but he also instilled in the students a national feeling and love for Armenia. During his long years as a teacher, he authored many encouraging articles.

Then came the days of the Ottoman Constitution, everything changed—schools, students, teachers and leaders.

The movement also pulled Khachadur from the confines of the school and made him a field worker. He ran from school to reading rooms, from gathering halls to libraries lecturing and organizing. He adored Murad and lived by his words. As doubtful as he was before the declaration of the Constitution, he became as daring afterwards. There was fire in him, and he was an enthusiastic member of the ARF. Alternately with Mihran Sirabian, he was the director of the Aramian School and the community orphanage.

On June 21, 1915, Khachadur organized a meeting in the neighborhood of Bezirjun-Ard. Murad had already sought refuge in the mountains. At that meeting, Khachadur proposed a plan to resist the deportations and resort to defending themselves. He pointed out Murad's example, and attempted by all his means to arouse the people. The people objected and disagreed with him. Soon after, the people were driven out of their village to be slaughtered in the Kanlê-Dereh and Frnjêlar valleys.

The same night, leading thirty armed young men, Khachadur left town intending to go to either Karahisar or the Caucasus. The group encountered many difficulties. Some of them along with Khachadur sought refuge in the Lusunpert caves of the Pashin Fabrika region. The Turkish gendarmes found out their presence there and surrounded them. Several of Khachadur's comrades were wounded; among them was Khanum, the eighteen-year old daughter of Avedis Shaheyian Agha. Khanum, with a gun in her hand, fought heroically and killed several gendarmes. At the end, she too was killed. She reminded us of Khanum Ketenjian of

Urfa's heroic defense. She went from one position to another, giving orders and fought as the men.

Few of the comrades, among them Khachadur, were able to escape. Alone, he returned to his village of Tavra and hid in his uncle's house. The town was already emptied of its population, taken to the city of Sebastia and given the watermills to operate. The town had 150-200 Armenian families in the province of Sebastia. All the inhabitants were millers. For this reason, Muammer had ordered the safety of these people. Until today, none of the population of the village has been deported. Their profession had become their salvation.

By chance, a Turkish gendarme had entered the house where Khachadur was hiding. Sensing that he was in danger, Khachadur had pulled out a gun and killed the gendarme. Hearing the gunshot, the gendarmes, who had been standing outside, rushed in the house. Khachadur killed them also. Word was sent to Svaz that fugitives were hiding in Tavra. The military bombarded the house. Khachadur ran out while shooting and killing several more gendarmes. At that point he fell to the ground wounded.

Khachig Chimenian: He was the son of executioner Nshan Efendi Chimenian of Govdoon. He had come back from the U.S. and joined Antranig's troop. In 1919, during the battles in Zangezur, he was killed in the Zabugh valley.

Doctor A. Hayranian: He was a modest and idealistic young man. He had studied at a medical school in Germany. He was one of the well-known members of Sebastia's ARF Central Committee, along with Vahan Vartanian and Hovhaness Poladian. He had established good contacts with the German officers, who had come to Sebastia to train the Turkish military. Trusting the protection of the German



Khachig Chimenian

officers, he constantly appealed to Muammer for releasing his friends. However, Muammer wanted to eliminate all the Armenian leadership by whatever means he could devise. He had already ordered the murder of many of the leadership, among them Benjamin Topalian, who was one of the leaders in the city. Muammer had called Benjamin to his office and informed Benjamin that his family was not deported to be slaughtered. Benjamin had become irate and told Muammer, "What difference does it make to save my family when you are slaughtering the whole Armenian population? He had added, "Muammer, I knew that Turks are low lives, but I did not know that they were to this degree!" Benjamin sent word to his wife telling her, "I do not want to see you again. Since you were my family, you should not have separated from the caravan. You should have left with the rest of them, and been massacred as they were."

A few days later, Muammer ordered his men to murder Benjamin, who was a Turkish speaking Armenian from the town of Zileh.

Under these circumstances, Dr. Hayranian had pleaded mercy for his friends from this bloodthirsty monster, who had declared in front of his thugs, "If I know that there is the smallest amount of compassion towards Armenians in a strand of my hair, I will pluck it immediately and throw it in the fire."

Murad had contracted typhoid while hiding in the wet caves in the Sakhar Mountain. He was under the care of his comrades. The situation was very serious, and his condition was getting worse by the day. There was neither a doctor nor medication. The group sent messengers to Svaz in order to ask Dr. Hayranian to come and treat Murad. Dr. A. Hayranian and Baghdasar Vartanian went secretly over back roads to see Murad. They found him in a wet corner of the cave. They treated him with medication, and left him teary-eyed with warm wishes. Murad got well, and escaped while fighting the Turks. Hayranian was arrested later and murdered violently.

Avedis Chavush Mushmulian: He was born in 1894 in Govdoon. He was orphaned at an early age. His mother raised him and his brother, Toros, with much affection. He left for the U.S. before WWI. When he heard about the deportations and massacres,

he left his factory work and went back to join Murad in the Caucasus. During the retreat from Yerzinga (Erzinjan), Avedis, Hovnan and Jebeji had disappeared. A little later, it could be seen that the Kurdish and Turkish villages were in flames. These were the braves who were defending themselves in the villages of Mamakhatun, Garchma and Jiniz, while spreading fire among the enemy's defenses.

After 1918, Avedis had fought in all the battles along with Murad, Sebuhi and Antranig. He had been in Erzerum, Kars, Hasan-Kaleh, Sarighamish, and Gharakiliseh. He had traveled with Antranig's group through Nor-Bayazid, Zangezur, Khoy, and had received the Saint Kevork Medal-of-Honor for his bravery.



Avedis Chavush

In 1919, when after numerous battles, Antranig's group had reached Echmiadsin and dispersed, Avedis, Hovnan and Jebeji moved to Cilicia.

Avedis was assigned to the leadership of Yepremian's cavalry group, and participated in the first voluntary movement of Hajin. His daring deeds and bravery were acknowledged by everyone. As a result, he became Cilicia's renowned Avedis Chavush. During the siege of Tumlu, leading two hundred inexperienced soldiers, he wanted to break through enemy ranks and go to help the braves of Hajin. He was hit in the right arm. Wounded, he led his group out of danger to Misis.

Avedis Chavush was a modest, mild-mannered, quiet and amiable person. His practice of military discipline and duty alleviated his charm and importance. On August 15, 1920, along the river Jihan, while attacking the insidious enemy, he was hit with a bullet to his head and died a hero's death.

Along with Avedis, his two reliable fighters, Mirijan and Garabed Tngrian, also fell in battle.

Vartan Srabian: He was one of the best young men of Govdoon. He had grown up under Murad's influence and was inspired by him. When Murad went to the mountains as a freedom fighter, Vartan went with him from the very first day. On the way, he contracted typhoid and could not continue with his comrades. His friends carried him to the Greek village of Devgerish in the region of Samson. The group left and ascended the Koja Dag Mountain. Several times, his comrades sent one of them to find out Vartan's condition. They heard that Vartan had died. However, this turned out to be wrong. Vartan had stayed at the Greek village and recovered. Traveling through the mountains of Trabizond, he reached Yerzinga and again joined Murad's group, to the surprise of everyone. In Armenia, Vartan lived in the region of Nor Bayazid. He married there and had children.

Traveling to Yerevan with butcher Garabed Hampigian of Sebastia, Garabed murdered Vartan and stole his money of 3,000 rubles and five Ottoman gold pieces. The news reached his comrades, who became enraged by the incident. Armenag Mikaelian went to the prison where Garabed was imprisoned, somehow got him out and assassinated him in the area of Ghuytur.

Harutiun Cheochenian: He was born in Govdoon in 1895. He was an agile, sagacious and clever young man. He had left for the U.S. in 1914 just before the beginning of WWI. Murad's escape from the village to Batum had created a tremendous enthusiasm among his village expatriates. A large number of them left the U.S. and returned to join Murad, fighting alongside him. Harutiun was one of those men, who joined Murad's tracking group.

This small group had become somewhat of a shield for Murad. Even though the group was small, the members felt as if they had the force of an army. These freedom fighters were Avedis Chavush, Armenag Mikaelian, Nshan Pilavian, young



**Harutiun
Cheochenian**

Nazar of Aghdk, Harutiun Cheochenian, Mardiros Tngrian, Nshan Muradian, Vartan Srabian, Nshan of Khorokhon, Hovnan of Ghazumaghara, Arutjan Pehlivanian and Dikran Meneghigian.²⁹

During all the fighting in Yerzinga, Erzerum, Hasan-Kaleh, Kars and other places, Harutiun's accomplishments were appreciated well by Murad. In the most critical situations, Harutiun was ready alongside Murad.

These were the days of retreat. The Turkish troops pursued the Armenian freedom fighters. There even was no time to destroy what was left behind. Harutiun Tngrian and Mardiros Tngrian were blowing up the ammunition dumps. Darting through the fires, they would come and join the group. It was this dedicated group that spread fire in the areas of Yerzinga, Mamakhatun, Erzerum and Hasan-Kaleh, leaving only smoke and ashes to the enemy.

Harutiun and Mardiros had also blown up the munitions storage of Yeni-Keoy on the orders of Murad and Sebu. The explosion had been so great and violent that the two had not had enough time to escape, and died in the fires. The explosion had been so immense that it had left a huge crater in the ground.

Artakin Meneshian: He was born in Govdoon in 1895. He had left the U.S. for the Caucasus and joined Antranig's troop, in Armenag's battalion. Artakin had been wounded during the bloody battles in Khoy. He remained wounded in the field alone and died there.



Artakin Meneshian

Nshan Cheochenian: He had left the U.S. and gone to the Caucasus. He had joined Antranig's troop. During the bloody battles for the occupation of Bitlis, he was recognized for his bravery. At the beginning of March 1916, during the battles in the field of Mush, he was killed and buried in the Brotherhood cemetery of Bitlis.

²⁹ Dikran Meneghigian is the person, who many years later, was condemned to life imprisonment in Grenoble for killing his wife.

Voskian Mikaelian: He was one of the modest fighters who crossed the Black Sea with Murad, always sacrificing himself to perform his duties. He had been forged in many battles. In 1925, during a familial tragedy, he was killed in Bolis.

Murad's Golgotha (Calvary): WWI had already started for several months. Throughout all of Turkey the mood in every village and town was somber. Every day conflicting rumors were spreading among the people. Everyone had turned into a politician, and felt that also Turkey was going to enter the war.

A general conscription had been announced. The government had posted the announcement on colorful papers. The situation was chaotic, unlike the orderly European manner.

The signals for pogroms had sounded.

Sebastia and its surrounding countless Armenian villages were openly being attacked and looted.

On November 17, 1914, the Russo-Turkish war had started.

Murad felt that his work was not yet completed, thus kept working feverishly. A deep feeling of prescience was disturbing Murad's emotions. Communications with outside of the village did not exist. There was no mail, no news and no orders for him. Both the people and their leaders were lost and depressed. A frightful terror had gripped the Armenian population.

All the community and political leaders had been arrested. Muammer had sent the chief of gendarmes, Kelesh Beg, with a group of his men to Govdoon to arrest Murad. They had gone directly to Murad's residence. Kelesh Beg, with flattering Turkish tongue, told Murad, "Governor Muammer wants to see you for a very important business, you must come with us!"

A messenger had come from the city a few hours earlier to warn Murad to be careful. Murad understood that a trap was set for him.

He did not show any signs of suspicion. He told his mother, who was a brave woman, to prepare a big meal, including a roasted lamb, for his enemy guests. The Turks sat down to eat. The village was already in turmoil. The people had predicted a calamity. Murad's comrades-in-arm, got ready and waited for him at the outskirts of town. Murad went down to the stable before the Turkish gendarmes, collected his arms, took his horse, which had

been readied, kissed his loved ones goodbye, and left. His young child, Kevork Chavush, cried after him, "Daddy, if you leave, who is going to protect us."

The Turks were taken by surprise, and realized that Murad was escaping. They tried to convince him that there was no reason for suspicion, and asked him to come back.

Murad shouted back, "Go and tell Muammer, who sent you, that he knows me well, and I him. I am not one to fall into his trap!"

The popular saying was that "a lion is recognized by its claws."

Kelesh Beg returned to Sebastia with his men. Muammer had become outraged, and poured insults on Kelesh Beg for letting Murad escape.

To learn about Murad's escape, how he fought and found freedom, one must read separately about his travels.

From that day on, he became the mythical character of the mountains. He was everywhere, but nowhere. The Turkish population exaggerated his strength and attributed miracles to him. Murad's escape route was Khorsana, Jin-Deresi, Hreshdagabed, Aghdk, Gamra, Sakhar Mountain, Tejerdag, Kojadagh and the Black Sea.

To find Murad, Muammer had used all means. He resorted to beating Murad's family members and friends, murdered others and set homes on fire. Nothing helped. The Armenian peasantry along Murad's escape route did not open their mouths to reveal his location. On the contrary, old men, women and children took food and bullets to him. Malicious people told Murad's mother that he had been captured. Despite the beatings she had received, she had answered, "I will curse the milk that nurtured him, if he is captured that easily!"

The forced deportations began. Murad could see the succession of caravans of emaciated people being led to slaughter. Murad was hiding in Mount Tejer, where he could see in the distance a crowd was approaching. He ordered his men to be ready. When the crowd got closer, he could see through his binoculars that it was the people of Govdoon surrounded by gendarmes. He saw his wife, mother and children, who were at the front of the caravan. These fighting men were overwhelmed with emotion. Yegho tried to console them, but to no avail. The men kept crying.

The caravan stopped in the forest. The animals were released from the carts and fires were lit. The donkeys went grazing deeper into the forest. Armenag, Nshan and Vartan, hiding behind a donkey, wanted to approach the caravan and gather information from the ladies, who were getting water from the nearby spring. Their attempt was in vain, since the gendarmes were constantly surrounding the caravan. The men were careful not to reveal their location. When they went back, Murad was angered, and he wanted to go. He too was not successful. Full of emotions, no one was able to speak. How difficult it was to see their loved ones, and watch this tragedy from behind a tree, a stone, yet not be able to rescue them.

Of course, it was possible to attack the Turkish guards, rescue the caravan, but what would have happen to the rest of the Armenians? The Turks would have killed a thousand Armenians for one Turk.

What to do?

In the morning, the caravan was prodded by bayonets to get ready. The carts started moving. Murad and his comrades got ready with their arms in case there was the need to fight.

The caravan went to be slaughtered in the desolate valley of Hasan Chelebi, Kanlê-Dereh and Frnchêlar.

Travelers and passers-by told Murad that the whole Armenian population of Svaz had been deported and massacred.

Murad and his group, fighting along the way and hiding in the mountains, came down from Kochadagh, in the darkness of night, near Rizeh, commandeered a boat, and all got in it.

To the surprise of everyone, the group reached Batum on November 8, 1915, bringing with it the body of their brave and unique comrade, Yegho. The group consisted of:

Murad of Govdoon
Armenag Mikaelian of Govdoon
Voskian Mikaelian of Govdoon
Nshan Muradian of Govdoon
Nshan Pilavian of Govdoon
Melik Asarian of Govdoon
Arutjan Pehlivanian of Svaz
Hovnan Jeledian (killed in Cilicia in 1920)

Toros Karaian of Ghazu-Maghara
Nshan Panosian of Maghara
Setrag Panosian of Maghara
Vasil, Triandafil and Petro, Greeks from the Black Sea area.

Murad's Activities in the Caucasus: It was the last period of the voluntary movement, a period of disappointment. An Armenian political movement had started in Russia and the Caucasus.

Murad had just had a chance to have a short respite, when he, with his comrades, moved to Bitlis to lead the first volunteer group. Gaydsak-Arakel and Vahan joined him. Murad passed the leadership to one named Smpad. Antranig had already left the Batum region and gone to Tiflis.

The group had engaged in only a few skirmishes.

The volunteer groups were dispersed in 1916.

In 1917, the Russian Revolution exploded. As a result, the Russian soldiers abandoned the battlefronts to the enemy and returned home. The Armenian soldiers—volunteers, replaced the Russian soldiers. The Armenian national and security councils were hard at work. Dr. Zavrian, assistant to the governor of all the occupied lands, made arrangements for Murad to go to Yerzinga. Murad, Sebu, Gaydsag-Arakel, Vahakn and Vartan Shahbaz established the “One Armenian for one gold piece” fund. Colonel Morell joined them. Chopur Davit went among the Kurds of Dersim to deal with the Kurdish Sheikhs and succeeded in rescuing a large number of Armenian children. Life resumed again for the rescued Armenians, who gradually settled on the Armenian lands and engaged in agriculture.

Murad understood the serious business of defending the battlefronts, but the Turks were always ready to attack. There were no soldiers, and the organizational work went slowly. The military council in Garin lacked authority. Murad and Sebu were the only protectors of the fronts. Everyone waited for Antranig's arrival. Finally, he arrived. There were many people in military uniforms, but they were not soldiers. Out of this untrained multitude, Antranig, Murad and Sebu were to organize and train an Armenian fighting army in a very short time to defend against Turkey. The fighting spirit among the military ranks was daily disappearing.

Extraordinary efforts were made to keep the fighting men from retreating, but the efforts were in vain. The collapse of the front started from Yerzinga. Antranig, Murad and Sebul were trying to organize a life or death defense within the city of Erzerum. I still remember Antranig's words, encouraging, with his hoarse voice, his fellow fighters of Khnus, and distributing bullets with his own hands, "Tomorrow, this city will be painted with blood, and you will be walking on the heads of the enemy! We all will either die here or be rescued!"

That same night, Antranig called on his wireless radio the first brigade telling them not to return from Ilijan. Captain Mirimanian responded, "The troops do not want to fight, and in two hours they will be in Erzerum. If you come personally, your presence may influence them to fight." Antranig and Murad immediately went to Ilijan. Antranig explained to the troops that in a few days they had to be in Yerzinga and not Erzerum.

One of the fighters came forward and said, "We have no clothes, no food and we are bare footed; we can not fight!"

Antranig got angry and struck the first soldier he encountered, wounding him. The soldiers started fighting among themselves, reviving the conflict between those from the Russian and Turkish territories. Antranig stood openly in front of the troops and cried out loud, "I know that I am going to die by an Armenian's bullet and not by a Turk's or Kurd's, shoot me, shoot me!"

Some of the men barely restrained Antranig from further incidents. The troops started their retreat toward Erzerum. Colonel Bezhanbeg arrived hastily and saw his group on the road to Erzerum. He pointed out to them their bad move, but no one listened. The retreating men, to please the colonel, shot several more rounds of bullets, and continued their retreat.

The general retreat was decided that same night. Erzerum had emptied suddenly of its population. The fighting men at their positions did not know of the situation in the city. The people were pouring out of the city. Murad and Sebul remained in the back to protect the people, directing the retreat all the way to Kars. From there, the two went to Tiflis.

Those were unprecedented days. The roads were cut off and the Turkish bayonets were pointed towards Yerevan. There was no

word from Tiflis. Words were circulating that the Turks were demanding their subject Armenian leaders. Murad and Sebuhi left for Baku.

There was fierce fighting in Baku. Nuri Pasha's and the Musavat³⁰ troops were continually advancing towards Baku. The Armenian majority had organized a strong defense.

One of Baku's agonizing battles had started. Murad had charged towards the Turkish defenses. During the bloody battle, he was hit in the forehead and fell with weapon in hand, as a hero. His body remained where he fell for days.

The battle was won. Murad's unrecognizable body was found and buried with a majestic military funeral.

³⁰ Musavat Party: The Turkic, Islamist party in the Caucasus (Translator's note).

INTELLECTUAL PERSONALITIES OF THE REGION IN THE DIASPORA

During different times and conditions, many people, born and raised in Sebastia, have left and become some of the best public and educational leaders in the diaspora. Until today, they live and work in many countries, sharing the unfortunate destiny of our people. Here are a few names, which represent that class of intellectuals.

Zadig Matigian of Ghavra: A university graduate, a public speaker and field worker in the United States.

Garabed Beonian of Kochasar: A university graduate and a renowned teacher. He is a physicist and a community leader. Living in Tabriz (Iran), he is the director of the Armenian school. In 1924, the 25th Anniversary of his community service was celebrated.

Krikor Giragosian of Gamis: Graduate of the Law and Political Sciences University of Paris. At the present, he is the principal of the Melkonian Orphanage of Cyprus.

Abdalian Brothers of Gamis: Both are university graduates. The elder brother is a science professor at the Yerevan University. Hovnatan is an architect in Paris.

Hovsep Der-Stepanian of Khorsana: He is a university graduate living in the U.S. as a writer with the pseudonym "SanSvaz."

Harutian and Levon Kevonian of Karhad: Both have been freedom fighters and are intellectuals. They have been in Bolis and in other countries, participating in all the Armenian freedom movements. Harutian had passed away in Bolis on January 1, 1927.

ETHNOGRAPHY

Village of Govdoon

Govdoon, built on a plateau, was one of the large villages in the area of Alice River's upper valley. The river flowed swiftly along the plateau and through the fertile Chorakh valley. It was a meandering, murky river, which irrigated the fields of Khorsana, Govdoon and Ghavraz before it dashed towards Sebastia.

Alice River was the natural border of the villages along its shores. It was their untouchable property, their joy and laughter. So much labor had been toiled along its shores, and so many songs were written about its roar.

Govdoon was bounded on the east by Kochasar, Aghdk and Gavra; on the west, by Seyfeh Mountain and Sebastia; on the north, Sakhar Mountain and Khandsar; on the south, river Alice and Khorsana. Govdoon was the center of the Hafik district. According to the villagers, Govdoon was an old village. Nearby, there were old Turkish gravesites, which were assumed to be four hundred years old. On the east side of the village, there were ancient Turkish graves, which indicated that previously Turks inhabited the village. The Armenians may have come from Kommer (This was an area far outside of the village. It is also mentioned later in the book as being the planting fields of the villagers. The word in Armenian means stables. Tr.), and settled in the village area.

Elders would tell that the old village had barely forty families. The Nrian family was the earliest family, which had come from Tsolig and settled in Govdoon. Until the 1890s, there still were several Turkish families in the village.

The name of the village had a Turkish origin,³¹ which meant Blue Religion (Geok Din) and referred to Christianity. The people

³¹ Octogenarian elders used to tell the village history differently. Supposedly, Surp Hreshdagbed monastery was the summer residence of King Senekerim Ardruni. His flock grazed in the river Alice valley. The shepherd would bring the herd all the way to where Govdoon was later built. He had built a cabin and lived there. The shepherd was named Ghovd, hence Ghovd's home, Ghovddoon, which had later become Govdoon.

had corrupted the name to Govdoon. After the deportations, the Turks had changed the village name to Hakk Din (true religion). In 1909, during the construction of a water mill, decorated cross stones (Khachkar) had been found, which were moved to the churchyard. There were ancient storage places and hermitages in the vicinity of Tarin Depeh and Tsiiun-Pos.

The houses were somewhat advanced in their construction. Such was the construction in most of the villages in the Hafik district. There were no houses as described by Xenophon. They could not be compared with the houses in the Abaran and Shirag regions (in Russian Armenia, or now in the Republic of Armenia, Tr.). The villagers were the architects with the guidance of a local master. Every house had several adjacent sections, which were the main house, a barn, a sheepfold and a storage area. Each section served a special purpose. Over the house and the barn, there was a separately elevated section, which was called saku (loft). The family and neighbors gathered there in the winter around the fire and socialized. Guests were received in the saku. Every house had a small courtyard. There were few windows. The streets were narrow and dirty, especially in the winter. More than the streets, the rooftops were used as streets. Every house had a mound alongside it, called selegheh, which connected the neighboring houses.

These mounds rather than the streets made it easier to visit each other. Besides, they also made it convenient for the carts to bring grains and animal feed to the barns and storage areas. Every roof had several gutters. Often, the water collected and dripped inside the homes. This was a common occurrence. The villagers shoveled the snow off the roofs onto the streets.

The roofs were covered with a large amount of dirt, sometimes to the depth of three feet. There were special days when the villagers leveled the dirt and impacted it with heavy stones. In the spring, when the villagers opened their doors, the rooftops were green as the fields. Only the chimneys interrupted the uniformity, by protruding as sentries among the rooftop greenery. The villagers spent half their time in the fields and the other in their homes. The climate dictated their behavior. As such, their morals and customs had two distinct characteristics, one relating to summer and the fields, the other to winter and their homes.

Rural Life

Planting

The peasants had their own working methods. They had divided their land into two parts, upper and lower sections. One section was planted, while the other was utilized for grazing. All the Armenian villages in the Hafik district had a scarcity of grazing land. The mountains and forests were faraway and in the hands of the Moslems. Govdoon, in particular, was in the worst condition. The surrounding hills were barren, where grasses did not grow. For that reason, the peasants could not utilize all their lands for planting. When one section was planted, another section was left for the animals to graze. Generally, planting was done in the spring, and sometimes in the fall.

The boundaries of Govdoon's agricultural lands were the fields of Gavra, the left bank of river Alice, Aghdk, Jihin on the east; Emrekegh, Soflar, Omiur on the north; Sokhgeru Vank and Pokriksiner on the west; Khorsana and Ghavraz on the south. The village and its agricultural lands occupied an area of ten by five kilometers. In each agricultural section two thousand fields were planted with five hundred kilehs (bushels) of wheat.

The upper section consisted of Postik, Anushi Boz, Golov fields, Keoseh-Pur, Bunaz, Aydin, Saksan Veran (forty ruins), Meds-Tadlujakh, Tsiun-Pos, Jermag-Pur, Kommer, Mesji, Kush-Gheleh Pert (Bird's Hill), Dushdugh, Saghjan, Orta-Pur, Veri (lower) Chorakh, left bank of the river Alice, Anti-Gecheh, Sivri Ghaybookh, Chevlig, Murad's House, Kshig's Aghl (sheepfold) and Yêlanchiugh.

The lower section consisted of Tsorun-Ghreng, Vari Postik, Bzdi-Tadlujakh, Dsag-Dsag Karer, Yonjalekh, Khandsru field, Jknavori-Plur, Balêkhluvu (fishery), Khul-Daps, Sokhger Monastery, Chayir, Trunk (door, as a gate in an irrigation ditch), Khachin-Gogh, Kedin-Yedev, Sevinchan, Kaghkin-Gechiud, Vari Chorakh, Galer (thrashing areas), Agin Klukh, Shamamin Dsag and Boyajik. When the snows melted, the fields cleared of snow, and the animals came out of the barns into the fields. The river Alice swelled with the melting snow.

Planting had started.

The villagers first plowed the land, then, with their sacks full of seed, they started sowing after a short prayer. They sowed in the form of a cross, one direction for God, one for them, and another for the birds. When the work was done, the peasants leveled the fields with a clod breaker.

The fields in the upper valley of the river contained either black or red soil. There were no clay or sandy soils.

According to old customs, the peasants planted wheat, barley and lentil. In this extensive valley, peasants had not tried to plant rice, cotton and flax.

Irrigation was not practiced, despite the abundant waters of the river. The river went its way, and the villager his.

The occasional and unpredictable rain was the peasants' only hope and protection. For that reason, when the fields dried up in the summer, the heat began, and the sun seared the land, the pious villagers threw a spoon in the air, and from the way the spoon fell on the ground, they predicted the outcome of their toil. If the spoon landed on its backside, it was a sign of drought; if it fell on the upside, then it was a sign of abundance.

The peasant did not think about fertilizing the soil. The river flooded the nearby fields and left behind the fertile silt.

A few steps from every house in every village, there was a pile of manure collected during the years without any purpose. The streets and the open sewers were health hazards to the healthy villagers. Unknowingly, the villagers polluted the air and harmed their health, instead of fertilizing the fields with manure.

Vegetables

When the hills and the fields were covered with greenery, the peasant girls went to the fields and gathered abundant vegetables. They filled their aprons with beets, black mustard, mint, leek, artichoke, sweet peas, onions, cauliflower and many other greens. Upon seeing the guards in the fields, the girls rested for a while, then started again. In the evening, they came back in groups, with their aprons turned up and filled with the fruits of their labor, singing and frolicking. Flowers in their hairs, their songs and voices gave life to the fields and brightness to the village.

Guards

When the fields turned green, the village elders elected a few villagers who became the guards and the authority of the planted fields. The guard carried a thick stick and rode on a horse from field to field, yelling, “Hey, hey, no one can enter the fields!” They did not allow any shepherds, passers-by or girls collecting vegetables to enter the fields. Fines and other forms of punishment awaited those who ventured into the fields. The guards spread terror wherever they went. They were the spirits of the fields, the protectors of the peasant’s toil and hard work.

The existence of these guards was an absolute necessity. There were many malicious villagers against whom the guards struggled.

Field Grazing

One of the worst malicious acts was having animals grazing in the fields, a practice common in the river Alice valley. Shepherds and their flocks would stealthily come down from the hills into the fields to graze. No amount of fines or punishment deterred this practice. Govdoon was the classic center of this malicious sickness. The tender plants were mowed down in the night. The hatred, jealousy and vengeance among the villagers destroyed the fruits of the peasant’s hard labor. Only after the Ottoman Constitution, the threat and fear of Murad and his group finally put an end to this evil practice.

Easter Holiday

There were many nice holidays and joyful days. Easter came during the spring planting days, when the fields were turning green. This was everyone's Easter, which was called Red Easter.

During Easter week, there were the unusual activities in the village homes. The villagers of Govdoon, Khorsana, Gavra, Aghdk, Khandsar and Ghavraz prepared a variety of baked goods, such as kata, pagharch (unleavened bread), adsig (wheat sprouts), iukha (a thin lavash) and boreg, to celebrate Easter in abundance.

On Easter eve, Khtum, everyone from small children to the elderly, dressed in their best and went to church. The church filled to its capacity. Due to the chaotic condition in the church from the movement and noise of the crowd, neither the singing nor the holy mass was heard. The priest frequently reprimanded the crowd, pleading for order, but no one paid attention to his pleadings. When the crowd had barely heard the priest utter the words, "Take this bread and eat ...," a large number of them immediately ended their fasting and cracked their red colored eggs.

When the mass and communion were over, the crowd poured out of the church and gathered in front of the church. The church elders and deacons uncovered the caldron and portioned Madagh (blessed cooked meat) to everyone.

Thankful to God and with peaceful spirits, the villagers went home to eat the delicacies they had prepared during the week. The next day, on Easter Sunday, girls and brides went out to the fields to sing³² and dance, which they also did for the next two days. Parents sat on the green ground and watched their children with joyful eyes. Children and young boys formed circles and played egg fights and vek (a game using the ankle bone of sheep), placing their collected gifts in the middle of the circle. The young men engaged in wrestling and egg fighting, played their drzar (bag pipes) while going from house to house to collect kata and pagharch and later returning to the fields.

³² In Govdoon and in general the villages in the river Alice valley, most of the popular songs were in Turkish.

Plowing The Land

After the planting, the oxen were taken to Sakhar Mountain for 15-20 days to rest and regain their strength. The practice was called “tarchêkh.” Upon the return of the oxen, plowing of the fields started. For a whole month, the peasant plowed and dug the fields. Plowing was a necessary preparation for the next step. The oxen slowly pulled the traditional plow and kutan.³³ The peasant, with a stick and a whip in hand, urged the docile oxen and pushed the plow forward. From time to time, when the plowshare became clogged with roots, he pulled it out of the ground, cleaned it and again thrust it into the black earth.

“The bread is the just earning of the oxen,” was the saying of the peasant.

The peasant plowed for days on end, near and far as they had done for centuries. The fertile soil opened up and swelled as the plowshare cut through the fields. The field was the peasant’s heart and soul, which they worked incessantly.

Villagers riding on donkeys brought bread and warm food to the farmers. At noon, the farmers rested for lunch. The tired oxen were taken to graze. Both farmer and oxen came back from their rest to work until sundown.

At night, one of the young men, wearing a long woolen coat (chukha) and a hat (bashlêkh), took the oxen to graze until dawn. During the planting season, the oxen were never brought home; they were taken to far away grazing fields, even outside of their fields.

Harvesting of Grasses

Harvesting of grasses was the beginning of the harvest season. The peasant carried the scythe on his shoulder, the hammer and grindstone in his hands, and went to his fields to reap various grasses and clover as fodder for his animals. To the west of Govdoon, there was a field near the confluence of the Alice and

³³ Kután was a large plow pulled by 7 or 8 oxen. It was introduced in Govdoon after the Ottoman Constitution of 1908 by the Andonian brothers, who were skillful artisans.

Agh rivers, midway between Seyfeh and Chayir-Pur, which was called Chayir. This was a marshy land where only grasses grew. It was a pleasant area full of trees, which was the only place with trees near Govdoon. Even though Govdoon had plenty of water, trees were very scarce there. Altogether there were two large trees in the village, one on the east side, the other tree on the west. The villagers had strange inclinations. If someone had the audacity to plant a tree, the next day the tree had already been cut down.

The cut grass was piled and left in the field to dry. Due to lack of grazing fields, the peasant had resorted to other means of feeding the animals in the winter.

Harvest

Harvest time converted both the village and the fields into a place full of activity. The golden wheat and the colorful fields waited for the harvest. Everyone in the village was busy. Life had been relocated to the fields. The village had been left to the grandmothers and children. Young brides and girls, young and old alike, without distinction between them, were in the fields. The villagers harvested under the hot sun, their sleeves rolled up, content and happy, rising and bending with the monotonous noise of the sickles. One stacked the harvest, another cleared the stubbles (khozan) with a clod breaker (sajogh) and a sickle, and another person piled the stacks.

There came the time to fill the carts, while the oxen grazed in the grass fields, the shepherds played their flutes, and the animals bellowed. There was much activity, and the fields were full of life. The hustle and bustle, the enthusiasm and the chaos were the immortal glory of the fields.

At the midday sun, the food bearers came. The harvesters had their eyes on the road. So many times, they had measured the shadow of a stick to tell the time of day. The peasants did not use watches or clocks. The sun and stars were their guides for telling time and the days. The shepherd could tell the time by gazing at Mars, the farmer by using his stick. Nature was their guide.

The day waned, and the heat subsided gradually. The tired and weary harvesters finally were able to stand up straight near the stacks of their harvest. The blade of the scythes had already been sharpened, ready for use. They went to work again.

Hundreds of sickles cut down the spikes of wheat. There were areas so fertile that the plants were as high as a person. The men and their sickles were lost among the tall plants. Until dark, a pair of hands constantly swayed and waved in the fields.

The peasant women played a large part during the strenuous work. With a hat and a scarf on her head, wearing field shoes (charokh), made of rawhide, and an apron, broad shouldered, healthy, lively and vivacious, the peasant woman used the sickle just as well as a man did. She was her husband and family's support. Not only was she a good mother, but also a hard worker.

Serene and fearless, under the heat of the sun, she sacrificed her beauty and attractiveness, her daintiness and tenderness. The peasant woman was as hard working at home as she was in the fields. She was not equal to men, but was not subservient either.

The day ended with the twilight. The harvesters, still fresh and energetic, labored in the cool of the evening. They returned home carefree, and barely eating their dinners, they slept on the rooftops and in the wagons. For months, they did not sleep in their beds. Their sandals, covered with dirt, did not come off their feet.

Early in the morning, at daybreak, riding their donkeys, sleepy-eyed and with greetings to others, the peasants again went to the fields to prepare the stacks of harvest for the cart drivers.

At night, in the moonlight, the lingering carts went from the village to the fields. In the dark and cool of the night, shivering, they loaded the wagons. At dawn, loaded with the harvest, the carts started towards the village along the dusty road, forming a long chain cast upon the barren hills. The wagons struggled along the rocky and uneven roads, bouncing frequently. The carts strained under the heavy weight. Much diligence was required to keep the wagons from toppling over and into the valley.

The dusty carts came to the threshing areas delivering the harvest then piling it high. Barely eating some tanabur (soup made from madsun and barley) and chaghlama, the riders hurried back to the fields. In the heat and the dust of the fields, the workers drank from their water jugs to satiate their thirst. The oxen and the water buffaloes were turned loose to rest and cool off in the river.

The young herders swam in the river, after which they lay on the warm sand. To quench their thirst, they dug a shallow hole (esmeh) and drank the water, which filled the hole. The boys buried their sandals in the wet sand to keep them soft. When travelers went by, they ran after them and extended their hands and received gifts.

The tired peasant woman, after returning home in the evening, went to the well and brought water, carrying the jug on her shoulder or on a donkey's back.

Govdoon was one of the villages where drinking water was in short supply. It had plenty of brackish and bitter water, but not much drinking water. The water wells were at a distance of fifteen

minutes from the village.³⁴ The women went through such hardship, lining up (nobat—waiting for one's turn) in the heat of the summer, to get a few jugs (desdi) of water (from the spring). In the night's solitude, like fearful spirits in the moonlight, the women waited in line to take water to the workers in the fields. In the summer, Govdoon was transformed into an arid land. Several men considered the idea of building an aqueduct to bring water to the village from the Tzolib Valley, but they did not succeed. Govdoon remained a village with very little water. The other villages were better off. Even though water was plentiful in the area, it flowed from the nearby mountains and disappeared without being utilized.

³⁴ Govdoon had a total of 20 wells of brackish and drinkable water. The drinkable water wells belonged to the families of Palo, Andon, Vosgian, Ohan, Kral, Derdiroch, Murad and Khaspeg; the brackish water wells belonged to Tolumban, Kshig, Mehmed, Dolov, Chiv, Pilav and Haytay families.

Threshing Grounds And Grains

The spikes of grains were piled high on the green threshing grounds. Life had come to an end in the vast fields. The harvest had been transferred to the village. The threshing grounds and the grain were the last phase of the planting and harvesting. There was much activity and liveliness around the threshing grounds. The thresher replaced the scythe, and the rake (yergu mad and huseli), the sickle. The piles gradually faded under the threshing implements. The sweating threshers, with their long sticks, guided the oxen, to stay in line.

Finally, it was rest time. The grains were piled high waiting for the evening breeze. It inevitably came. Everyone was ready on the heaps of grains. Soon they threw the grains into the wind and sang heartily.

Blow breeze, blow breeze
The straw to you, the grain for me
The collector will come, the pain to you
Blow breeze, blow breeze

The threshing ground got covered with a glistening veil like a white sheet. The grain piled up higher and higher waiting for the tax collector.

Guards of the Grain Heaps

Keeping guards was a necessity more than a tradition. The well-off villagers were always subject to theft. Distribution of their grain piles was a bad tradition, which plagued the village. It was necessary to guard the piles night and day. For that reason, a few members from each family stayed guard until the harvest was moved indoors. The guards would start a small fire and place a pan over it to roast some grain. Sometimes the guards filled their sacks with grain and took it to the village store to exchange it for fruits. The tax collectors went through the areas so that the villagers would not steal any of the grains. It was not enough that the collectors, for days and months, like parasites, exploited the

villagers by eating their food and living in the village, and yet during the collection of the taxes, the bushels had to overflow. The villagers were not allowed to move any amount of grain into their storage without the collectors' permission. The collectors spread terror among the villagers. The poor unfortunate villager, who had spilled as much sweat as the grain piles, watched the plunder in broad daylight.

After the collectors' entourage left, there came the shepherd, the herdsmen, the priest, the deacon, the abbot, the servants, the davul and zurna players, the poor and the peddler. All would line up to demand their pay and wages, charity and claims, a motley caravan of people who had to receive their share. In addition to such waste and exploitation, the usual wages were still there. The villagers' tables were abundant as their storages; their hearts were open to everyone, both to friends and strangers, passers-by and travelers.

Grazing Fields (Yayla)

Prior to laboring in the hot fields, the villagers of the plains took their animals into the mountains. The scrawny animals were transformed into healthy and strong animals during the three or four months in the mountains. This was a great help for those who had a large number of animals. During those few months, the entire winter's food supply was ensured. The villagers prepared large quantities of butter, cheese, dried madsun (chortan) and honey. The mountain grazing field had a vital importance for raising animals. Any village, which did not have a grazing area, ceased to exist as a village. Thus the issue of these grazing fields gave rise to unfortunate events between the villages of Govdoon and Khandsar. Khandsar was an Armenian village where brave young men, full of vigor, lived close to their lands. The villagers were defiant due to their unfavorable location. Travelers and carriages had to be very careful while passing through their fields, lest they got beaten up. It was here where in 1915 Murad and Taniel Chavush had hidden from the Turks. Young and old were subjected to much suffering, without betraying the freedom fighters or any Armenian.

The grazing fields were in the Kêrk Geoz (forty eyes or springs) area. There were many cool springs there. The Kzêlbash villages of Sarê-Keoy, Tokhuj, Mazan, Diuger, Gêzlar-Ovasê, Sevid-Yoziu, and Ghaghlaghan were all near each other. The original landowners were the Gharlu Kzêlbash people, who had many years earlier sold some land to the Govdoon and Khandsar villages. The grazing area belonged to both villages; however, the villagers of Khandsar owned the larger portion of the fields.

Govdoon lacked sufficient grazing fields for their animals. One day, the villagers demanded the use of their portion of the land. Thus started an argument and dispute. In the fall of 1909, both village folks armed themselves with guns, clubs and sticks, and hastened to the meeting location. Negotiators were sent to convince the Khandsar villagers to leave the grazing fields and turn them over to the Govdoon villagers. The two sides did not come to a reasonable agreement. The impatient and hot-blooded young men of Khandsar started shooting. This move brought retaliation and the start of fratricide. Negotiations for a mutual concession became useless. Both stubborn sides insisted on their demands and continued fighting. Several people were injured and a few oxen were killed. The news of the incident reached the Prelate, Bishop Torkom in Sebastia, who with Murad and a few other community leaders, rushed to the area of dispute. Passions were so aroused that the fighting could have erupted again had it not been for Bishop Torkom and Murad's presence there. Due to the arbitration brought about by Bishop Torkom and Murad, the dispute was put to rest, and the Govdoon villagers benefited for a few years from their right to utilize the grazing lands. For a long time, the neighborly relations between the two villages were severed, and they became enemies for just a small piece of land. Many years later, the people who were involved in the fighting, blamed themselves for the inexcusable mistake. Now, all the hatred, animosity and feelings of revenge have been left behind along with the bloody horrors of the massacres.

Autumn's Arrival

During the first few days of autumn, all outside work came to an end. People and animals returned to their village homes from the fields to prepare for the winter. The peasant had a chance to rest for a short time. Living activities had moved to the village, around the homes and hearths.

Preparation of Vegetables

During the dreary fall days, the villagers boiled vegetables in their courtyards for pickling. The villagers, who did not plant vegetables, brought them from nearby villages. Pickles were one of the more important reserves for every house. The pickles were stored in large and tall crocks. Pickles, onions and cheese were the villagers' daily food, along with thin bread, lavash, called turemeji, the latter being the decoration for the previous three basic foods.

Boiling Wheat

This was a familiar and unforgettable tradition. The cleaned wheat was boiled in large caldrons during the cool autumn nights. The cooked wheat was spread on the rooftops to dry. The dried wheat was beaten in large mortars to separate the bran from the wheat, which later was milled into cracked wheat (dsavar—blghur), and stored. The noisy black birds gathered their share of the tasty grains for the winter.

Trips to the Mountain

The Sakhar Mountain was everyone's forest. Armenian, Turk and Kzêlbash villagers all went to the mountain for firewood. No one owned the forest. The Armenian villagers went to the mountain early in the morning, cut the trees, loaded the oak wood on their carts and returned in the evening for more wood. The wood was piled high outside by the front door to be burned in the winter.

Gathering of Kedud (Twigs)

Poor families who did not have oxen to go and bring wood from the mountain found a different way of gathering firewood. They went in groups along the shores of the river to gather dried twigs and bushes, which they carried on their backs. Every year the river flooded the lands along its path, uprooting a great number of trees. Flowing fiercely through the gorges and valleys, it deposited the broken trees along its shores in the planes near Govdoon. The river's wrath in the spring was the indigent villagers' forest, warmth and hearth. This is why whatever the river brought and took away was called kedud, literally meaning what the river eats (ked—river, ud—eat).

During the autumn rains, when the river swelled again, the wood cutters from villages further up the river floated on their rafts with the current to the city to sell the wood, which made up their own rafts. One of the largest markets in the city of Sebastia was the wood market, where the stacked tree trunks gave the impression of a forest.

Attar

Due to the shortage of firewood, the villagers had the custom of preparing attar. The manure was placed on the walls to dry under the sun. Often the manure was piled in the streets in front of the houses. The owners mixed water and straw with the manure and shaped them to be dried. This was called attar. When the topside was dried, the pieces were turned over to complete the drying. The attar was stored in a separate section of the firewood storage area. They were neatly piled for use during the winter in the fireplaces and tonirs.

There was another method of preparing attar. This type of attar was called kemreh. For five months during the winter season, the sheep and goat droppings were left to pile up in the sheepfolds. In the spring, the animals were let out, and the doors were left open for a few months until the surface of the pile hardened. Afterwards, the dried manure was cut up into pieces and dried under the sun to be burned in the winter.

Traveling

Traveling to other towns was inescapable. There were no stores in the villages. The city of Sebastia was far and expensive. A large amount of fruits and groceries, items lacking in the villages, were necessary for the winter. There were no fruit trees in the village environments. For that reason, the villagers in the plains had made it customary to travel for days to Janig, Endires, Tozalu, Karahisar and other places to purchase apricots, beans, walnuts, pears, apples, watermelons and grapes. These items were carried back on donkeys.

Wheat, barley and oats were the only items the villagers could exchange. Apricots, beans and chickpeas were exchanged with bread. Often, the villagers in the mountains exchanged their goods with corn bread (baksimat). The fathers made several trips until the storage rooms were filled. They brought back radishes, turnips, carrots and potatoes from the city, then buried them in the ground.

Clay Merchants

Just as the plains villagers took their goods to the mountain villages, the reverse also took place. Whether during the threshing period or in the autumn, the clay traders from Endires came with their horses, bringing clay,³⁵ shovels, yarn and firewood to be exchanged with the villagers' goods.

The sellers of oxen (siuragchi) came with their fattened herds and camped near the villages, tempting the villagers with their beautiful animals. Afterwards, passing through Chorakh and Seyfeh, they took their herds to Svaz. The villagers went to the fields to purchase oxen, clay and firewood. This was a kind of seasonal trading, which occurred every year, strictly with the Moslem villagers of the mountainous regions.

³⁵ The use of clay was common. The washing of clothes was done with clay.

Cooperation Of Labor

The idea of cooperation between the villagers was an obligation. Experience, family necessities and seasonal changes had made the idea of cooperation inevitable and traditional. For centuries, the work was repeated religiously during the same season and on the same days.

Providing Help (Êrghad)

In certain places on the hills and brackish soils, the harvest could dry under the hot sun. Harvesting alone for days meant some of the wheat would be left on the fields and gone to waste. A quick and an extraordinary way had to be found to save the harvest. That way was the cooperation among the villagers. In exchange, those who received the help would help the others cut trees and perform other chores.

The helpers came and reaped the harvest. In a few hours the work was done and the danger of losing the harvest was gone. Cooperation and helping others were noble responsibilities.

Khaz—V-shaped Cut

Some modest and moderately well off families, who did not have large flocks or herds, utilized the grazing lands near the village, and did not go to the mountain. The shepherd brought the flocks down from the hills into the wetlands, yelling “Hoy! Hoy!” and whistling, with his sheep dogs following behind him.

His milk sack on his side, a bag on his back, his flute in his pocket, the shepherd brought the flocks to rest in the green fields. The cries and liveliness of the young animals brought cheers to the fields. Brides and young girls, carrying their pails, went to milk the sheep. The women brought the milk where it was collected into large buckets, measured the height of the milk with a stick, made a notch on it and went back to bring more. Later, each family received the amount of milk indicated on the measuring sticks.

This collective cooperation, which was very common in all parts of Armenia, was a great help for all the villagers. In a few

days, everyone was able to prepare a year's needs of cheese, butter and other dairy products.

Going Meji (Preparing Wool)

After the sheep and goats were sheared, the wool and hair were cleaned, dried and readied. The lady of the house went from house to house, and invited the women to come and prepare the wool. This practice was called meji. One woman from each house went to honor the invitation, taking her wool combs with her. In the case of a poor family's participation, as a compensation for the work, a ball of wool yarn (sumag and vortsig, the latter containing some worms) was given to her. The whole day, the women combed wool and made yarn, while singing and laughing. The lady of the house honored the guests by providing them lunch with apricot jam (rachel) and madsun. This practice was repeated in every house, every year and every autumn.

Milling

After the wheat was boiled, dried and the bran separated, the sound of milling was heard in every house.

The milling produced dsavar (blghur).

The young village girls were invited in groups to mill the wheat. With their songs, smiles, laughter and enthusiasm, they brought liveliness to the homes they visited. The work was but a song, a joy and fun for them. Gathered around the two round millstones, the girls worked and expressed to each other their emotions, earnest desires, love-sickness, pains and secrets of their hearts. In the dark of the night, with timidity and bashfulness, the girls could hear the amorous words of their young admirers. Their hearts swelled and they burned with love when their admirers, without being seen, threw down little gifts wrapped in colorful handkerchiefs.

Virginity was traditionally idealized among the villagers. Expressions of love were suppressed. Kissing was not permitted. Timid looks towards and pining for the opposite sex were strictly prohibited.

Chukha Thrashing

Chukha was a cloth woven with thick, rough wool, which had to be thrashed to soften. The village young men spread the word for chukha thrashing. A large tub was placed in a cart. The tub had sharp wooden spikes in it. A large piece of log, which was covered with spikes, and handles at either ends, was placed in the tub. The young men pushed the log back and forth like a churn, while thrashing the chukha to the rhythm of their playful songs.

Nearby, the chukha floated in the caldron of boiling water until it was soft and clean.

Within The Homes

The snows of winter covered the streets and houses. The stables and attics became enlivened. The villagers gathered around their hearths telling endless stories and conversing about their experiences. Inside the homes, the chores now were separated among the men and women. Everyone had his or her separate work.

Washing Clothes

First, the women gathered the white clothes, which had turned dark from the sweat and dust of many months, and took them to the river Agh to wash. Every household had placed a flat stone by the river shore for washing clothes. The women thrashed the clothes with their bare feet and exposed legs, sighing and groaning with every strong step. Occasionally, they threw powdered clay on the clothes, and thrashed again, repeating several times until the clothes were cleaned.

No one was permitted to pass by the women during their clothes washing, whether it was a villager or a stranger. The honor of the village and the families was not to be insulted. Those who dared to do so were tied to a post and disgraced.

Tired and cold, the women returned, carrying the heavy and wet clothes home. They gathered around the hearth to warm up and rest.

Combing Cotton

A curved piece of wood (gakhank), resembling a camel's neck, was attached to a rafter in the loft. A cord was strung from the gakhank and attached to the fluffing implement. The peasant women struck the cord with a mallet (chek), vibrating it like a violin string in the fluffy cotton pile. The cotton rended and flew like butterflies across the length of the attic. The women gathered the cotton into small balls (baiug), and formed larger piles (kula) to spin later.

Spinning Wheels

The spinning wheel was the symbol of Armenian villages. Most probably for that reason, the spinning wheel and the likeness of an Armenian grandmother were pictured on the currency of the Armenian Republic. Poets and minstrels had praise the spinning wheel.

The wheel spun and the spindle creaked, while the balls of yarn collected around the grandmothers. In the village stables and lofts, the creaking and chirping sounds dominated as those of crickets. The spinning wheel turned and wrapped the skein on itself.

The yarn was placed in boiling water to be strengthened. After drying, the yarn was cut to lengths for making linen. The process required great patience, which the women performed responsibly. Round and plump babies slept by the rhythmic noise of the spinning wheel and their grandmothers' soft lullabies.

Weaving

Weaving was an indispensable work. Brides and brides-to-be were obliged to know how to weave, wear a golden bracelet on her arm, manage the home and keep the hearth warm. It was considered a shame, if a bride-to-be had not learned these skills.

The graceful peasant girl weaved linen and other colorful materials while singing during her work. She enlivened the home with the sound of the weaving machine.

Karman Spinning

Grandmothers operated the spinning wheels, and grandfathers operated the karmans.³⁶ In their old age, the men made long winter days enjoyable for all. They spun the goat hairs on the karmans to make strings, which they wrapped around their arms. The strings were needed to make sacks.

Sitting on straw mats in the warm stables, the old men spun goat hairs and reminisced, gave ancestral advice and endlessly told

³⁶ Karman was a type of spindle, which was made of two pieces of wood attached crosswise, in the center of which was placed a thin stick.

various proverbs and fables to those around them. Unlike the spinning wheels, karmans made no creaking sounds. They turned and turned quietly, spinning long string. The children played on the rooftops, jumping around, playing hide and seek, wrestling and snowball fighting. In the evening when they came indoors, they took the oxen for watering, fed them hay and spread straw under the animals. Taking a piece of leather to make sandals, they pounded it with a piece of wood, and buried it in the dirt to soften for wearing.

Milking Cows

The brides, with their bare arms and milk pails in their hands, entered the stables to milk the cows. They let the calves suckle first. When it was time for milking, the frisky animals reluctantly separated from their mothers. Pulling the calves away and tying them with a rope, the brides started milking. With uniform movement of their fingers, the milk flowed into the pails. The full pails were lined up, and later emptied into a large metal container, called ashurma.

Water Mill

The wheat was washed first, cleaned of other seed, then dried before it was sent to the mill. The wheat was placed in large bags and carried by carts. The mill was built by the hard work of the Govdoon villagers. It belonged to all the villagers, and it was their meeting place. The white walls, the white powder of the flour, the noise of the round millstones, the coming and going of the people gave the impression of a sanctuary for pilgrims. The miller, covered with flour dust, who was a Tavra villager, hammered the stone to cause the flour to be milled very fine. There was a person, who with bare feet stepped on the flour bags to pack them down. The flour bags were lined up for transporting back to the homes.

The neighbors gathered, carried the bags onto wooden slides (ghzakh), and brought them to the storage areas, moaning and groaning in the meantime. The owners thanked the helpers, and gave them ezmeh (a fruit juice made from the puree of the fruits),

tan (diluted madsun) and a piece of bread, after which the helpers departed giving their blessings.

Bread Making

The day the flour was brought home, the brides were very busy. Every home had a tonir³⁷ for baking bread. The villagers preferred to bake bread in their tonirs rather than going to the village bakery. In the winter, the baking was seldom done in the bakery. Since the bakery was very busy, it was hard to schedule bread baking there. The village had only two or three bakeries. However, on holidays, all kinds of breads, kulicha and hodêla³⁸ were always baked in the bakeries.

First, the flour was sifted through a coarse sieve and then a fine one, separating the bran. In the middle of the night, the brides got up one after another to boil water in large kettles, and readied the sour dough and salt. With their bare and strong arms, the women kneaded the dough and covered it to rise. Meanwhile, they borrowed bread from neighbors until the bread was baked.

In the morning, one of the grandparents lit the fire in the tonir, and readied it for baking. One of the brides made balls of dough, another lined them up, and a third opened the dough with a rolling pin. The baker adjusted the flame, cleaned the walls of the tonir. With a couple of quick moves with her hands, she expanded the dough into a large oval piece and gently placed it on the rapatan (a matted, concave and oval shaped wooden implement, Tr.), then carefully stuck it on the walls of the tonir.

The white, blistered and hot lavash (very thin bread) breads were brought out of the tonir, and piled on wooden boards. The sweet smell of the bread filled the whole neighborhood. When a neighbor walked in, he or she greeted the household with the words, “May your home be joyful, and your bread be plentiful.” After which they were offered bread and told, “Come, take some

³⁷ Tonir is a large bell shaped clay structure with an opening at the top. This was buried in the ground. When bread was to be baked, a fire was lit inside the structure to heat it up. The bread dough was stuck to the hot walls. Tr.

³⁸ Kulicha is a type of unleavened bread. Hodêla is a round bread with a hole in the middle.

bread.” The indigent and the beggars came to give their blessings, and receive bread.

Har (Churning)

The soot from the black smoke and the smell of parched meat covered and filled the tonir area. The fire was lit in the tonir, and in large kettles, the milk and the water boiled. In one corner, a woman prepared dense madsun for making kalajosh;³⁹ another prepared ezmeh (puree) from zoghal (the fruit of mountain ash family of plants, Tr.), and yet another churned butter in the churn hanging from the ceiling.

Tan, ezmeh, rachel, bastikan, turshi and chakhlama were the permanent and unforgettable refreshments of the villagers.

Ghavurma (Dried Meat)

At the start of autumn, the villagers made preparations for their winter ghavurma. An older ox was selected and fattened for its meat. The ox was slaughtered some time in the middle of December. The meat was hung from the ceiling joists to dry.

³⁹ Kalajosh, food prepared with meat and madsun.

Engagement And Wedding

The wish of the mothers and fathers was the utmost rule for their sons and daughters. The parents decided and selected the marriage partners, while the partners obeyed without objection. Often, even before the birth of a child, the mothers agreed and made promises to wed their children to each other's. It was very difficult to break those promises. Trapped within the boundless traditional domination, love was a source of deep emotions, like songs of sorrow and melancholy. Often for these reasons, couples eloped.

Young adolescents, barely into puberty, infatuated with love, made timid passes at one another. Affectionate parents would confide in each other saying, "If I could only get my children married, I would not care after that, even if I die."

One happy day, the engagement negotiations started. Taking a bundle filled with sweets, a few colorful handkerchiefs, earrings and a ring, the boy's parents went to visit the girl's parents. They started the conversation on some remote subject, and gradually opened the subject of marriage. Initially, the girl's parents expressed feigned refusals by saying, "If God has willed the marriage, what can we say." Then they agreed to the request. From that day on, the lovers courted each other, waited for each other in the streets and rooftops and sang to each other. The couple remained engaged for several months or even years before getting married.

Finally, the wedding started. The king, the groom, wore his official clothing called halav. It consisted of a dark blue woolen cloth, a colorful silken belt, a silver watch with a chain, which hung from his neck and attached to the belt, footwear resembling shoes, instead of sandals, and a tasseled hat (fez).

At the beginning of the wedding festivities, the parents prepared a reception for the neighbors and announced the wedding while zurna music played on. After the reception, the king, the Godfather and the groom's entourage rode on their horses to Aginklukh, and sacrificed a rooster. The priest blessed the rooster, and with the blood he blessed the sacred stone of Saint Garabed. In exchange for the priest's services, the slaughtered rooster was given to him.

The king with his entourage returned to his Godfather's house, bathed, then poured a sweet drink on his head; thus, became eligible for marriage. In the evening, with music and praises, following the Godfather, the group went to the girl's house. The next morning, the king was dressed with his fianc ' s gifts called jez (dowry). The wedding ceremony began with the priest quickly reading a few verses from the Bible. After the church ceremony, a monetary contest started to see who would earn the honor of dressing the king. Customarily, the priest was the monitor, after whose few words, the relatives bid for the above privilege, up to a certain amount. The highest bidder became the one to dress the king. Meanwhile, the king had come from the neighbor's house, accompanied by singing and music. The collected money was generally donated to the village school or church.

The king stood in the middle of the crowd with a lit candle in his hand. The winner of the bid picked up the clothing one by one, and dressed the king. With each piece of cloth, the deacons chanted the "Bless and Praise" phrases, and the crowd cheered. After the meal, the Godmother and the bridesmaids, who usually were chosen from the groom's relatives, formed a woman's group, joined with the king and the village youth, together they went to the bride's house with singing, music, noise makers and shooting their rifles in the air. Purposely, the door of the bride's house was closed. One of the bride's relatives demanded a gift in order to open the door.

Without a gift, the door was not opened. When the king entered the house, a rooster was immediately beheaded, and the blood was smeared on the threshold and on the king's foot. One of the relatives, who had many children, expressed a wish by saying, "Seven for you, as it has been for me," and spread incense around the king. The king with henna on his hand went to the loft and stood there to be greeted. He did not sit down. After the dinner for the guests, the mother-in-law called the king and the best man to a separate dinner. Before the king sat down, the best man quietly slipped a spoon under the king's feet, which the king broke by stepping on it. The mother-in-law kissed the king and gave him a gift.

The music never stopped. The whole village participated. The circle dancing, singing and the lively hops filled the village with unlimited joy. The dance caller jumped and yelled at the top of his voice. The priest entered the house with his cross and censer (purvar). The bride's clothes were blessed with a short ceremony. Several girls praised the king with amorous pretensions, so that the bride-to-be would acquiesce and dress up in order not to disappoint the king.



Orhnadsian in his local costume

On the third day, the large entourage left the bride's house for the church. The priest performed the mass and wedding ceremony,

then tied the narod (a red and white string used by the priest at marriage ceremonies, Tr.) around the couple's head, recited from the Bible, "...take the hand of Eve... give the right hand to Adam," while bringing the couple's heads together.



Govdoon's Priest, Father Taniel and his family

After the wedding rituals, the bride and groom were slowly brought out of the church. A large crowd gathered outside the church. Davul and zurna rendered an extraordinary atmosphere to the celebration. The whole village, along with the wedding party, was full of merrymaking.

The horses and the carriages were decorated with special and colorful materials. The noisy crowd, shooting their rifles in the air, left the church grounds and came to wait at the bride's home.

A silent moment was observed.

The names of those who were giving gold presents were called out one by one. In a melodic and drawn out voice, the caller announced, "God bless so and so, who gifted the bride a bundle of linen," and the gifts were collected by the bride's brother.

After each announcement, voices among the crowd could be heard saying, "May good luck reside at your house." The gift giving in front of the bride's house ended and the entourage moved towards the groom's house. The bride, saddened, cried for permanently leaving her home. Presentation of gold gifts by the groom's relatives took place also at his house. Finally, the bride dismounted from the horse on which she was riding from her house to the groom's house.

Upon entering the groom's home, her steps attracted everyone's attention. She was not to step past the threshold with her left foot, so that a curse would not be brought upon the house. On the way into the house were placed a dish, tongs and a shovel. She was to crack the dish with her feet and bend over and pick up the other two items.

Finally, the bride entered the home and went up to the loft and stood among the guests, still in her wedding dress of *bedlan* (veil), *miltan* (a decorated long-sleeved vest), *chintan* (a red undergarment) and *altêbarmakh* (literally means six fingers, in this case it referred to six gold or silver coins hanging from a headband, Tr.) with the veil covering her face. The guests greeted the bride and wished each other good fortune. Turning to the groom, the guests congratulated him with the words, "King, may you earn your wishes!" The bride's mother-in-law gave her a gift and allowed her to sit down. From that day on, the bride remained silent in front of all her in-laws who were older than she. The gathered presents were given to the newlyweds.

On the fourth day, a group of the groom's neighbors and relatives went to the bride's house to bring the *jez*. It was customary for the parents of the groom to give a few pieces of gold to the girl before the wedding towards her dowry. The dowry was

brought to the newlywed's home. The bride had earlier prepared gifts for all the groom's family members. She distributed the gifts ceremoniously, while the zurna player played a couple of tunes. The party gulped few shots of oghi (alcoholic drink similar to the Greek uzo), ate some snacks and condiments, and considered the wedding officially fulfilled.

On the fifth day, for the last time, the king went to his mother-in-law's house. The Godfather and the best man came to take him back to his home. With a special ceremony, the crowns of the bride and groom were removed. The Godfather took a piece of wood and whittled it with a knife directing the pieces towards the groom as a sign of prosperity. With this, the wedding was completely over. A separate family was formed.

After the honeymoon month, the bride was taken to her parents' house. This was called tarts (return). The parents of the bride visited the groom's house to ask permission from the elder of the house to allow the bride to visit her parents for twenty or thirty days. The parents were never refused. On the appointed day, the bride's mother-in-law and sister-in-law went to the bride's parent's house to bring her back. The parents usually asked for an extension of a few more days. Finally, the groom's parents and the Godparents, with a gift of sweets, went to bring the bride back. The guests were honored and entertained, after which the bride was brought home. The bride's face was covered with a red veil.

Holidays

Holidays were sacred events and, at the same time, events for great happiness.

The New Year and Christmas had special meaning and significance. Every year, the villagers greeted each other, young and old. The young people went from house to house announcing the birth of Christ, and collected presents. Before the holidays, the man of the house went to the city and purchased presents for the family members to make them happy.

The storage rooms were opened. The holidays were times of lavishness and brilliance. All the old or new nice things were brought out and placed on the table. The doors and tables were open for everyone. Butter, honey, kata (sweet bread), bread, madsun, boreg, bishi (cheese-filled dough, which is fried; sometimes just fried dough sprinkled with sugar), yeghjmur (a mixture of bread, butter or fat, at times with sugar) and halva (a sweet made from flour, butter and sugar) were abundant. People gathered around the tables and enjoyed the holiday spirit. The men and women gathered separately, because the women did not have the right to sit at the same table with the men.

A multitude of Turks, Kurds, Kzêlbash and Cherkez people had eaten to their fill from the blessed tables of the Armenians.

Paregentan, Spring Festival

The old saying was, “When the Armenians get hungry, they think of Paregentan.” It was a holiday, which had come down from pagan days and become one of the religious holidays. It was the most popular holiday.

Paregentan truly spread liveliness in every home. Putting on masks, dancing, playing and wrestling were the essentials of Paregentan. For a whole week, people enjoyed themselves on the streets and rooftops. Jolly and comic young men built a wooden camel, and hung bells on it. They paraded in the streets and rooftops, entertaining the people. The young boys and girls hung a rope from the ceiling and swung back and forth in order to digest all the goodies they had eaten.

During Saint Sarkis and the main fasting (Arachavorats) periods, people were to abstain from eating for three days. They were allowed to eat pokhint (a food prepared from roasted flour), if they wanted their wishes to come true. The brides wished to have children, and the girls wished to be proposed to by the young men. Generally, the villagers observed the religious holidays with much zeal.

Before Lent, the village young men tied long ropes around sticks and went from rooftop to rooftop to lower the ropes into the homes. They rang little bells so that any left over baked goods would be tied to the rope, which later was pulled up.

Meds Bahk, Lent

These were long repentance days. For seven weeks, those who fasted could not eat meat or eggs. They were not to break their fast. The food they ate became boring. They ate soups, chickpeas and vegetables. They became impatient, and anxiously waited for Lent to be over. Often, they lost count of the days. For that reason, they hung an onion with seven feathers stuck on the onion. One of the feathers was white. Every passing week, one of the feathers was pulled out. The last feather, the white feather, which represented the last week of Lent, was finally pulled out.

During the long Lent period there was also the feast of Derndas (Diar_ntarach), which was greeted with its pagan customs. After the church services, a bonfire was lit. Every believer picked a piece of burned wood, took it home and placed it in the stable in order to keep the animals from disease and pain.

The newlywed brides, dressed in their wedding gowns, went up on the rooftops to be seen by the villagers, and visited their parents. On that day, all the villagers prepared khadsagh (roasted grains). This was the official symbol of Diarêntarach.

During the fourth week of Lent came the holiday of Sebastia's Forty Infants (as newborns into a new religion, Tr.).⁴⁰ When the

⁴⁰ Forty Martyrs of Sebastia, who were forty Roman soldiers stationed at a garrison near Sebastia. After refusing to renounce their Christian faith, they were stripped and forced into a frozen lake, and died from exposure. See *Armenian Info Text*, by George Mouradian.

church bells sounded, women, brides and girls hurried to church. The newlywed brides were taken to church with great pomp by a group of girls. The church hung a chandelier with forty oil-burning lanterns. Reciting the “Der Voghormia—God have mercy,” the chandelier was lowered so that it would be closer to the crowd. Girls, old ladies and brides, all dipped their fingers into the oil of the lanterns, crossed themselves, and rubbed the oil on their eyes so that they would be healed from any eye sores.

Curses And Blames

During anger and wrath, the usually affectionate mothers released their fury by cursing. As if breathing fire and throwing thunderbolts, they cursed a thousand curses. It was an evil moment, which had to pass.

The curses always dealt with the subject of the sun and light. The echoes of pagan religious customs continued to exist among our people. The curse of King Ardashes for his son Ardavazd still lived on in that popular epic.

In all the villages of Alice River's upper valley, the sun, the light, the earth, the mountains and gorges, the water, the fire and a person's physical handicaps were inexhaustible sources for curses. Here are a few examples:

May your sun turn!
May your sun darken!
May you go seven layers under ground, and not see the sun!
May your hands dry up in your lap!
May you become blind!
May you slither on the ground!
May you be showered with fire!
May you break into pieces!
May your generation end, but your name remain!
May the gods curse you!
May your arms break!
May fire rain on your houses!
May the owls talk about you!

Personal inclinations, dressing habits, physical and speech handicaps, similar mannerisms and other characteristics were all subjects for defamation and criticism. The villagers' vocabulary was so rich that with a single word they could convey what they wanted to say. Most people had nicknames, which sounded like riddles. It seemed as if people's baptismal names were forgotten. Everyone knew each other by their nicknames. There still are survivors who are the only ones that know their names. Shortened names are easy to figure out. However, those names, which the

people themselves invented and gave, required many years of experience to understand. These are several unique nicknames by which a few survivors are still known: Khodgur, Chortan, Patates, Kioseh, Gheso, Havgit, Komo, Kok, Partal, Jagad, Prod Gharib, Yaghji, Chul, Ghêrpêkh, Ghambur, Cheklo, Kiulah, Garak, Mrod, Aghudan, Besh, Bezir, Chordig, Choghalabur, Avji, Bleh, Chakhar, Pipi, Rop, Yoriug, Ghadi, etc. There were countless and endless names.

Village Medical Practices

Unfortunately, very few people have attempted to research the medical practices of Govdoon. The villagers had no concept of the chemical nature of medicines. Their medicines were the field flowers and plants in their primitive forms. Their ancestors praised the medicinal values of plants as was recorded in Mkhitar Herati's writing, "Chermants Mkhitarutiun—Mitigation of Fever," and that of Amirdovlat, "Ankidatz Anbed—Things Unnecessary to the Ignorant."⁴¹

Modern medicine's health advice is to breathe fresh air, sunbathe and stay away from smoke and soot. The villagers naturally were exposed to a healthful atmosphere. For that reason, they were always healthy, lively and red-cheeked.

Along the entire length of the valley, there were no doctors or hospitals. Everywhere there were schools, churches and watermills, but no hospitals. One must not think that the villagers did not get sick. Sickness was relatively rare, but people did get sick.

The most widely prevalent diseases were skin rashes, fever, jaundice, pleurisy and chicken pox. Epidemics compounded the medical conditions of those already sick, and gave rise to other diseases. Wounds, broken bones and burns were treated by Kêrêkjies, who had gained experience over the years, without having any formal medical education.

One such person was the well-known Mrs. Yeghisapert of Khorsana, who could heal all types of broken bones by simple means. Armenians, Turks, Kzêlbashs, all went to her for help. The lady put the patient in a chair, tied the patient's hands, prepared hot water in a large pan, and had some black pitch by her side. Often, in place of the pitch, she would take egg yolks, mix them with flour and salt, and make a paste. If the patient's leg was broke, she would grab the toes and heel, yank the leg a few times until the bone set in place, then wrap the pitch or the paste on the leg. She advised the patient not to move for forty days. Later, she visited

⁴¹ Both were physicians, Heratsi in the 12th century, in Eastern Armenia; Amirdovlat in the 14th century in the Ottoman Empire. Tr. (Note: for details, see "Armenian Info Text" by George Mouradian.)

the patient, examined the wound, removed the splinters, removed the pitch or paste, washed the area with hot water, and wrapped the area with gauze. After twenty more days, she removed the wrapping, at which time the patient was completely healed.

Finding a local or village “doctor” was easier than finding a Kêrêkji. Every village had a “doctor,” who at one time had been either a caretaker of a sick person or worked as a servant in a hospital. Often, the priest or the teacher acted as doctor.

If someone had a high fever, the person was given okhlamur (a brew made from linden tree leaves) to drink, prayers were said and the person was wrapped in a cold, wet sheet. For food, the sick were given only milk and tea. When someone had a stomach ache, the person would lie on his or her stomach and have someone step several times on his or her back. In cases of pleurisy, the person tightened a belt around the waste, and leeches were used to draw blood. For food, the patient was given donkey’s milk. If a person had a swollen area, post (poultice—a paste made from flour or wheat) was wrapped on the area. For coughs and sore throats, tatlubia (madudag—licorice plant) leaves were boiled and the brew given to the patient. A paste made from flour was used to relieve any and all aches.

Madsun was rubbed on snakebites and bee stings. For swollen throats, the mouth was gargled with vinegar.

For toothaches, oghi was rubbed on the gums, later followed with tobacco and salt. Headaches were treated with placing a rag soaked in vinegar on the forehead. This was followed with placing a handkerchief filled with chopped onion, potato, radish and salt.

Someone with a stomachache drank oghi, and placed a warm pot cover over the stomach. Burns were treated with placing mud and madsun on the area. Also, a donkey’s ear was cut and the blood rubbed on the burn. For eye pain, a piece of an animal’s lung was used to “draw the blood.” The milk of a nursing mother was also used for eyesores. Cracked skin was rubbed with olive oil or a piece of fat, and exposed to the sun. A constipated person drank raw milk.

The third medical aspect in the village was obstetrics. The midwife was one of the village women who had been endowed with experience and a sense of observation. When pregnant women

went into labor, the midwife immediately hastened to the house. The surrounding women expressed best wishes as “May your hands be light,” or “May your hands be blessed.” When the baby was born, the midwife tied the cord, and bathed the infant in a tub of salt water, placing some of the water in the armpits and some on the palate. After sprinkling some salt on the infant, she wrapped it in linen. The midwife did not touch any food until she washed her hands with soil brought from the cemetery. She blessed the family profusely with such statements as, “May you live in peace and good luck, and have a large amount of gold. May God let the baby grow up with a mother and a father.” The neighbors came around later to congratulate the mother, after which they ate halva and drank a little bit of oghi. The family did not kiss the baby until baptism. It was considered “unholy.” At night, above the mother’s head, a shovel, a needle and a Bible were placed so that the evil spirits would not step on her and take out her liver. After eight days, the infant was baptized with Miueron (blessed oil used for baptism). The Godfather was always someone from the extended family. After church, family and guests, led by the priest, came to dghotsgan’s (mother of the child) house, and were served food.

Animal husbandry was the most neglected aspect of village life. If a swelling developed on any part of an animal’s body, the area was seared with a hot iron. When the legs were broken, the animal was taken to the bonesetter.

Costumes

Costumes were one of the villagers' true expressions. There was a special style, which easily distinguished the Armenians from the Turks. All the Armenians of the region dressed similarly, with minor differences. There did not exist distinct styles, which the Armenian of Mogs, Shadakh, Khizan and Sasun had. In these regions, there was barely any distinction between the Armenians and the Kurds. The costumes of the Armenians in the Sebastia region, particularly in the river Alice valley, differed greatly from those of the Mohammedans. The Kurds, Turks, Cherkezes and the Kzêlbashes, each had distinct costumes, completely different from those of the Armenians.

Women and men's costumes changed according to their ages. The older women dressed in long dresses called entari. Their heads were covered with a red apukh (a long veil covering the top and back of the head and draped down the back to the waist, Tr.), and a shortened fez-like hat topped by a boboz (a headdress) without any decoration. They wore black leather sandals called messer.

The young brides and girls wore colorful long dresses, also called entari, which branched out from the waist down with slits on the sides. One part draped in the back down to the ankles. The other two parts draped at the hips and gathered in the front. An apron covered the front. Under the dress, they wore colorful, heavy linen shirts, which reached their knees. A bib-like garment draped the chest (having the appearance of an European corsage). A decorated waistcoat (ishlik) was the outermost attire.

Their heads were adorned with a decorated yellow apukh, which spread from the head down on the back and attached to the boboz at the forehead. Their hair was woven into two long braids, which were decorated with beads from the neck down, reaching their waists. This style of braiding was unique to Govdoon. The ladies combed their hair, set it by splitting it in the middle then braided into two long braids. They wore a headband decorated with colorful beads and Turkish silver coins. They wore earrings and rings on their fingers. A thin belt, decorated with colorful beads, adorned their waists. On holidays, the ladies decorated their

sleeves with glass and silver beads, which jingled when they walked.

Outside of the fields, the most common footwear was the slipper, which had wooden soles and leather uppers covering the toes. The ladies wore thick woolen socks. The girls wore similar socks with minor differences. A bride wore boboz and apukh on her head; whereas, a girl wore a cloth hat decorated with silver coins.

Men's clothing was much simpler. During the spring and winter they wore sandals over the socks. They wrapped tasseled dolakhs (puttee, strips of cloth wound around the legs) over the socks and dizligs (drawers reaching the knees). In the winter, they used black overshoes (chamurlêk—mud shoes) for protection from mud and snow. They wore blue or white linen zbtans (baggy pants), which had tight legs and very wide waist and bottoms. A two or three meter long rope (khonchan) was used around the waist to hold up the zbtan. The young men were very particular that their pants be very tight, so that they would be able to place a wad at the seat of the pants, which made them look like the rear end of a ram. They wrapped a four or five meter long belt around their waists and placed a folded leather piece (ser-atlik) under the belt. Occasionally, some placed a knife in the leather piece. The young men wore a colorful shirt and a speckled vest over it. Without exception, they wore fezes and wrapped a long headband around them, like a turban. A short length of the headband, called chalma, was let to hang in the back of the head.

The men detested European clothing and criticized them. If the men, who had come back from Europe, did not change their pants and coats, they were ridiculed by such derogatory terms as “fork and hammer,” “city folks,” and “decorated ones.”

Both men's and women's clothing were speckled. From their feet to their heads, the clothing consisted of many colorful pieces. Clothing of a single color did not satisfy their tastes. Besides, there was not a single piece of clothing, which was not decorated with beads and leather strips (ghaytans). These were the two unavoidable decorations on clothing, which twinkled in the sun. Particularly the young had taken the practice to an extreme. As fond as they were for attire and decoration, so were they tall and

graceful. The women were not pretty, but they were tall and healthy. The men were relatively good looking, tall, lean, strong and brave. In the upper valley of the river Alice, conspicuous were those from Govdoon, Aghd, Khorsana and Khandsar.



Village boys in their local costumes

The women had their ears pierced at childhood for earrings. They tattooed a beauty mark between their eyebrows. It was said that in the past, men also did it, but that gradually the practice had faded, and left only for the women.

Very few of the well off had the opportunity to go to Jerusalem for a pilgrimage. The desire to do so was every elder's wish, but it was far and very expensive.

The School In Govdoon

For a long time, the village did not have a school. The priest and the deacon used to give lessons to a few children in one of the rooms on the church grounds. Kneeling on floor mats, the students repeated after the teacher. In 1878, with everyone's efforts, a builder named Khul built a two-story building in the middle of the village, which became Govdoon's coeducational Bakraduniats School. It was called coeducational because one of the students was a girl, who was the daughter of one of the founders, teacher Harutiun. It was an exceptional occurrence in those days for a girl to have the courage to attend school.

Even though externally the school was beautiful, it was poorly run according to the old mentality. Parents brought their children dragging, and piously told the teacher, "The flesh for you and the bones for us." The prudent teacher, with a frown on his face carried a short, thick stick in his hand and walked in the aisles. Suddenly, he would hit the students on their hands and feet. The frightened children were called to recite their lessons. One could pity those who had not memorized their recitations, spelling and lessons from the Psalms. Immediately, the teacher beat the students' feet with a stick. The students remained four or five years on the same subjects. A student who had attended school for several years knew as much as someone who had not attended school at all.

Why would someone have gone to school, or have the desire for education? Weren't the village homes and streets, the fields and nature more attractive and charming than the torturous school and the teacher's stern face?

A student who came to school was obliged to bring a piece of wood from home to heat the school during the winter days. If a student forgot to bring the piece of wood, the teacher would twist the student's ears and make him stand on one leg.

In the midst of an illiterate sea, the priest and the deacon were imperceptible and inexpressible wise men with boundless authority and pure knowledge. While passing in the streets they were pointed out, people stood up and bowed to them. Not only were the priest and the teacher the masters of the church and school,

respectively, but also of the villagers' hearts and family private matters, their joys and pains. Affectionate parents yearned for their sons, who had left home. They wanted to say something to put a spark, a heartfelt emotion in their letter so that their soul would be in peace. The priest would come over and be received with great respect to write a letter for the villagers. He would start composing the letters with the same unaltered words, which he had learned by heart like his church prayer—Der Voghormia. He would start, "At first, we ask for your precious condition, and if you ask us, thank God that up to this time we are alive and well." He would continue listing one by one whatever he knew was new about the family, since in his mind the parents were ignorant and did not know anything, and that he, the priest, was a "learned" man, and knew how to weave and compose a letter.

For years, the villagers' sons wandered, covered with mud, near warehouses, slept on rusted iron piles and cried from loneliness, desperate for a word from their parents. All was in vain. The letter came, but had no substance. They could not tell who was writing about whom. Far from home, the wanderers, withered and jaundiced, wished for news from the birds.

There came new days. The Ottoman Constitution was declared. There was general freedom. There appeared new life and new demands. Those who had left, returned and saw the village in its old bonds and unchanged. They considered their dedication as an ideological effort, a debt to be paid to the village, for its needs, pains and wounds. Their priority was the school.

New teachers came from the city of Sebastia. Thanks to Murad, the village became a place of dedicated activity. The villagers had a deep respect and veneration for the school, and expected their illumination from the newly arrived intellectuals. Foundations were set for coeducation. The Armenian girls left the tonirs and went to school. They came to know the Armenian alphabet and books, and learned to read and write. Coeducation could be considered the biggest triumph in all the villages of the Alice River valley. The Armenian woman was freed from insensible habits and mores, and became equal with the knowledgeable members of the family.

Representatives from Khorsana, Khandsar, Aghdk, Govdoon

and other villages went to the city of Sebastia and demanded from the Prelacy and the Educational Council that female⁴² teachers be sent to teach in the village schools. There was a general and overall demand from every corner. The village had awakened and demands had to be met.

This educational movement flourished until the deadly days of 1914 when the massacres had already started. Exactly a year later, in 1915, there was nothing left of all the advances made in the village. The teachers of the Bakradunyats coeducational school of Govdoon were:

The early period from 1873 to 1908:

Reverend Hagop Dedigian of Govdoon
Harutun Varzhabedian of Govdoon
Nigoghos Kharpetsian from Navir Village of Divrig District
Nshan Chimenian of Govdoon
Krikor Vahuni, a teacher and an orator from Shabin Karahisar
Kalust Kasbarian of Govdoon, at the present he is a priest.
Taniel Muradjian of Govdoon
Reverend Taniel Begian of Govdoon
Mirijan Vligian of Govdoon
Reverend Khachar Der Khacharian of Govdoon
Nshan Begian of Govdoon

The new period from 1908 to 1914:

Karekin Eknadian of Sebastia, martyred
Mgrdich Dayigian of Khorsana
Dikran Garmirian of Shabin Karahisar, martyred
Mgrdich Chadrjian of Sebastia, martyred
Miss Genevieve of Sebastia
Aram Yerosian of Sebastia, martyred
Abraham Der Hagopian of Govdoon, martyred
Garabed Muradjian of Govdoon, martyred

⁴² The first female teacher who came to Govdoon was named Genevieve. After her came several female teachers who had graduated from the Armenian Protestant School.

Dissent in Govdoon

This following incident was a dark page in the history of Govdoon. On the surface it seemed a small issue, but the emotions in the village were high.

In 1912, Harutiun Mruzian, a shrewd and deceitful person, became a partner in the collection of the taxes (ashar), and cheated the peasants by using larger erêplaghuns (a container for measuring grains, similar to a bushel). Murad had noticed this deceitful practice and told him to stop the exploitation. The misunderstanding got out of hand. Murad's friends scolded Mruzian. The village divided into two sides, those on Murad's side and those against him, in other words, Hnchags and Tashnags. Passions were inflamed, and mutual friendships were ruined. One day, Murad beat up teacher Tateos in front of the store belonging to the Mndod family. The teacher had been aroused against Murad by the parents of a student. The accusation was that Murad had wanted to send his brother-in-law to Armash in place of the said student. This incident poured oil on the flame. Rival neighbors had stopped greeting each other, passing by each other's house, giving bread to each other, and households had stopped talking to each other. The cooperative work in the village was completely weakened. There was no sign of compromise. The defensive crowd had stood against Murad. Rumors, threats and gossip had created an explosive environment. Murad did not want to shed blood among his village compatriots. Despite his feelings, the guns went off.

Unfairly, Hagop Muradian was killed, and Nshan Muradian, one of Murad's braves, was wounded in reprisal. Hatreds were intensified. Fortunately, Murad's threats restrained the tragic events. For a long time, Govdoon was in turmoil. The start of WWI quieted down the villagers.

The great catastrophe of the massacres became Govdoon's peace dove. Faced with horrors and death, the villagers reconciled and made up, passing on all their misunderstandings to the dusty winds of the deportations.

Superstitions, Internment And Cemeteries

The domination of dark spirits was eternally present. Whether in nature or in the mind of humans, these spirits dominated the people. In order to prevent malicious occurrences, the villagers resorted to various means. A large number of superstitions existed in the Sebastia, Hafik, Giurun and Darendereh areas, as well as the entire Sebastia province.

Superstitions

If it were thought that someone had been inflicted by an evil eye (achk êlal), the grandmother took a needle in her hand and prayed with the following words:

In the bottomless sea
I threw the piece of pebble.
I took seven (okht) cows and milked them,
Afterwards, I curdled the milk,
And made medicine for the evil eye.
Evil eye, evil pimple,
May you burst and tear apart.

Then the woman would utter, “I confess with belief—havadov khosdovanim,” and spit lightly on the sick person. If this action did not cure the sick, she would write a prayer on a piece of paper, place it in a small cloth bundle (nuskha) and hang it around the sick person’s neck.

For a person with blindness, a mangur (a concave piece of wood with a rope tied to either ends, somewhat like a leash, Tr.) was placed around the neck, and the person was taken around the cemetery or the old Turkish gravesites.

When one chased a cat, dog or any other animal, which one believed embodied a dead Turk, that person had to cross a body of water.

The villagers would not awaken a sleepwalker. They placed a wet carpet in his path. If the sleepwalker stepped on the carpet,

they made the sign of the cross on the carpet with a stick or their hands.

A frightened person was made to eat a small amount of soil, blessed by the priest, brought from the spot where the person had been frightened. If a snake frightened a person, the shed skin of the snake was placed under the person's pillow.

People frightened by getting in front of a dead person's funeral procession were taken to the dead person's grave. Some soil from the gravesite was collected, blessed by the priest, and placed under the frightened person's pillow at night. A pinch of soil was also given to the frightened person to eat. If the person did not recover from the fright, some beeswax was melted over the person's head, and dripped from the tip of scissors into a pan of water. The shape of the solidified wax indicated what had frightened the person. If the wax shape was of a shroud, it was believed that a corpse had frightened the person. If the shape resembled an animal, then a dog or some other animal had frightened the person.

Before a deceased person's services, salt and consecrated bread were placed in the shroud. No one dared pass in front of a funeral procession; doing so was considered an act of desecrating (merelgokh) the dead person's funeral.

If a saint appeared in someone's dream, a candle was lit near the fireplace; the family went on a pilgrimage and sacrificed an animal.

In order to keep the animals from evil eyes, beads and little bells were hung around their necks.

When a calf was born, in order to prevent the mother's milk from evil eyes, pieces of wood and rags were secretly picked up from the neighborhood and burned to heat the milk.

Stepping on breadcrumbs was considered a sin. The villagers never cut bread with a knife; they believed it would lose its value.

During sneezing, they made the sign of the cross. The sneezers had someone hold their middle three fingers while they thought of three things. Also, sneezing meant some people were talking about the sneezers.

If an owl sitting on a chimney made a sound, it meant that someone was going to die, either nearby or far away.

Urinating on ashes was considered a sin. It was said that whoever did so would become paralyzed.

The howling of a dog was a bad omen, indicating death or bad luck.

If some news or a letter did not arrive from a family member who had left the village, a fortuneteller was consulted to “throw barley—kareg tskel.” The teller wrapped one hand with a veil or a scarf, placed some barley in the other hand and held them together as if she were praying. After moving her hands three times, she opened the fist holding the barley, and threw the contents on a table or a carpet. The teller proceeded telling a fortune according to the position of the barley grains.

When there was thunder and hail, the cross iron (this was a piece similar to a grill, which was placed on the opening of the tonir to place pots on top for cooking, Tr.) was thrown outside.

Eating burnt bread was considered bravery. The villagers would say, “Eat burnt bread so that you will not be afraid of wolves.”

The villagers raffled off any moveable or immovable objects, which they wanted to give away. Usually, a child was asked to pick the winning ticket. A child was considered innocent.

A hunter never shot at a flock of cranes; it was considered a sin.

One was not to look in the mirror at night; a ship would sink.

If someone’s right eye twitched, it was good luck; if the left twitched, it was bad luck.

If someone ate leftover food, the person was considered lucky.

It was said that a person who cleaned the bottoms of large kettles would have a beautiful fiancé.

Every Saturday at midnight, incense was burned in the corners of the house so that the devil would not stay there.

If a visitor came during a meal, it was said that one’s mother-in-law liked the son or daughter-in-law very much.

Before going to bed the villagers crossed themselves, pleaded for help from the saints and prayed the following prayer:

A drop of milk may fall from the crucifix,
May the sinners’ sins be forgiven.
Christ the Lord passed over our house,
I crossed myself three times,

One for my heart and side,
Another to save me and my household,
And one for bad people, to be forgiven and saved.

If one passed over a lying person, that person would remain short unless the reverse was done to erase the first act.

To spill hot water on Saturday night was considered a bad thing, because the evil spirits would gather on the person's head.

Eating or drinking before burning candles on Saturday night was considered a bad thing.

After a person died, all the water in the house was thrown out, because the dead person, while alive, may have placed the hands in the water.

If a relative of a dead person cried a lot, it was not good, because the tears could fall in the coffin and the dead person would be uncomfortable.

A new bride was not allowed to go out in the dark for forty days so that evil eyes would not harm her.

If a lice was thrown away alive, a dog would bark in the hereafter.

If the women ate with the men, the men will become hairless.

If some salt were stolen from a new bride's house, she would have a sweet tongue.

Taking a dark dish into the house after dark was not a good thing, because someone in the house would die for sure.

When a bride first entered the house with her husband, a baby boy had to be carried by her so that the firstborn would be a boy.

While taking a newborn for baptism, the Godfather was not to look back, because the child would get pains.

If a guest was not pleasant, some salt was placed in the shoes, or the shoes were pointed towards the door so that the guest would leave early and not come again.

If one's palm itched, it meant good luck; if the foot itched, it meant an upcoming trip.

At mid-Lent, bread was baked with a coin inside it. Whoever got the coin became the lucky person of the household.

If the shed skin of a snake were placed under a child's pillow, a snake would not bite the child.

When stepping out of the house, if one met a pleasant person everything would go well; if a bad person were encountered, things would go wrong.

If one bit the tongue while eating, it meant that somewhere people were gossiping.

If the roosters and chicken crowed at different than their usual times, they were immediately slaughtered, because it portended death.

A pregnant woman was to avoid seeing an ugly person, because the newborn would turn out to look like that person.

If a newborn was sickly, they collected forty keys from forty homes, and placed them in a copper pot. After taking the child through a cemetery, it was bathed in the pot.

Whatever happened on New Year's Eve, the whole year would be like it.

When a dish was broken, it was considered bad luck.

Passing a soap bar from person to person was considered a bad thing to do, because it would cause arguments.

A child's fingernails were not cut, because it was believed that the child would become a thief.

A person who chewed gum at night would have night blindness.

Whoever spit in a newborn's mouth, the child would acquire that person's character.

If a piece of food stuck in someone's throat during a meal, one of the person's sweethearts was hungry somewhere.

The groom was to step on the bride's foot during the wedding so that his word would be the rule.

If a person's eyebrows came together, someday that person would become either a thief or a murderer.

When a loved one left the village, the family would throw water after the person so that the traveler would return soon.

If a person had two or three cowlicks, that person would get married two or three times.

If a newborn constantly sucked its fingers, it would turn out to be a genius.

If the moon had a halo around it, rain was expected.

Stealing a spoon from a wedding reception meant the person would get married soon.

If a dog fly sat on someone, it meant the person was to receive news from a faraway place.

If a horse fly sat on a person, it meant a visit by a guest.

While heating milk, neighbors were not given fire, because the milk would curdle, and the cow would stop giving milk.

On rainy days chickens were not given water; it was considered a sin.

If a newborn's hands were clasped, it would turn out to be a miser.

Two people were not to drink water at the same time; they would later become fierce enemies.

A person eating a meal without washing up would cause the food to lose its value.

If a disliked person came over, a small pot was broken when he left so that he would not visit again.

A mother would not pour water on her children's hands; it would cause their hands to shake later in life.

They did not braid hair at night so that their lives would not be tangled.

A boy who played with fire would urinate in bed.

Stagnant water was not to be drunk; it would go down to the feet.

One who ate stale bread would find money.

If one ate a cat's food, sores would form in the mouth.

During yawning, one was to cover the mouth with the hand so that the devil would not get into the abdomen.

Cut fingernails were not to be thrown on the floor, because whoever stepped on them would turn into an enemy.

Pointing to the moon with one's fingers would cause the tip of the person's fingers to swell up.

The house was not to be swept on Wednesday and Thursday, because the house's good luck would go out with the dirt.

A young girl was not to sit at the edge of the tonir or else she would not get married.

If one used another person's handkerchief, one corner was to be knotted so that animosity would not arise.

If one wanted to do a favor for a paralyzed person, an egg was blessed by seven (okht) persons, and buried in the middle of seven roads. After a few days the paralyzed person would get well.

Internment

The church bell would ring a series of three distinct tones. The village was informed by the church bells that there was a death in the village. Within half an hour, the whole village knew who had died. The priest and the deacon came to the home of the deceased person carrying crosses. The body of the deceased had already been bathed and wrapped in a shroud. The coffin was brought from the church, and the body placed in it. In the villages, the dead were buried only with the shroud. The use of a coffin was not practiced. For that reason, the church provided the coffin with biers, in order to carry the body easily.

The home of the deceased was filled with loud cries. The mourning mother and close relatives gathered around the coffin, and called out loud the deceased person's good qualities, and wept. Especially the mother cried in a heart rendering manner, hitting her knees with her hands, and cry out, "Dear child, you did not see the day and the sun, and you did not get satisfaction from this world. You died with your eyes open." She said these words while crying, and causing others to cry.

The bells rang with melancholy. The coffin was carried through the weeping crowd and taken to the church. The whole village became participants in the funeral.

After the church service, the procession headed to the cemetery. Most of the relatives accompanied the coffin. Along the way, the crowd stood up in reverence, and murmured to each other, "Cursed be the heavens. How is the mother going to endure this tragedy?"

There was a large flat stone in front of the main entrance to the cemetery, which was called "rest stone." The coffin was placed on the stone, the last service took place there, and the melancholy song "Heavenly Jerusalem" was sung. Afterwards, the coffin was taken to the grave. The gravediggers had already dug the grave, and were waiting with their shovels. The priest prayed for the last time. He blessed a handful of dirt and threw it on the coffin saying,

“Dust were you, to dust you shall return.” The mourners did likewise with a handful of dirt.

The mourners returned in groups to the house of the deceased. They ate blessed food and drank oghi. No one had the right to refuse the food. On the way out, the mourners gave their condolences by saying, “May the days be yours; may God illuminate his spirit, for all of our places are there in the hereafter.”

Forty days later, a church service was held for the deceased, followed by a meal. After the church service, the priest held a short requiem service, and informed the people about the meal. Rich, poor, beggars, passers-by, armed with a spoon, went to have the meal.

Those who were invited generally brought a small container of food, such as beans, dried apricots and halva. The food was taken and emptied in large dishes. The women and men sat at separate tables. The abundant amounts of cooked barley, raisin pudding and warm bread were placed on the tables.

Forks were not used. Using a spoon or hands, the bread was separated and eaten.

During memorial days, the people went to the cemetery, and had their relatives’ graves blessed. A bundle of food was taken to the cemetery. In place of bread, thin cracker bread and kata (sweet, flat bread) were taken. The priest and the deacon were compensated with cracker bread, kata, and halva.

The Cemetery

The cemetery was on the edge of the village, close to the church. There were no old monuments, which attracted one’s attention. Generally, graves were recognized by dirt mounds or moss-covered tombstones. The tombstones were mostly of red or white stones. Marble stones did not exist at all. The cemeteries were generally left unattended. The gate was always open, and animals went in to graze. There were neither trees nor flowers. All along the eastern upper valley of the river Alice, historically significant cemeteries did not exist.

During the 1915 massacres and deportations, the Turks had ruined whatever existed in the village cemeteries.

Proverbs, Riddles And Games

I have gathered and put into writing proverbs, riddles and games told to me by the survivors of the massacres of 1915. Unfortunately, I did not completely achieve my purpose, because there are yet so many proverbs, stories, riddles and games, which have not been recorded in order to save them from the fading memories of the survivors. Their worth is multiplied when we realize that the source, the people, who had the thorough knowledge, do not exist anymore.

Proverbs

The egg-laying hen is a clucking hen.
Wherever there is a flowerbed, a kid (goat) will go.
During good days, many people smile at you.
The good is behind the mountain, the bad behind the door.
The past becomes forgotten.
Borrowed eggs do not have yolks.
Eat soup, go to the door; eat rice, go to the mountain.
The poor has cheese and bread, and remains sleepless at night.
From mouth to mouth, it becomes a log.
They have appointed the wolves to guard the sheep herd.
One collects with spoons and scatters with a ladle.
Go die, come back to be loved.
A thief, but with fear in his heart.
A jar rolled and found its cover.
The place of a bad wound disappears, but the place of a bad word does not.
Garabed was at fault, but Hayrabed got the blame.
An old ox, a knife at its neck.
I say pear; he says treasure.
I am an agha, you are an agha, who is going to mill our flour.
You have grease; rub it on your head!
The donkey dreams about having a bag of barley at its mouth.
If a fly fell off his face, it would break into forty pieces.
Due to his laziness, he is calling the donkey uncle.
He who says a Turk is good, has forty years of repentance.

Whatever one sows, one will reap the same.
 He is afraid of his shadow.
 Mountains don't meet, but people do.
 Dawn arrives and brings goodness.
 Before it has become a cat, it wants to catch mice.
 When an Armenian becomes hungry, the feast of mid-Lent
 (Paregentan) comes to his mind.
 The bread is the oxen's just earning.
 The hen is just a hen, but looks towards heaven when drinking
 water.
 The distant saint is more powerful.
 Everyone cries for his problems.
 If a mouse got in his pocket, his head would get a hole in it.
 A sieve has many holes.
 We forgot the big donkey in the stable.
 One cannot hold two watermelons with one hand.
 One father has not been able to support one orphan, but one
 mother has been able to keep forty orphans.
 I have no beard so that people would listen to me.
 The mouse is not able to get in the hole, it has tied the broom to
 its tail.
 The rabbit in its hole is a lion.
 His weight is deficient.
 A horn does not grow on a dog's head.
 I know many songs, but I do not have a good voice.
 A dog does not run away from kata.
 We put our live heads under the Bible.
 One who asks has one black cheek; one who does not give has
 two black cheeks.
 Come late, but come with sweetness.
 I don't want to eat, but put it in my pocket.
 The baby that does not cry is not given milk.
 The debt is closed by giving, the sin by crying.
 The baby sleeps well, older people dream.
 He is pretending to be insane, but is eating the chicken of the
 monastery.
 A dead donkey is not afraid of work.
 There are no sweet onions.
 I have not eaten onions to have heartburn.

If I spit downwards, there is my beard; if upwards there are my brows.

Extend your legs to the length of your blanket.

Hot bread is collateral.

Manager, keep your accounts straight.

The sound of distant drums is sweeter.

He chews gum in the daytime, and burns oil at night.

The first baked bread bubbles.

A stone cross, an iron jug.

Riddles

It has a tail, but no soul. *A skillet.*

The poor plants, the rich collects. *Runny nose.*

A cave here, a cave there, Christ throws javelins (*jirit*) inside. *A clock.*

It has eyes, but has no feet; it kills people, but has no hands; it lays eggs, but has no feathers; it has a shirt, but has no bones. *A snake.*

I have a field, no matter how much I reap it keeps growing. *Hair.*

The Arab fell in the hole, his head stayed outside. *Carrot.*

I swept and collected, the hunchback old lady sat down. *Spindle.*

It fell from the wall, but did not break; it fell in water and did not dissolve. *Egg.*

A donkey comes braying, gives fruits while shivering. *Watermill.*

I went up the mountain, pulled a load and spilled the beans. *Hail.*

There is an ancient king, his crown is made of gold; he gets up and announces to those who sleep, "Christ has risen from the dead." *Rooster.*

It is black, and the face is white. *Coffin.*

At night I sifted eggs, there were none in the morning. *Stars.*

Its bosom is a lake, the head full of fire. *Water jug.*

In a hairless cave we have a bride who plays; when put in water she swims, when pulled out of the water she shivers; if she is given a raisin, she plays all day. *Tongue.*

I have a bundle of thread, which no matter how much I wind, it never ends. *Road.*

Until evening it is wet, until daylight it is open. *Shoes.*

We have a thing, which kisses the hands of passers-by. *Akhlang— lock.*

Sweeter than honey, heavier than steel, it can't be bought and not found in stores. *Sleep.*

A rabbit, working for water, no matter how long it runs, it still has an empty stomach. *Reel.*

It is a narrow and dark home, the devil asleep in it. *Saber.*

I have a small house, which is full of growing things. *Mouth.*

I have a house without a door, silver on the outside, and gold inside. *Eggs.*

The camel went into the stable; the tail hit the lock. *Ladle.*

It is an altar by daylight, and over someone at night. *Bed.*

I have a hearth, which has four pieces of bread. *Walnut.*

The roots are on top, the branches at the bottom. *A person.*

Sebastia's Popular Poetry

A few of the songs of the emigrants from Govdoon, Khorsana, Aghdk, Ghavraz, Gavra and Khandsar are given below.⁴³

Rain is falling on us,
Give my sweetheart the news,
Let her send us her coat,
To make a tent over us.

Sweetheart come to me, come to me,
Take some raisins; come to me,
If you have no money for raisins,
Bring your sweet spirit to me.

You have dressed in red, and become red,
I long for you, what will I do with your sheep,
You have struck fire in me. I am boiling and burning,
I thirst for you as for water; I await you.

Two homesick birds perch on a rose bush,
A fire burns in the middle of my chest,
I came to this world, but did not get my wishes,
They tell me don't cry, how am I not to?

I envy you mountains everyday,
You have no passing days, nor counted years,
You know neither death nor separation from sweethearts,
You have no white hairs, and do not know death.

It has been a long time since I received your mail,
My heart flutters, I have not received my wish,

⁴³ No attempt is made to rhyme the lines. Only the meaning of the poem is preserved. (Translator's note)

It is possible that I have love for you,
Don't delay your mail, I long for you.

The sea of Bolis strikes with its waves,
How sweetly blows the breeze of love,
I wish the Lord gave me luck to go near her,
And fulfill my wish, and fall in the sea.

It has been five years since you went to Bolis,
You have opened a store in the country of Bolis,
You have dressed Galata (a ward) whores with fur coats.
Come, my master (agha), don't be cowardly.
He who travels away from home does not see paradise.

If you stay there three years, it is enough,
If you stay four years, your earnings are cursed,
If you stay five years, it is harmful to your life.
Come my master, etc.

I wish I were a photographer, in order to take your picture,
Every time I missed you, I would look at your picture,
Looking at your eyes, I will quench my thirst.
Come my master, etc.

You took your caravan, and left your khan (an inn) empty,
Your country is far away, your voice cannot be heard,
The calling cranes are not giving any news about you.
Come my master, etc.

Get up stranger, and go to your country,
Someday you will fall and die, who will cry for you,
The worry of your absence made my heart ache,
Separated me from my sweetheart, and made me a stranger.

The mountains, the mountains, the cool refreshing waters,
I would take my sweetheart and go up the mountains,
The father herds the cattle; the son herds the flocks,
The mother claps her hands along the river.

I took you up the mountain,
I herded you among the green grass,
After milking you, I made a bed,
Drinking keoremez (milk and madsun mixture),
I went to sleep,
The cattle has come, asking for a lamb,
The shepherd has come, asking for a sweetheart.

Hey, Mariam! Where are your father's fields?
It is behind the high mountains.

It is muddy in front of the house, in front of the house,
Your heart is harder than stone, harder than stone.

Don't cry Mariam, your eyes will get bloodshot,
May he who marries you young, have his house crumble.

Today should have been Saturday, tomorrow Sunday,
I needed a key for my tongue to open my heart.

The window is across from us,
The shadow left and disappeared,
What kind of sweetheart was she?
That left without I being able to see her.

Your curly hair is like a crown,
Your cheeks are like pomegranates,
The boy I love passed by my door,
He looked like a handsome bey (a gentleman).

Songs from the Giurun Region

I have been very distressed
My condition is so bad
I used to be a distant bird
This year I am in tears.

The mulberry tree is so tall
I did not eat any of its berries,
May your family be cursed!
I did not find a sweetheart.

I am like basil, but have no dal (sister-in-law)
I am young and have no remedy,
They took away my sweetheart,
I am innocent and don't know much.

The mulberry syrup is very sweet
The village boy is a sweetheart
One who marries the village boy
Possesses a handful of worries.

This world of mine is cursed.
It is a wound in my heart.
May I die and be buried,
My love is still for her.

It is breezy in the treetops
My mind is on the boy
Since the boy left
My days have been black.

What happens if I go out of the house?
The rose bush is thorny.
Don't call my sweetheart a rose.
A rose has a short lifetime.

From the village of Darende

Wine Song

The wine came in a vessel,
Kebab came with the salad,
Let us eat wishing each other.
Our wine, our blessed wine.

In our house, they bake long breads,
Let us eat slowly, slowly,
The bartender knows us so well,
Our wine, our blessed wine.

Behind our house there are forty crocks,
The wine in all the crocks is sweet,
Once I drink it, then a young bride,
Our wine, our blessed wine.

Nakarat (Repeating Song)

The cup is silver,
And gold-plated,
The drinker is blessed, blessed,
The non-drinker is cursed.
This one for Garabed,
That one for Garabed,
Go and tell him,
He is gulping down,
It is our turn,
Bring us a drink, a drink
And let us be merry.

The Hreshdagabed Monastery

Sung during the Transfiguration Holiday in Kochasar, Govdoon, Aghdk, Khorsana and Gavra. The song is similar to the one sung at Saint Garabed Monastery.

Come! Let us go to Hreshdagabed Monastery,
Where we will have a circle dance with the girls,
Let us have fun with davul and zurna,
And give our gift to Hreshdagabed.

At the great Hreshdagabed,
Its structure on the throne,
Murad Pasha will come on his horse,
After him will come his whole group.

Hreshdagabed is a high place,
And it has a curving road,
Many pilgrims come and go,
Both on feet, and on horseback.

Murad gives way to those on foot,
And also to those on horseback,
He gives love to the lovers,
And respect to the farmers.

During Harvest

Behind the door, there's a heap of sheaves,
If the heap falls, it will not roll
The one who loves you will not grow old,
I took pomegranate seeds to win her.

I plow and plow behind the village,
The woolen skirt is colored by the tiller,
There is a barley field behind the village,
As I plow it, the wind takes it away.

During Milling

As I mill, let pomegranate kernels come out,
While milling the grains, let stones come out,
Give my regards to my sweetheart,
Let her get some raisins and come home.

The millstone is round and round,
My sweetheart is very tall,
She has hung an amber tassel,
And has wrapped a belt around her waist.

Fortune Telling

The villagers collected water from seven springs and seven places, and placed the water in a large tub. Those seeking to have their fortunes told gathered around the tub and threw in their beads, spoons, mirrors, rings, earrings, buttons, bracelets, blades and whatever else they could give. They covered the tub, and put it aside. Brides, girls, old and young participated.

On Ascension Holiday when church was over, the old ladies and the new brides gathered in the middle of someone's courtyard. With two or three girls of about eight to ten years old, the women surrounded the mysterious tub. One of the young girls, with a piece of cloth on her head, waited for the women to start the game, so that she would pick the objects in the tub one by one, whichever touched her hand first. Each woman said a stanza, in the form of a poem, whatever she knew and whatever she could compose in Armenian or in Turkish. They would start reciting the following examples:

I wished on a fortune,
And kept it in my mind,
I said it was my heart's desire,
I liked my fortune.

Hey sparrow, sparrow,
May you lay golden eggs,
May you have wings of pearl,
And become a Sultan of the people.

The Pasha (honorary title) went into the bathhouse,
He dipped the cup in the tub,
As he said "gold and silver,"
His luck brought forth jewels.

A key fell from heaven,
My closed door opened,
My room filled with sunshine,
My house filled with apples.

The sun is round and round,
It has tied a golden belt,
It has fasted for fifty days,
For its only sweetheart.

I will go to the open field,
I will stand in the open field,
I will harness seven oxen,
That one, for your fortune.

The mother has eaten apricots,
She has borne a crazy son.

Dust in your enemy's eyes,
You are pretty as a dove.

The mother has broken the jug,
The son has become a bear.

The father has bought a donkey,
The son has become bad.

The father has planted barley,
The son has become kind.

After each recital, an object was taken out from the water-filled tub among the tumult, confusion and laughter. After the game was over, a fortune telling book was brought. Whoever remembered her wish would search for an explanation in the book.

Here is another poem from the region.

Two Beauties Go To the Water

Early in the morning to our spring,
Two beauties come to our waters,
Each one asks the other,
“Are you pretty? Am I pretty?”

Carrying your jug you go to the water,
You admire your beautiful height,
You give a sign to the beautiful ones,
Prettier than you is the happy deer.

Carrying your jug come near me,
Give me a kiss from your apple cheeks,
Give me a piece of your scarf,
And from your hair, give me a lock.
Oh dainty girl, do not ponder,
Give my regard to my sweetheart,
Take your scarf as a gift,
You are pretty, and I am pretty.

PART C

MASSACRES AND DEPORTATIONS

The Pogroms And Carnage Of 1895-1896

We are not going to talk here about the Armenian Question and the general nature of its progress. We are going to confine it only to the Sebastia region.

The Armenian Question, the problem of Armenian Reform, along with the entire Armenian population, had generated great enthusiasm for the population of Sebastia. The bloody policies of Sultan Hamid and his hatred of the Armenians were executed with boundless barbarity on the Sebastia Armenians, as in all corners of the Armenian provinces.

The French “Yellow Book”⁴⁴ describes that the reformatations had particularly enlivened the Sebastia Armenians, who were rich and numerous.

“In the beginning of November of 1895, the ferocious Kurds of the Trabizon region rushed to Sebastia, and joining the Turks, looted, burned and plundered the Armenian villages. Around that time, news came from Karahisar, Zara, Divrig, Derendeh and Susheher that the massacres had started, and that there were a large number of deaths.

On November 12, the French Consul, Emil Carlier, telegraphed Paul Gambon, the French Ambassador in Bolis, the following:

“Heavy shootings have started at noon right by my house. I immediately removed the weapons from my house, and prevented the Turks from coming into my street. Meantime, I protected the Armenian Church, which was filled with a large crowd. The clergy have sought refuge in my house. The shootings continued until three o’clock. On November 13, the plundering subsided, but started again on November 14. The number of dead has reached 1500. All the Armenian stores have been looted.

⁴⁴ Livre Jaune, *Les Affaires d’Armenie*, p.174.

“In the evening, again massacres... The religious leader from the minaret delivers Allah’s blessings for the murderers. Particularly eye catching were the dervishes, who agitated the Moslem crowd. Numerous separate and secret killings took place on the following several days. The majority of the victims were axed to death.

“The governor has gathered one thousand army reservists and one hundred gendarmes, in order to suppress the anger of the furious crowd. However, the central government does not allow him to go ahead with it.”

The wife of the French Consul in Sebastia, Mrs. Carlier⁴⁵, who had been an eyewitness to the massacres, had written the following:

“They killed everyone in the market place. Not a single Armenian remains. Some of them hid in the granaries, but the soldiers dug holes in them and found them. Right at this moment they are killing with bayonets. It is for that reason that loud cries, moans and sighs can be heard. The soldiers are passing by with their pillage and bloodied hands. The mob continues to loot. Oh! That mob, they committed every kind of cruelty. Since the mob was not armed with weapons, they had grabbed whatever they had found, axes, clubs, stones and shovels. They crushed the heads of their victims, after which the bodies were taken and thrown in the river in front of the eyes of the crying mothers and wives of the victims. Before killing the Armenians, the murderers undressed the victims and mutilated them.”

Here are some more eyewitness accounts.⁴⁶

“Everywhere there is blood; wherever you step, you step on human brains and scalps. An armed Turkish beast wanted to kill seven or eight Armenians. Muted with raging fear, the victims, like sheep, without attempting to defend themselves, were slaughtered, despite that all were strong men.

“The misery was boundless.

⁴⁵ Mme. Carlier, “*Au milieu des Massacres*,” p. 80-91.

⁴⁶ Abbe Eugene Griselle, *L’Armenie martyre*, p. 45-46.

“I saw dogs dragging human body parts in their mouths, victoriously roaming the streets in packs with blood dripping from their mouths.

“The majority of the victims were men. A large number of women and girls were put up for auction by the criminal Turks.”

Giurun was surrounded with 2,000 Kurds. The 4,000 Armenians of the village defended themselves continuously for four days. One thousand of them surrendered their arms and found refuge in the church.

It was difficult to tell the number of victims. On November 18, 1200 corpses were in the streets, 1,000 homes were burned, the church and 500 homes were looted and 150 girls were taken away by the Kurds.

On November 15, predatory bandits tried to enter Tokat. The army pushed them back. The governor, Bekir Sami Pasha, made a great effort and stopped the atrocities.

In many places the soldiers and the religious imams participated in the massacres.

On hundred and fifty Armenians were arrested under the pretense that they belonged to secret revolutionary organizations.

All the villages of the Art-Ova were burned and looted. When the mob could not carry away the pillage, they poured kerosene and burned the goods so that the survivors would not be able to use them.

In Zileh, 200 people were killed, and 300 homes were looted without sparing anyone.

In Amasia, the mobs destroyed the watermill, storage houses, businesses and stores. The definite number of the victims was not known. According to consular reports, the number of victims reached 1,000. Yeshilêrmak was covered with corpses.

In Marzvan, the ferocious mob descended on the Armenians. One hundred were killed and 500 wounded. Approximately 400 homes and stores were looted. The murderers took off the victims' clothes and left their naked corpses in the streets.

In Vezir-Keopru, likewise, 200 people were killed and 300 homes were pillaged.

In Shabin-Karahisar, the massacres and predation began at the end of October. On November 1st, 2,000 people sought refuge in

the Armenian Church. All of them were forced to surrender and all were slaughtered ruthlessly. No child, an old man or a paralyzed person was spared. The women and girls were raped with extreme barbarism. The number of victims exceeded 3,000.

The surrounding thirty Armenian villages were all despoiled. The worst devastation was at Endires, Anyezri, Tamzara, Buseyid, Seridik, Purk, Sis, Mshgnots, Adsbuder, Anyerg, Hiberi, Agin and Armudan. Almost 50% of the Armenian population was massacred.

On October 3, another pogrom took place about six miles outside of the city of Sebastia. Several Armenian villages were burned, and the population ruthlessly massacred. The number of the killed was not recorded.

On October 5, the massacres had started in the river Alice's upper valley's predominantly Armenian villages. Khorsana was burned to the ground. Aghdk and Sasun of this area bravely defended themselves. Govdoon, likewise, defended itself bravely. Kochasar, Tokat, Yarasar, Gamis, Khorokhon, Khandsar, Ghaveraz and Gavra were burned. The animals were left unattended and strewn everywhere. The Turkish mob, led by the head bandit, Mehmed Ali, armed with axes, scythes, sickles, iron pieces and clubs, attacked the villages, plundering, burning and killing the inhabitants.

The number of dead in the upper valley reached 5,000. Just in Aghdk, 600 Armenians were massacred. The priest and the community leaders were killed right away. Next, the people were subjected to the same fate.

Turkey, under Sultan Hamid's rule, was in a state of corruption and misrule. An eyewitness⁴⁷ described Turkey of those days in this manner:

"The Begs plunder, burn and massacre; the judges steal; the mufti (Moslem religious leader) steals; the Christian leaders steal; the Archbishop steals; all of them steal, except the doves, in other words, the minority populace, which constantly is deplumed."

In those days of misery, foreign travelers and eyewitnesses conservatively estimated the number of Armenians massacred to be 150,000. Just in the Sebastia province, according to the French

⁴⁷ Vandel, *Les Armeniens et la Reforme de la Turquie*, p. 27.

“Yellow Book,” the number of Armenians who were massacred was conservatively estimated to have reached 18,000 in the following areas:

Sebastia City on October 3, November 12, 14 and 15	1,500
Alice River's Upper Valley on November 5, 6 and 7	5,000
Giurun on November 12	1,200
Tokat on November 15	1,000
Amasia on November 15 and 16	1,000
Marzvan on November 15	150
Shabin -Karahisar on October 27, 28 and 29	3,000
Vezin-Keopru on November 12	200
Kavra on November 12	10
Unidentified Victims	5,000

The Armenians appraised their material losses at 26 million Ottoman Gold, which the French Consul considered a realistic amount.

Deportations And Massacres During 1915-1916

My hands shake and my eyes darken when I remember and think about the horrible tragedy. Even reminiscing about the massacres is a form of deathly exile. In order to write about our enormous pain and lamentations, a large number of volumes are required, which we don't have yet.

Let us stand at the edge of the deep chasm, and once more look, with our heads down, observing the Great Tragedy in its horrible dimensions.

Let the evidence speak. Let the foreigners and the survivors tell with their own words and torn hearts.

For a long, long time, this Great Crime in the depth of Asia Minor is going to make us agonize over it.

A general military readiness had been declared. The colorful notices were shining on the walls. The deportations had been announced. It was Sefer-Beylik (military mobilization). Those between the ages of 15 and 45 were conscripted. There was an overall confusion and chaos. The populace had crowded into the streets and marketplaces. An uncertain situation had astonished the frightful population. The town crier announced, "Either recompense or military service—bedel or askyar."

The villager, storeowner and merchant, businessmen and craftsmen, educated and teachers, office workers and factory owners, rich and poor, all of them indiscriminately were conscripted into the inhuman Turkish military.

Along with Sefer-Beylik, Tekelifeh-Harbiyeh (wartime levy) was declared. Confiscation for military needs started. Everyone who became a soldier was supposed to turn over all his possessions and property to the government for war's countless expenses.

The Armenian warehouses, factories and merchandise stores were confiscated, plundered and the goods carried away. It was even worse in the villages. Turkish soldiers went into the houses, heaping insults on the household, gathering whatever was in the houses. Everything the villagers had, wheat, barley, butter, cheese,

dried madsun, cows, horses, donkeys, oxen, sheep, goats, clothing and materials, were considered “military necessity” and taken away. They carried everything continuously. In place of the goods, the soldiers gave the households pieces of paper as pretense that they were going to return everything later. No one dared to hide even a broom; otherwise, they would immediately be whipped and called “Gyavur khnzir—infidel pig, Christian pig.”

The war erupted. The cannons roared over the stupefied Armenians. Soon jihad—holy war, was declared. The Turkish frenzied mobs swelled and frothed like the murky waves. Their religious leaders, mulahs and imams, with their white and green turbans, dressed in black robes, organized demonstrations, calling the name of Allah, spread hatred and venom among the frenzied mobs.

The foreigners departed hastily. The capitalists (foreigners), behind whom the Turkish minorities had found refuge, were not there anymore. There remained a few American missionaries, who “in the name of God” shared the Armenians’ fate.

Turkey became isolated. No longer could foreign eyes see the atrocities of the Turkish dungeon. The lambs had fallen into the wolves’ cage.

The noose tightened day by day.

The arrests had started.

Locally known decent community and political workers, church trustees, teachers, priests, merchants, government workers were taken away to Svaz, hand cuffed and under the whips of the gendarmes. The villages of Zara, Divrig, Kochasar, Ghanghal, Govdoon, Aghdk, Gavra and Khorsana were all emptied of their decent leaders.

The criminal institutions in Shafik and Geov-Medreseh of Sebastia were filled beyond their limits with Armenian men. In the night, the executioners, armed to their teeth, gathered the Armenians in groups and took them to be massacred. Villages and towns were cleared of most of their male population. No one remained to give the people leadership and comfort. All of them had been victims of an awful conspiracy. Relatives came from far away places on foot to visit the imprisoned men, bringing them a little bread. Mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, wives and

children came to see their loved ones for the last time and to be comforted by hearing and seeing them.

The gendarmes, bayonets in hand, bragged and answered with demonic smiles, "Your men have all been sent to build roads." This was the indication that death was awaiting those doomed men. The relatives returned with their heads down, crying to carry their own black cross. They had all become living corpses, with bleeding hearts.

Murad's escape became noticeable to the governor of Sebastia. It was conceived as a threat that the remaining people of the villages would follow him and resort to self-defense. Muammer mobilized his men to make every effort to catch Murad. All the governor's efforts were in vain. Giving up his search, he spilled his venom on the villagers of the upper valley, particularly on Murad's birthplace, Govdoon.

Alay-Bey entered Govdoon with his gendarmes, and subjected the people to beatings and whippings. He threatened the villagers and demanded that they reveal Murad's hiding place. When these measures did not help, he ordered his men to burn down Murad's home and torture his mother, wife and brothers. Again, it was impossible to extract a word from Murad's family. Next morning, blaming the villagers, he extracted a heavy fine from them. Dissatisfied with his despicable act, Alay-Bey became outraged and fumed with anger. He ordered the deportation of the villagers. He allowed them only one hour to get ready. However, a quarter hour later, the decision was changed, and the deportation was postponed.

Under the pretense of looking for defectors, the gendarmes immediately left for the nearby villages. Murderers and other criminals, who were let out of prisons, accompanied Alay-Bey. Conspicuous among the outlaws were Kiutik's son, Husain; Salaheldin, the head of the Kochasar gendarmes; and Maher of Zara. These men were allowed to commit unheard of brutalities, unprecedented tortures and horrible murders.

The beatings bruised the bodies; the flesh of some people had been torn off their bones; others were beaten on the soles. The priests were tortured the worst. Their beards were plucked; insults were heaped on them; their bodies were seared with red hot metals.

Hot metal pans were placed on the victims' heads. Many were impaled. The cruelties were endless. Cats were thrown inside women's and ladies' blouses, later their wombs were torn out. The gendarmes went into the homes searching for weapons. When they could not find any, they made the residents buy weapons from them and the civilian Turks, and then turn the weapons over to them as if the weapons were found in the homes.

The pillage and plunder continued. During the searches, any hidden gold, jewelry and valuables were seized. After the plunder, the men—young, old, priests, teachers and leaders were tied together and led away under the pretext of being taken to the provincial center. However, many were slaughtered just outside of the villages. The survivors were taken to Zara, Kochasar and Sebastia, where they were imprisoned. Most of those taken to Sebastia were slaughtered either at the entrance to the Seyfeh neighborhood or on the Boghaz bridge, on the pretext that the men were going to escape.

Knowing that Murad's centers of activity were Khorsana, Aghdk and Khandsar, Alay-Bey subjected the population of these villages to the most ruthless brutalities. In these villages, the gendarmes had found several hidden boxes of arms, ammunition, bombs, dynamite and military clothes. These items were carted away, along with the people, to the city and exhibited to the Turkish population to prove that the Armenian people were worthy of annihilation.

The male population of Khorsana was tied together, brought to the Burnaz valley and brutally massacred. Afterwards, the murderous gendarmes returned to the village and told the women to take their carts and go to bring back the bodies of their loved ones, while they sat around eating without remorse the meals prepared for them by the women.

When the women got to the Burnaz valley, they were unable to recognize the bodies of their husbands, brothers and sons. The bodies were dismembered and torn apart to the point of being unrecognizable. It must have been unimaginable the grief, the cries and the wails of these peasant women, deprived of their male relatives. Those who were imprisoned in Kochasar, and later taken to the city, were also slaughtered in an area called Gavra-Poser—Gavra Holes.

The towns of Shifa and Geov-Medreseh were filled with Armenians of the river Alice valley. At night, groups of 50-100 were taken bound together to the outskirts of town and slaughtered. Along the river, an area called Pash-Chayir, where there were many ditches filled with water, became the slaughter field and graveyards of the Armenians. The next morning, the murderous gendarmes brought the bloodied clothing of the slaughtered men to the market place and sold them.

During the uprooting of the villagers, no priests, teachers and males older than eight to ten years old were left. There remained a few very old men, who were killed along the way.

The black smoke from the homes along the entire valley rose to the heavens. The centuries' hope and refuge, the sweat and toil of decades burned to ashes.

Enver Pasha visited Sebastia on January 5, 1915.

The entire military and government officials, all the school children and the whole city went a distance of two hours outside of the city, on the road to Erzerum, to greet him. On the same day, the city was bedecked with flags. There were fireworks, torchlight marches by the students and recitations praising the hero. Finally, there was an official reception.

The Armenian and Catholic religious leaders, along with the Armenian Community and political leaders hastened to welcome Enver. He praised the Armenian soldiers and added, "They fought with such bravery that had not been seen before, for the protection of the Ottoman Empire."

In Sarighamish, Enver had met a crushing defeat by the Russian soldiers, and had run away in disarray. He had just about to have been captured, when officer Hovhaness Aginian of Sebastia and a few other Armenian soldiers had rescued Enver at the expense of their lives. Officer Aginian was wounded and later died.

Enver left the next day. On the following day, notices were placed on the walls for the conscription of men from 45-60 years old.

After Enver's departure, Ghani Beg visited Sebastia and brought the orders for the deportations and annihilation of the Armenians.

Turkish representatives from Kharpert, Kyanzêri and Erzerum came to Sebastia to incite the Turkish population by such speeches as, “Our real enemies, the Armenians, who have caused the whole world to turn against us, are among us. They have caused our blood to be spilled, they have destroyed the foundation of our fatherland and government; therefore, it is necessary that we first annihilate and cleanse this internal enemy.”

The consequences of such incitement and cynical announcements came quickly.

Imprisonment of Armenians followed immediately with ferocity. Gendarmes with bayonets stationed all passages. Thousands of Armenians hid in the mountains and caves, lived on grasses, so that they would not be caught. Death awaited all of them. The Armenian honor and history, songs and toils, holiness and beliefs, were violated every day and every hour.

The orders for the deportations had been given. In the villages, on the order of the gendarmes, the frightened servant of the village head, went from house to house announcing that everyone had to be ready the next day to be on the road.

Heart-rending cries and lamentations filled the air. Full of grief and sorrow, widows, mournful mothers, beautiful young children, frail old men, delicate young girls loaded their funeral wagons, with broken spirits, wailing and mournful, to travel down the road to their graves.

Marauding Turks descended on the fields to ravish the scattered sheep herds, cattle, oxen, horses and calves. The animals temporarily would escape and run back to their familiar homes.

A horrible scene had unfolded.

Everyone was driven out of the villages under the threat of bayonets and scimitars. They left as pilgrims with reverence to their ancestral homes, cemeteries, green fields and everything, which was holy and everlasting for them.

They left everything behind, and went along the river Alice. The dust clouds rose in the air as if mourning the villagers’ departure.

The caravans started moving.

The Turkish mobs, like hungry ravenous vultures, descended on the Armenian villages, grabbing and loading their carts and animals with everything that was left behind—animals, furniture,

utensils, clothing, carpets, farm implements, tools and even the beams of the houses.

From Kochasar to Ghavra, a dead silence prevailed from one end of the river Alice valley to the other.

Govdoon was the first village in the province of Sebastia to be deported because of her beloved son, Murad. The other villages followed one after another. From the end of May until June 16, not even a single crippled person was left in the entire valley.

In the frightful deep silence of night, the labored creaking of the carts echoed like feeble moans. Staggeringly, the cartwheels sank in the ancestral soil, which clung to the wheels as if to prevent the carts from leaving. The depopulated homes and hearths, mountains and hills witnessed the martyred Armenian caravans, which disappeared into strange and unknown directions.

From here on, let the survivors speak in their own words and torn hearts. They were the ones who, like frightened shadows, passed through deserts and deep gorges, witnessed and sought death, and by some luck or some chance regained their lives.

Every one of them has a story. They have seen countless terrors and horrors, and lived fearful lives. While recounting their experiences, they have cried and made us cry. They have remembered the death and destruction, bloodied and dismembered bodies, mothers gone insane abandoning their children, drowned sisters and brothers.

I have collected and compiled several personal episodes from several of the survivors, which exemplify the atrocities committed on the entire Armenian population in the Alice River's upper valley. With no exception, all the caravans from these villages passed through the same bloody roads described in the following episodes.

Episodes Told By Survivors

The following is the account of a woman from Sebastia's fourth caravan. She had been saved with her two younger sisters.

"In November of 1915, the Turks started collecting the rifles. The few rifles some of the villagers had served as an excuse for the government to arrest and imprison many of them. The villagers were forced to buy rifles from the Turks and turn them over to the government so that they would not be beaten up. One Martin rifle was purchased for 15-20 Ottoman gold pieces.

"The Turkish government released from the prisons approximately 531 of the most bloodthirsty and barbaric chetehs (brigands, marauders), and handed over the task of the deportations of the Armenians to them. One night, the gendarmes and police poured into the Armenian neighborhoods. They knocked on the doors to wake up the people and took the men away. The men were beaten up and were demanded to point out the homes of certain people. If the men refused, they were beaten up on their faces and limbs. By morning, 2,000 men were already arrested. The women were derided and told sarcastically, 'In one or two hours, your husbands will go to hell.' Oh, you ravenous wolves, our lambs had fallen into your hands.

"The women got together, went and stood in front of the Shifeh and Geov-Medreseh prisons, crying and lamenting. The prison head and executioner cursed us with unheard of profanities that I cannot mention. The prison guards hit us with their rifle butts and whips. Many of us fell and died on the spot. Instinctively, we all went in the direction where governor Muammer's coach was to pass. Many of us threw ourselves under the wheels. Two women died under the horses' hoofs. The cruel governor shook his head with a cynical smile, saying that things were not in his hands, and that he could not do anything.

"Hopeless, we returned to our homes and found the children crying their hearts out. The nursing mothers did not have milk to feed the babies, who did not stop crying. Many pregnant women aborted their fetuses. Eleven days later, the town crier announced that all the Armenian families had to be deported from Svaz to Musul (a town in present day northern Iraq, Tr.). We ran to church

in order to ask for some advice from the clergy. We did not find anyone there. We cried and kissed the church walls, and returned home broken hearted. Again, we pleaded to Muammer. He refused us again, saying that such an order had come from Bolis.

“We returned home, thinking about our buried love ones, whose graves were going to be left behind. Several men had gone unnoticed and not arrested. We dressed them in women’s clothes and hid them. The Turks removed us one neighborhood at a time. Every day 4,000 of us were forced out of our homes by the Turkish whips. For the last time, we were saying ‘goodbye’ to everyone. One Turk cried and said, ‘What sins did these poor souls commit? We lived like brothers with each other. By Allah, the accusations are all lies, the Armenians neither killed nor insulted us.’ We loaded the donkeys and mules with whatever we could carry, and tied the babies on our backs. We kissed each other and our children again and again; we cried and cried incessantly. The gendarmes whipped us on the heads and shouted, ‘Hurry up and go to hell.’ We heard Father Arsen respond to them, ‘Yes, we will go. When we are gone, you save the Ottoman Empire.’

“We walked continuously for three days. Five or six hundred bloodthirsty chetehs (brigands) were awaiting us to rob, rape and massacre us. We had all become petrified. One by one, they started counting the carts and people. We realized that they were going to kill us, and for the last time we started kissing each other. The scene was horrible. They took away my husband. I wanted to go with him, but I was hit by a rifle butt and fell unconscious. They poured water on me, and I woke up to see that my husband was gone. Everyone around me was crying. The men, who were taken away, were killed. Four military officers came and told us, ‘If you have gold, silver or any jewels, give them to us for safe keeping, because we are going to pass through narrow gorges. When we return, we will give them back to you. Anyone who does not give, will be shot to death.’ That day, 22 hegs (this may be a pouch or a similar container, Tr.) of wealth was collected. On the following day, when we were going to start out on the road again, some of the men, who were separated from us the day before, were killed in front of our eyes. After traveling for seven to eight hours, the gendarmes came and told us, ‘The carts which the government had

provided have to be returned for military use.’ A large number of families remained behind in the fields. We were not able to take a single memento with us.

“We reached Hasan-Chelebi. The gendarmes disappeared. The Kurds surrounded us. Whoever had been left behind were robbed and massacred. A town official came and ordered us to put down our bundles and rest by the river. We were surrounded by bones and corpses. The stench was very strong. The Kurds came amongst us and started robbing us. When we resisted and refused, they showed us the river. We went to the gendarmes and pleaded so that they would stop the Kurds from robbing us. The gendarmes shouted at us, ‘Disgusting Gyavurs, your complaints never end.’ While there, a large caravan of 5,000 to 6,000 people came and passed in front of us.

“The next day, we saw a seventeen year old young man, with a large gash on his head, who told us that the Turks had gathered the 9-12 year olds and massacred them with axes. He added, ‘We heard the Turkish religious village leaders yelling, Allah akbar! Allah akbar! Death to the Christians! They struck me with an ax. I pretended to be dead.’ When I heard the children crying, I moved near them. Father Krikoris Pehlivanian, who was amongst us, dressed in his sister’s clothes, blessed us and gave us absolution for the last time. We spent the whole night in fear, crying and praying. The Turks took twenty men and ten young boys and slaughtered them in front of our eyes.

“We reached Hekim Khan in the middle of the night. We had not eaten anything. We were extremely hungry. The local Turks wanted one gold piece for a loaf of bread, and for a container of water, five gold pieces. Fifty people from our group went to find bread, but none of them returned.

“Enduring horrible tortures, we came to Hasan-Badrik the next day. We lost twenty of our carts on the road. The gendarmes, for some reason or other, became somewhat ‘humane.’ They brought bread and water. One hundred and fifty of us died from hunger and thirst.

“The next day, we came to Kêrk-Geoz, where we remained for four days. The Kurds collected money from us to bury our dead; however, instead, they were throwing the naked bodies into the

river. On the morning of the fifth day, the gendarmes ordered us to travel towards Malatia. They did not let anyone enter our caravan. The gendarmes told us that they had found eight hundred Kurds, who would take the oxen for grazing. We gave them three hundred gold pieces for that 'favor.' They took the oxen and confiscated the animals. We suffered a great loss at this location. Six hundred children died. We remained there three days, and left the heavy items behind when we left. Four thousand old and sick people died there. A short distance from Frnchêlar, the gendarmes heard the cry of children. They went and found out that the Kurds were trying to bury three hundred children alive. Father Krikoris Pehlivanian bribed the gendarmes and saved the children from that horrible situation.

"We reached Kanlê-Dereh. This was a true valley of blood. We were all stupefied. Armed with axes and knives, the Kurds attacked our caravan. They killed twenty people, and took away 260 others, demanding two gold pieces for each person in order to release them. To rescue our precious ones, we paid them what they demanded. At that moment, 800 Kurds came again and slaughtered the 260 rescued people in front of our eyes. After the slaughter, their leader ordered that all the pretty girls in the caravan walk in front of him. Some of the girls took poison and died. The Kurds took away many other girls. The plunder started. The Kurds collected our clothing and other belongings. They also collected five gold pieces from each person. Whoever did not have any money was killed.

"We were all on the brink of death. We reached the shores of the river Euphrates. The majority of our people threw themselves in the river. The gendarmes were sitting and drinking oghi. Whenever one of us jumped in the river, the gendarmes exclaimed, 'There is one less Armenian!' and broke out into laughter.

"When we reached Urfa, rumors spread that the Sultan had issued a pardon for the Armenians, and that all were going to go back to their villages. The rumors were false. Again, we went on the road of death.

"The Armenian population of Husni-Mansur were waiting, like us, for row boats to cross the river. They told us that the Turks had beaten up the Catholic priest of the town by inflicting him with

1,200 blows, and later stuffed his mouth with excrements. Father Der Minassian's sister told us that the Turks had done the same thing to Father Arsen of Aleppo. Both had died after the horrible tortures.

"A cavalry, which had come from Urfa, entered the caravan and started gathering the good looking girls. What a frightful sight that was! The girls screamed and cried, called out God's name, 'Mother! Mother! Do not let us fall into the hands of these ravenous animals!' Their mothers wailed and cried to no avail. Three to four hundred girls threw themselves in the river, in order not to fall into the hands of the Turks.

"When we reached Suruj and Bumbuj, our tortures were lessened, but the diseases started to take their toll. We remained in Bumbuj for two months. An Armenian, Hagop Khanjian, dressed in Arab's clothing, saved us from this place. The local Moslems urged us everyday to accept Islam. We heard that Father Karekin Khachadurian had received permission from Jemal Pasha to go to Jerusalem. I went and pleaded with him, as his relative, to take us with him. He consented.

"On December 8, 1917, the Allies entered Jerusalem. Thus, we were completely saved and went to Egypt near our relatives."

* * * *

The following is the description of the deportations told by Mrs. Hnaz Cheochenian and Mrs. Mariam Hagopian. These two ladies complemented each other in telling their experiences of the deportations from Govdoon.

"The gendarmes divided the village population into three caravans.

"In the first caravan were the following families: Kzirian, Gharadakessian, Muradjian, Mikaelian, Srabian, Tngrian, Topalian, Hagopian, Vartanian, Kasharian, Cheochinian, Kshigian, Muradian and the Khrimian family of Murad, all in all 120 families.

"The second caravan consisting of 130 families included the Pilavian, Yaghjian, Poladian, Nrian, Gnjoian, Hagopian and Topalian families.

“The third caravan consisted of fifty families among whom were the Kralian, Kshigian, Muradjian, Bedigian and Mushmulian prominent families.

“The first caravan was deported on May 30, 1915, and the other two after two or three days apart from each other.

“The day we left the village, we stayed in Klkhêdegh. The next morning, we loaded the carts again, moving along the Kardashlar Mountains, entered the Keosiurelik valley and got on the road to Olash. We camped the night at the bottom of Tejer Dag. Suddenly, the gendarmes, who were accompanying us, came and told us that they had heard that members of Murad’s family were among us, and that we were to give them up. They grabbed and took away, while beating them up, Murad’s sister-in-law, uncle Tateos’ grandchild, a girl from the Ghren family, all in all ten people, whoever caught their eyes. We passed the Yêrêkh and Keotu khans (inns) without any danger until Hasan-Chelebi. The population of this region was wild Kurds. Armed with axes, picks, scythes, sickles, swords, they came to our caravan. They selected several good-looking girls and took them away. They came back yelling and demanding that we give them the men folks, otherwise they would kill us all. They searched all our belongings, stabbing the bundles of clothing and mattresses. They did not find anyone. Blindly, they carried away from the carts our clothing and anything that their hands touched, telling us, ‘What are you going to do with all these items, all of you are going to die in this valley?’ We tried to take our belongings away from them.

“We passed by Hekin-Khan, Hasan-Batrik and Kêrk-Geoz without anymore danger. Through green valleys and orchards, we were on our way to Malatia.

“In Malatia, they took away all our personal belongings, oxen and carts. They also demanded the men of the caravan. We hid the men, and did not turn them over. They moved us out again, without knowing where we were headed. As we advanced, our fears increased. A few hours later we reached Takht-Kapu. The river Murad flowed furiously ahead of us. Before we crossed the river, the Kurds came and surrounded us, pretending they were going to search us and let us go. One of us, named Kok of the Guguz family, did not let them search him, and threw himself in

the river. The gendarmes started shooting at him, and killed him. All hell broke loose. The Kurds got in our midst. They beat and robbed us, then killed many of us. We had no strength left to defend ourselves. We were worn out from hunger and thirst.

“Suddenly two men on horseback appeared. We were told that they were the officials of the region. We ran in front of the horses, begged and pleaded to let the two men know of our pains, and that the Kurds were robbing and killing us. The Kurds gave the two men some of the spoils. These men disappeared without paying attention to our pleas. When the two were gone, the Kurds attacked us again, taking away Hovsep of the Turshuju family, Dingil and Krikor Kshigian. When they came to take Haji-Agha, he hit them several times with his hand stick and shouted at us, ‘What are you still waiting for? They are taking us today; tomorrow they will take you. Let’s attack these dogs.’ Women, old people, girls and boys grabbed sticks or stones and attacked the Kurds. The fight lasted two hours. The Kurds pulled away from our caravan and disappeared in the valley. An official came and promised to bring back our belongings. A few hours later he came back with some rags. During the fighting, several of us were killed, namely, Garabed Muradian, Uncle Avak, Yeghsapert Muradjian, Elmas Giurgenian and four newborn babies.

“We were rescued from the Kurds, but fell into the hands of the local officials. For his ‘favours,’ he wanted to rape Zaruhi Begian, and took her away by force. We came out of the valley and arrived at a small village along the river. Here, the local officials came and took away Antaram Muradjian and Melik Giurgenian. That night, we slept on the sandy ground. Suddenly, several local police came, and demanded twenty ghurushes from each one of us before they would allow us to cross the river. They separated us, with forty men on one side, and the rest of us on the other side. They brought a boat and put thirty people in it. The gendarmes were resting under a tent by the river. First, they took the girls and young brides across the river. They told the men to sit on the ground. There were only about fifty of us left to cross. We saw a commotion on the other side of the river. The gendarmes were raping the girls and the brides in front of everyone. The women were wailing and crying. While crossing the river, they threw Sarkis of Khachig’s family

into the river. When the gendarmes had moved away from the group of forty men who had been ordered to sit down, also these men jumped in the river. Among them were Arshag Srabian, Yervant Srabian, Kevork Kasparian, Harutiun Vartanian, Nshan Muradjian, Marnos Kshigian, Garabed Cheochenian, Osgian Vartanian and his family, Haji-Agha, Arakel Gharadakessian, Simon Muradjian, Mikael Muradjian, Anania Giurgenian, Minas Giurgenian, Sarkis Begian, Stepan Gharadakessian, Avak Pilosian, Toros Der Khachadurian and Hovhaness Der Khachadurian (Julik). Five more people were killed in their sleep when the Kurds smashed their heads.

“When the men jumped in the river, the gendarmes opened fire on them, and all were killed in the Murad River. The gendarmes considered the shooting and the killing of the Armenians a reward. For that reason, they walked along the river to shoot those in the water. The rowboat owners came, and we got in. Right in the middle of the river, the boat owners demanded money from us. ‘Whoever does not have money will be thrown into the river!’ they said. Each of us was able to find five gold pieces, and gave them to the boat owner. They threw Hnaz Muradjian in the river. When her mother cried and begged, then gave them five gold pieces, they pulled her out of the water. The mother had sewn the money in her daughter’s clothing so that the Turks would not suspect she had any money. Many of us were stripped of our clothing and left with only a shirt. We all knew that we were going to be killed. We used to say that whoever died early was saved from further torture and degradation. We would collect money from each other and give it to those dogs. The boatmen demanded money from Mirijan Hagopian, who was dressed in woman’s clothing. When he spoke and said ‘I will give you the money,’ they recognized that he was a man. They hit him with a rifle and threw him in the river. When they demanded money from me, my mother took out a handful of money and gave it to them. I was saved. In order to take away the bracelet from Elbik Bajakian, the savage Turks were going to cut her hands. Elbik took off the bracelet and gave it to them. At that moment, they threw into the water, one after another, Takuhi Haytaian, Vartuhi Hagopian, Srpuhi Meneshian, Voski Meneshian and Mariam Mushmulian.

“With such torturous tribulations, we barely were able to get to the other side of the river. Girls, young brides and boys, who made it across the river unharmed, were tucked under rags so that the Turks would not come again and kill them.

“In the morning, women and men who were wearing women’s clothing went on the road again. We were told that they were taking us to Urfa.

“We were hungry and thirsty on the road. We had ceased to belong to humanity. We did not know what was happening to us.

“When we reached Urfa, they forced us into a large compound, without doors or windows. At night, the wind shook the walls of the compound. There was a small group from Erzinga. These people helped us a lot. Everyday, new groups came. The compound was filled completely. Soon disease spread among the people. Dysentery was wearing down everyone. The dead were carried away in carts. The names of the dead were posted on the Armenian Church walls. We heard that the Armenian Church was taking in people and helping them. We wanted to go to the church, but were scared of the gendarmes, who were guarding the entrance to the compound. We stayed here for eight days. During those eight days, the following died from disease: Mariam and Sandul Hagopian, Yazgiul Poladian, Markrid and Maritsa Hagopian, Markrid Pilafian, Artakin Hagopian, Sandul Muradjian, Memizar and Mariam Muradjian, Zarug Vligian, Zmrut Topalian, Takug Shamoian, Arek and Vartan Mushmulian, Elbik Bajakian, Sultan Bajakian, Mariam Der Khachadurian, Voski Muradjian, Nartuk Cheochenian, Sandul Cheochenian, Artin Muradjian, Manug Hagopian, Tutush Khrimian, Mariam Mikaelian, Vartuk Mikaelian, Asdghig, Nshan, Hazevert and Hayganush Mikaelian, Elbik and Tetghi Kshigian, Arshaluys Muradjian, Mushegh and Antara Topalian, Beghek Ghngoian and Nortug Kesberian.

“A day before the Urfa insurrection, we were deported from there. The sick were left behind. Sara Muradjian and Sandul Mushmulian remained in Urfa and participated in the insurrection, carrying bullets and bread to the fighters.

“The rain, hunger, exhaustion and various diseases had taken their toll. Out of 120 families, only forty members survived. We came to Rasulla and remained there about a month. Refugees from

different villages were brought here. The mixed crowd was divided into two groups, and the men were separated from the women. The Arabs attacked the women and took away five children and six women.

“From there, we were taken to Musul, where Artakin, Vasak and Elmas Begian died from disease.

“We wrote letters for help. Our village compatriots from America and Bolis sent us help and saved us.”

* * * *

The following narrative is by Mushegh Hagopian, who was a young 14-year old boy. He was among Govdoon’s second deported caravan.

“We were forced out of the village, and surrounded by gendarmes. We came to Kikhêdegh, from there to Ghanghal. On the way, the gendarmes caught several deserters and killed them. While passing through Ishkhani, we were told not to be frightened. Generally, they did not give us trouble. They were going to be replaced with another group in Ghanghal. We did not want to see that. In the morning, we saw that they were really leaving. The gendarmes departed with sadness telling us, ‘From here on you are going to be killed.’ Miushgiun Orhnadsian died in Ghanghal. We took him to the Armenian cemetery and buried him with the proper service performed by the priest. Kel (bald) Mehmed of Soflar came and told us, ‘Sell your belongings, because the end is not good.’ The Armenians of Ghanghal used to come and tell us that whatever the Turks are doing to you, they will be doing to us tomorrow.

“We left Ghanghal and came to Deli-Dash. We unhitched the oxen from the carts and took them to graze. We had barely moved away from the caravan, when the Turks from the nearby villages came and took away our oxen. ‘We are going to plow the fields,’ they told us, and went away with the oxen. After plowing their fields all day with the poor, hungry oxen, they returned them to us. The animals were exhausted and emaciated. It was not possible to travel with these animals. We were forced to leave again towards Hasan-Chelebi. While sleeping in the valley, Sinan Hagopian was beaten up badly, accused of going along the planted fields and

trampling the plants. The oxen were tired and unable to pull the carts; especially, when we came to a slope where we had to push the carts. Finally, after many difficulties, we reached Hasan-Chelebi. The gendarmes did not allow us into the village.

“The village head came and asked if Garabed Kralian and Murad were with us. We told him that no one from these families was among us. They grabbed Kel Hovnan and beat him so badly that his arms and ribs were broken. Still, he did not open his mouth to admit that someone from Murad’s family was with us. The gendarmes grabbed Sarkis Kralian, beat him also, demanding that he point out his sister-in-law and turn her over to them. At night, more gendarmes came and forcefully took away young brides and girls. They beat the mothers with rifle butts, and snatched away their daughters to take away and rape them. They brought back the raped girls in groups, and took away others to rape. They wanted to take away Elmas Meneshian, she fought with the gendarmes, screamed and yelled, and they were not able to take her away. We were terrorized the whole night. The young brides and girls were hidden under piles of clothing and rags so that they would not be taken away and raped. Many of the girls became sick.

“The gendarmes moved us from Hasan-Chelebi. We had barely gone an hour’s distance, when they dispersed us in the fields. We could see the Kurds in the distance, armed with scythes, axes, swords, knives and sickles. They were waiting for night to fall to attack us. The gendarmes had sold our belongings to those Kurds, knowing that they were going to be replaced by another group of gendarmes. We collected 500 gold pieces and gave them to the gendarmes so that they would drive away the Kurds. However, the Kurds started coming towards us from the surrounding mountains and valleys. The gendarmes opened fire on them. A few of the carts were far behind us. The Kurds attacked those carts, and started pulling out their belongings from the bundles. Harutiun Topalian hit one of the Kurds with a stick, and the Kurd fell down the hill. Voskian Zorian, who had fallen far behind, was caught and his clothes were ripped off of him. When Israel Hagopian saw the condition of those fallen behind, he yelled and told the people to stop the carts. We all got together and attacked the Kurds with sticks and stones. We triumphed and drove them away. The Kurds left the valley, went up the mountainsides and started throwing

stones at us. We all finally got together again. Only Dakess Muradjian and Srpuk Srabian had fallen too far behind. For that reason, the gendarmes had killed both of them.

“We had no human losses, both in Hekim-Khan and Hasan-Badrik. The gendarmes demanded gechit (passage money), and we gave it to them.

“We came to Kêrk-Geoz. We were along one of Euphrates River’s tributaries called Tokhma. There was a bridge, which connected the roads from Svaz to Malatia. Here, they collected the males from 15-50 years of age announcing, ‘You are going to work as laborers and build roads!’ Among those men were Vartevar Mikaelian, Harutiun Mikaelian, Vartan, Levon, Shnork and Hovhaness Bajakian, Karnik and Karekin Nurian, Stepan Tarpinian, Aghabeg Chivian, Harutiun Topalian, Krikor Vligian, Mardiros Andonian and Krikor Chivian. We were approximately twenty men. We remained by the river for two days. Kalust Chivian jumped in the river and drowned. The gendarmes ordered us to load our carts. We came to a small village. They told us that we were going to stay there and plow the fields. One night, they gathered the old men and children over the age of ten, and placed them in a compound. Israel Hagopian, Avak Pilavian, Mado Mikaelian, Arakel Mikaelian, Tavit Payilian, Krikor Muradjian were with us. The Turks robbed us of everything, clothes, money, then ordered us to hitch the oxen, and returned us to Kêrk-Geoz. An hour later, more gendarmes appeared, behind whom was the third caravan from our village. Elbik Bajakian saw her mother, Yeghisapet Kshigian, on the other side of the river with the newly arrived caravan. Elbik was trying to find a way to be with her mother so that they would travel together. The gendarmes hit her with their rifle butts, and did not let her join her mother. We were told that both caravans were going to be combined.

“We reached Urfa without any trouble. Shortly thereafter, we were on the road again towards El-Bab, where there were many Armenians.

“In Aleppo, we joined the remnant of the caravan from Aghdk. By the time we got to Aleppo, we lost Ohan Kasparian, Voski and Harzik Hagopian, Mariam Poladian, Marnos Vligian and Areg Muradjian.

“From Aleppo, we were taken to Hamma by railroad cars. There, all three caravans from Govdoon were combined. Half the people of the village were decimated. Some of us were taken to Homms. Hamma and Homms (towns in Syria) became the graveyards of our people. Out of the whole village, only 77 people had survived.”

* * * *

Zenen Mikaelian of Khorsana provided the following narration of the deportations from her village.

“In early June, the government gave each family a cart, and told us to get ready in a hurry and wait at the village outskirts. Four gendarmes from Ghanghal came and joined the caravan. We all went on the road. After a while we came to Ishkhani. The gendarmes ordered us to light fires, so that the surrounding Turkish villages would know that a new caravan had arrived. In Ghanghal, the gendarmes started gathering young brides and girls to sell to the local people. The Kurds, who were brought around the carts, proceeded to collect two ghurushes for each cart.

“In Hasan-Chelebi, knife-wielding Kurds came and took away four men. Khdo, who had helped Murad so much while Murad was a fugitive, was one of the men. We were told to bring money if we wanted the men to be sent back. Meanwhile the men were already killed.

“Most of the young girls were killed in Kanlê-Dereh. They robbed us all. They took everything off the carts. A group of Kurds brought horses on the pretense of renting them to us. Just at that moment, there was a commotion, because the gendarmes were gathering the children from our caravan. The parents, who did not want to give up their children, were tied to horses’ tails and tortured to death. Both the people from the cities and the villages were mixed together. At night, the gendarmes separated people of the cities from those of the villages to set up camp. The caravan from Erzerum, whose gendarmes treated them harshly, was also with the rest of us. They collected five gold pieces from each one of us. Not a single child was left. The cries of the children and the newborns filled the air. Under every nearby bush a naked child

stirred. Oh! May God blind them, how could they leave so many children without their mothers or milk?

“We were exhausted. Our bones stuck out from under our skins. We were emaciated, and were supposed to continue to travel as far as we could see. In Malatia, we joined a caravan from Govdoon. Here too, the children were collected. Everyday, children were taken away. Finally, at night we had a chance to catch our breaths, and started looking for each other. I went into the Govdoon caravan to ask for my sister. I did not find her, but found Yeghisapert, Marnos, Nshan, Kalust and Tetghi Kshigians.

“In the morning, in order to climb up the inclined road, the gendarmes demanded dirt (toprak) money. Whoever had money gave it to go up. Those who did not were left behind, and they threw themselves into the Murad River.

“While crossing the river in boats, the boatmen undressed us all, and searched us for money. The sick were thrown into the river. The jewelry was taken from us forcibly. They cut the nipples and hands of many women. They cut the bellies of some pregnant women and threw them in the river. If we said anything, they yelled at us, ‘Gyavur, don’t talk too much, I will cut you up right now!’ They took everything; nothing was left. The tears did not dry in our eyes. We cried and wailed. The gendarmes were killing everyone who was left behind.

“In Hamma, a large number of refugees had been brought. The filth, lice and disease were rife. Three to four hundred people died daily. Those who had someone to help them were saved; those who did not, got sick and died.

“Very few from our village survived.”

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Here is another heart-rending narration by a woman from the village of Kochasar, describing the tragic event, which she witnessed.

“In July of 1915, on Vartavar Holiday’s second day, suddenly orders came to get ready for our move to another location. The reason given was that our location was dangerous because of the war. Supposedly, in a few months we were going to return back to

our village. We were to take only two or three days' supply of food, which, we were told, would be enough, and there was no danger for us.

"On the morning of the third day, the gendarmes gathered us, took us outside of the village and counted us like sheep. They divided the village into three caravans. I was in the first group, which consisted of 500 people. Six large-statured gendarmes accompanied us. We sensed that there was no possibility for our return. We looked at the smoke coming out of our chimneys, and could not stand the thought. We cried. There were about twenty men with us. The rest were all women, children and elderly people. Suddenly, the corporal of the gendarmes ordered us to get up and continue walking. After just fifteen minutes, they made us stop, and selected three men. One of them was my brother-in-law, the other two were Simon Andonian and Vartan Elmasian. The gendarmes told them that they were going back to the village. The men were herded in front of the horses. A few minutes later, the gendarmes came back. They had killed the three men. We kept walking and crying. We saw a major coming towards us. He got among us, grabbed the arm of a young bride, and told her, 'You are going to marry me!' The bride cried and begged, but it did not help. He put her on his horse and took her away. An hour later, we came to the Armenian village of Gavra. No one was left there. There were guards, as if the walls were going to escape. Akh, may your eyes go blind! Three hours later, when we arrived at the Khandsru fields, we were told to stop. We saw that Khandsru was also being deported. People, with their carts and animals laden with belongings, were coming, surrounded by gendarmes. The people passed in front of us, taking the road to Seyfeh. They told us that a half hour later we were to follow them. On the first night, we got to Seyfeh and stayed on the outside of the compound. We had just rested for a short while, when a gendarme came and forcibly took away baker Krikor's wife and two children. We were terrified. At a half hour's distance, they killed the young woman and the two children.

"We were uprooted again and taken through narrow and rocky roads to Injeh-Chayir near the city of Sebastia. They made us stop there.

“We saw at a distance three men coming towards us. A few steps from us, the gendarmes stopped the men and asked them, ‘Are you Armenians? Don’t lie!’ The men answered, ‘Only one of us is Armenian.’ As soon as the gendarmes heard that, they pulled the Armenian down from the horse and beat him up. The Armenian cried and begged so much that the corporal told the gendarmes to let him go. The gendarmes did not want to let the Armenian go, and reminded the corporal, ‘Don’t you know that we have been ordered to kill any Armenian we see?’ They killed the man in front of our eyes. Whenever I remember their atrocities, my heart jumps. Which one shall I tell you? When they saw that we pitied and cried for the Armenian man, they came among us, grabbed some of the young brides, raped and violated them like monsters. We could not sleep that night. The gendarmes came again, took away Khachig and Sahag Ghugasian and Vahram Babigian. A short distance from our caravan, the gendarmes killed these men. They brought the men’s clothes, dressed themselves with the clothes and sat down.

“On that same day, the people from the city of Sebastia were brought and mixed with us. The group consisted of 4,000 to 5,000 people. We left Injeh-Chayir, went through the Delik-Dashi pass and reached Ghanghal. This was the first and last village where we saw Armenians. The villagers brought us bread, food and clothes. We refused to take their offers, but they told us that a few days later they were going to join us. They told us to take the food instead of it being left behind for the Turks to eat. We left Ghanghal. Through valleys, we reached Alaja-Khan. Again, the men were gathered. Right in front of our eyes, they killed four men, who were my uncles Hampar, Kalusd and Arakel Tarpinian and Pakrad Kojian. The next day we were taken to a compound called Ghêrêkhu-Khan. We came across some Turkish travelers, who were going to live in our villages. Their oxen had become emaciated and could not pull the carts. The gendarmes did them a favor by taking our oxen and giving them to the Turks. We were left with the weak oxen. We were not able to do anything. We went on the endless road again. By midday, we reached Keotu-Khan. A fight broke out here between the Kurds and the gendarmes on our account. The Kurds ran away. Soghig Kalajian, a young bride, died at that place.

“We were a short distance from Hasan-Chelebi, the savage Kurds, armed with all kinds of weapons, came and entered our caravan. Mariam Kojian had wrapped her newborn child in a bundle. The Kurds thought that the bundle contained valuables, took it away from her. A little later, when they saw that it was a baby in the bundle, they smashed the baby to the ground. The mother went and brought the baby back. Those Kurds committed all kinds of atrocities. They cut off the nipples of several women. They cut open some women’s bellies, took out their livers and tried to sell them to us. A few government officials came to us and urged us to accept Islam. They told us whoever accepted Islam, the Kurds would not harm. None of us denied our God. We told them that we will not convert, and will die here. The Kurds again attacked us. They beat Zartig Ghugasian so much that she died. We were told to move again. We did not know where we were headed. We were surrounded by mountains, Turks and Kurds. We traveled in the mountains, sleepless, being robbed and murdered on the way. We finally reached Hasan-Badrik. We were told that we were not going to stay there. Without a moment’s rest, we were forced to continue on our way. We came to a Kurdish village. I don’t remember the name. The gendarmes sold our caravan to the Kurds. The Kurds came and demanded five gold pieces from each one of us, calling it ‘road money.’ They killed everyone who did not have the money. They took away the daughter of Armaven of the Kyandir family. Her mother ran after them crying and pulling her hair. The Kurds hit her with a ghundakh (a baby carrier made of wood and cloth), which caused a large cut on her head. The blood started pouring out. She kept crying and begging. The Kurds tortured the girl so much that she fainted. They poured water on her, and told the mother, ‘Now, take your daughter and go away.’ After being tortured, Marnos Atanasian died there. Many from the Sebastia caravan also died there. When Ipek Babozian died, her orphaned daughter mourned and cried on her mother’s body. She made us all cry by her lamentation in Turkish.

‘The camels have formed a caravan,
Head to head they go,
Mothers become cruel,

They toss away their children and go.'

"We had come to a place called Susu-Yazi. We had no food or water. Our tongues were like pieces of wood. We yelled, 'Water! Water! Water!' Even God was not helping us. All around us was desert. There was not a drop of water. Many of us fainted and fell onto the dusty ground. The sun was burning us so badly that we were being choked. The carts were going over the dead bodies. So many people died that day that we could not take a step without stepping on dead bodies. Akat Sntseian and Fndukh Kyandirian died there from thirst. In the distance, we could see Kêrk-Geoz. River Tukhman flowed nearby. We saw the water, and it seemed that some strength came to us. Just before getting to the river, we saw so many bodies in the ditches on both sides of the road, blackened and swollen. One could not breathe from the stench. We saw a narrow stream of water flowing from under the corpses. We did not mind the corpses, and threw ourselves into the ditch and drank the water. In a short while, we were at Kêrk-Geoz. We all rushed to the river, drank the water and cooled off. The gendarmes told us that we were allowed to go in the river to clean up. We did. The gendarmes put our sick ones on wooden boards, telling us that they were taking them in the river to help them clean up. They took them to the deepest part of the river and threw them into the water. So many threw themselves in the river. The river was covered with dead bodies. The gendarmes were elated by the sight of the dead bodies. Akh! May your arms fall off; may they turn black and blue, and the crows pluck out their eyes. How many young brides and children drowned in the river?

"In the morning, the gendarmes came and told us, 'Leave the carts for us. Orders have come from Malatia to take food to the soldiers. Take whatever you can carry with you.' We left without carts. We saw that the carts were given to the Sebastia Armenians and they moved them towards Malatia. We were taken to a village in the mountains, and left there. I don't remember the name of the village. While passing through a wooded area, suddenly Kurds confronted us and started gathering the children. No matter how much we resisted them, we could not stop them. They hit us and pulled our children from our hands.

“We got to Malatia and joined the caravans from Davshanlu, Gamis, Bingeol, Yarasar, Tokat, which were waiting there for us. We remained there for fifteen days.

“It was during the Moslem holiday of Ramazan. The gendarmes told us that from now on they were not going to kill anyone. They told us, ‘If you want to be safe, go and hide in the fields. When we hear the official orders, we will come and let you know.’

“One day, soon after their lie, we heard that all the men of the Sebastia caravan were murdered in Kanlê-Dereh. Our turn came. We had not yet reached Kanlê-Dereh, when two wounded young men, who had survived by falling under the corpses, met us and told us not to proceed on the road on which we were traveling. They told us that no one would remain alive, and that we all should remain where we were and become Turks. Blood was flowing like water in the valley. What could we do? Twenty of us accepted Islam and remained there. The rest of us got to Kanlê-Dereh. My God! What a horrible scene? The gendarmes collected all of the males and poured kerosene on them. There was no way out. We were all going to die there. Not a single male child was left in our caravan. Out of 500 people, only fifty or sixty of us were left. We were again told to move on without knowing our destination. When we left the valley, a woman was murmuring the following song in Turkish:

‘In the morning, I met a group of deer.
A songbird is perched on a rose bush; it will not stop singing.
Dear God, do not hold a grudge against me.
The Almighty can separate the songbird from the rosebush.
Leave the hawk alone to find its prey.
Let my loved ones and companions come close to me.
May only the enemy remain at these strange places.
Come my brother, come let us go to our homes.’

“The further we went, the more Kurds and Arabs we encountered. The gendarmes collected money from us every night. After traveling two days, we came to a valley through which flowed a river. On its one bank was a watermill. The gendarmes made us stop there. Every day, the Kurds brought food to

sell—bread, cheese, butter, onions and raisins. Whoever had money, bought the food. Those who did not would have died, if no one helped them. Many of those who had oxen, horses and donkeys, sold them to buy food. Whoever had food shared it with those who did not have any. The caravans from Tokat and Svaz were always with us. However much was taken from us, twice as much was taken from the other two caravans. We were ready in the morning to move again. We were to go up the mountain, past the watermill. Many people left their children there. They could not imagine that they would be able to climb the mountain in that condition. We started going up the mountain one after another. The inclined road was called Davshan-Yokushu. Moaning, falling and getting up again, we reached the top. A vast valley appeared in front of us. The abandoned children at the top of the mountain cried and wailed. There were no tears in their eyes, and we had turned into skin and bones, as if we were bags of bones thrown on the side of the road. Oh, my God, what a horrible scene that was? One could not endure it. The murderous Kurds, taking advantage of the night darkness, attacked us. We could not see where we were stepping. A false move could send us down the mountain. The corpses were everywhere on the road. We spent a terrible night when we passed through the Kurdish Zeynal Beg's fields. There was no road to go on, or a way to be protected. All the people of the different caravans were robbed there.

“After several torturous days, we reached Suruj. The Arabs did not give us as much trouble. It seemed that our troubles were lessened. After wandering here and there, we reached Aleppo. Our village compatriots who were in the United States assisted us, and saved us—the survivors.”

* * * *

The entire population of Amasia, Zileh, Gemereg, Zara and Tokat were subjected to the same tortures and killings as the rest of the villagers described. To describe all, requires many volumes. Death howled in the depths of valleys and mountains, like the sinister Satan.

A large number of foreigners observed the atrocities, complained and appealed to governments and wrote to inform the

populations of their respective countries about the massacres, the burnt caravans and the horrid deserts.

Miss Mary Grepem watched attentively, like an eagle, the caravans of Sebastia, and saw with her own eyes their horrible Calvary.

In the United States of America, the “Commission of the United States on Armenian Atrocities,” consisting of several notable personalities, such as Cardinal James Gibbon; the past president of Harvard University, Elliot; secretary of the “Board of American Mission,” Mott and others, approximately 25 people, put forth an extensive campaign on October 4, 1915, to bring everyone’s attention to the deserts and our people’s ashes. Information received from missionaries, diplomatic corps, and, especially, from Lord Bryce’s report, was used to inform the citizenry about the Turkish atrocities committed against the Armenian population of Turkey.

A Swiss missionary, Miss Beatrice Rohner, described her observations in “Sonnenaufgang,” the official publication of the “Organization For the Relief of Eastern Christians.”

“In the desert of Der-Zor, one of the major cities of the desert, which is a six days’ journey by wagon from Aleppo, we saw a large compound filled with Armenian refugees. All the rooms, the rooftops and all the hallways were filled with women, old people and children. Wherever there was a piece of ground, people had occupied it and covered themselves with tattered blankets. The people, who had been reduced to animals, asked us, ‘Why don’t they kill us right away so that we can be spared the tortures and atrocities.’”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ar. I. Toynbee, *Les Massacres d’Armenie*, p. 77.

FROM THE HOMELAND TO THE DESERT

The Armenian honor, the grieving mothers and children, the sick and the aged driven from their ancestral homes, came like corpses, carrying their red cross and fading into the desert sands. The sorrowful caravans were the symbolic incarnation of martyred Armenians, suffocated among the horrendous dangers from the surrounding Turkish and Kurdish barbarism. The victims' bones stuck out of their flesh as a terrible protest against humanity.

Perhaps someday, their countless invisible graves will become strong bulwarks of our ideals, pyramids of our inflexible freedom and sanctuaries for our coming generations.

The following numbers convey the extent of the devastation and will stun the reader:

Districts & Villages	No. Deported	Number Survived
Sebastia, 1 caravan	698	196
7 other caravans	?	0
Ghanghal	600	24
Maghara	2,000	2
Ulash	3,000	4
Prknik	3,500	4
Kochasar	2,000	150
Khandsar	900	23
Govdoon	3,000	77
Khorsana	1,500	25
Têtmaj	900	1
Manjêlêkh	2,100	28
Yeni-Khan	2,400	35
Karagyol	1,200	3
Zara	3,000	3
Divrig	6,500	43
Pingian	2,300	0
Tokat	2,400	2
Ghavraz	900	20
Aghdk	3,500	70

We can add that during the deportations from the homeland to the desert, 98% of our population was decimated from its roots.

IN THE RUINS OF THE HOMELAND

After WWI was over and there was some peace in Turkey, many with shattered lives returned from the deserts to occupy their ancestral homes once again. With the fear of solitude and emptiness, with a yearning desire in their hearts, they entered the “Kemalist Heaven” to find that everything was razed to the ground.

What kind of feeble wrath was in their eyes to have the courage to go back? It seemed that centuries had flown by and passed over them.

These fragments of survivors have returned and become sentries to the once lively fields, devastated hearths, plundered stables and burnt homes.

Here are some moving excerpts from a letter dated December 26, 1926, written by a friend:

“My dear friend, if one has no pain or worries, these ruins are enough for us. In the morning or at some other time, when we go out and look at the destruction, it seems that it has covered itself with a black veil, as if mourning the death of its residents. Our hearts ache every moment. We look all around us and see that all of our neighbors now are savage Kurds from Alashgerd, who are living in our relatives’ and villagers’ ancestral homes. To what avail? Our pains have no remedy, our wounds incurable, we have to endure until our deaths.

“For thirteen years, our well-known Aghi-Geol, Tsiun-Pos, Bunazin-Tsorê, Dsag-Dsag Karer, Postik and Seyfeh have been protesting against the committed atrocities and God. How can we say, and how can we explain to you, my dear friend? Every time we take pen in our hands, we are not able to restrain our emotions, we cry, our eyes fill with tears. All of us mourn when the thoughts come to our minds. We fear writing in details, because we are still subject to violence; therefore, we do not want to take chances.”

During one year, quite a few Armenians have left for different countries, through Bolis. Currently, there are approximately 250 families in the Sebastia province, who are fairly well off. One hundred of the families are local people. The remaining 150 families are from the surrounding villages.



Mardiros Mikaelian
An elderly caretaker of Govdoon's ruins

Due to the absence of schools, 250 children roam the streets.



**Muso Andonian, an octogenarian
caretaker of the Govdoon's ruins**

There are neither schools nor churches in the above-mentioned villages. The people are completely deprived of needed spiritual consolation, and the children of rudimentary education in order to be able to read and write.

Several village compatriots, who had recently left Turkey, gave me the following very reliable information on the number of families in the Sebastia Province:

Town/Village	Families	Members
Zara	80	350
Kochasar	40	133
Govdoon	4	10
Ulash Pashakiugh Ishkhani Yeni-Khan	55	200
Manchêlêkh	21	80
Ghanghal	42	165
Chay-Kurt	0	5
Yarasar	0	3
Todorak	0	7
Khorokhon	0	20
Tevotsay	0	4
Bardizag	0	13
Prapert	0	20
Gamis, Tokat, Stanos, Gavra, Ghavraz, Aghdk, Khorsana, Bingyol, Ornowud, Davshanlu	No one remains in these villages.	

The people live in bondage. Until this day, many of our nation's priceless children are tormented under Kurdish tents, in Turkish harems, on Arabian deserts, in the impregnable rocky mountains, inside uninhabited caves and crevices, deprived of hope and light, thirsting for the Armenian name and language.

SEBASTIA IN THE DIASPORA

In its past period, emigration was a big historic calamity. Countless field workers struggled against it, through their writings and preachings, so that our people would not abandon their homeland and fields.



Mardiros Tngrian
(Martyred)

The white massacre was considered a phenomenon, which would cause the homeland to become a place without Armenians and fields without Armenian farmers. The slogan of the time was

Towards the Homeland...

Who would have thought that several years later, such an immense catastrophe was going to be the greatest opportunity for the physical survival of the Armenian people?

Everything had been upset. All the masts of our ships, our hopes and our tendencies had been sunk.

Today, a large number of Armenian young men attribute their better lives to their emigration from the homeland. They have become industrious laborers in noisy and smoke-filled factories, working in restaurants and for rich aghas.

Emigration was an old phenomenon for the Armenians.

Newly wed young men, leaving their young brides, spent their honeymoon month at warehouse corners, working as porters, with the yearning for family, home and the fields in their hearts.

Today, from Armenia to the Balkans, from Egypt to Persia, we have a nation without a fatherland, working to earn a living and establish new lives.

From every province and every village, there exists a nucleus of emigrants in various countries.



**Mirijan Tngrian,
Martyred**

The Armenians of Sebastia had also experienced emigration because of oppression, and had left the cities and villages of the homeland.

These young men set roots and established compatriotic associations in America, France, Egypt, Bulgaria, Rumania, Greece, Syria, around the shores of the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Persia, Bolis and the Middle East.

COMPATRIOTIC ORGANIZATIONS

Compatriotic unions represent a place of comfort for the survivors of the Massacres, a place where they establish spiritual ties with people of their homeland. In foreign lands, these organizations represent a microcosm of the lifestyles and mentalities as they were in their villages and towns.

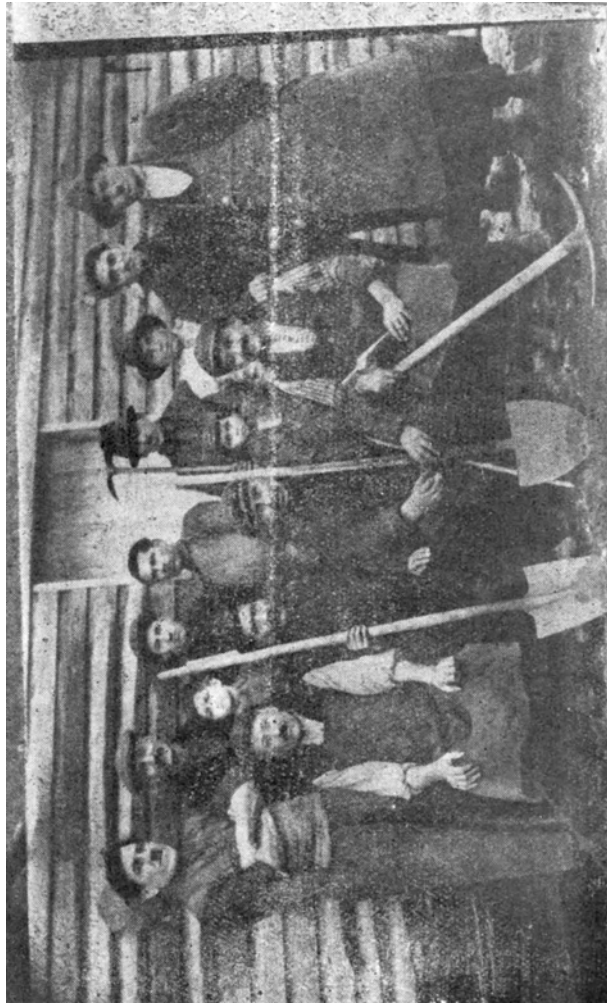
In all the regions and towns of Sebastia, there existed, both before and after WWI, well established and organized compatriotic unions with large memberships.

Until the Great Massacre, these organizations had various names. Only Sebastia's Senekerim Society kept its traditional name after WWI, and performed a superb service. All the other organizations adopted the word "rebuilding" or "rehabilitation," as an indication for rebuilding their towns and villages, when they heard the laments of the desert, and the destruction of the homeland.

Today, the center of various Sebastia organizations is in the United States. The most productive organizations are those of the people from Sebastia, Govdoon, Aghdk, Khorsana, Gavra, Khorokhon, Yarasar, Gamis, Khandsar, and Giurun. These organizations have amassed approximately three to four thousand dollars, as a result of sacrifices they made for many years. Not one organization to date has undertaken a serious survey to correctly assess the number of its surviving compatriots or their conditions. All the organizations present approximate numbers without any correct data. Only the Govdoon Compatriotic Union has attempted to collect correct statistics, but this has been incomplete. Conducting a census of their compatriots is a fundamental task, which these societies must not ignore.

At the present time, the number of survivors from Sebastia province must reach 25,000. The "New Sebastia Cooperative Union" is only a few years old. It publishes a monthly bulletin called "Alice." The organization members work enthusiastically. It has put forth the question of establishing a town called New-Sebastia in Armenia. It has sent Mr. Aram Zartarian there to study the local conditions, and to conduct negotiations with the Government of Soviet Armenia.

The project is still in its early stages. Efforts are being made to establish a collective will and understanding. New-Sebastia is the current slogan in the United States. The demand for a homeland gets stronger by the day.



A group of laborers from Govdoon

The deported, exiled and wandering Armenians, be it those from the cities or villages, see the need for a safe place in order to be able to work and become productive and self-sufficient. Today, there is a safe place, where the industrious Sebastia Armenians will be able to dedicate their physical and mental strength towards

creative work. They will be able to go to Armenia, the real fatherland of the Armenian people.

The “Union for Reconstruction of Sebastia” has chapters in New York, Chicago, Binghamton, Philadelphia, Providence, Detroit, Los Angeles, Brockton and Springfield. There are chapters also in Bolis, Aleppo, Beirut, Athens and France.

In Aleppo, there are 250 Sebastia Armenians, thirty of whom are male adults, the rest are women, girls and children. The Organization has leased a large building, which has forty rooms and pays 200 Ottoman gold pieces for the rental. All the Sebastia Armenians live in this building, each one paying one mejid (a silver coin worth 84 cents of the 1930s, 100 ghurushes equaled one mejid, Tr.) rent. In the same building, a carpet-weaving factory has been established, having thirty sets of weaving machines, where seventy women and girls work. The factory produces 300 carpets and sends them to the United States to be sold.

The “Giurun Compatriotic Union” has leased a large piece of land and has built a building with a large number of rooms, which have been provided to destitute Giurun Armenians. The organization collects 2 tahegans (same as ghurush, Tr.) for rent without exceptions. The number of people living in these rooms is approximately 700. The Organization has a budget of 350 Ottoman gold pieces.

The “Organization for the Reconstruction of Sebastia” has performed a significant custodial task, especially, for the last survivors and orphans of the desert. It is a lively and strong organization, with a budget of 600,0000 Franks.

Obligation and sacrifice have been the foundations of the compatriotic organizations. During the last ten years, these organizations have played a large roll in helping the survivors. They have participated in the volunteer movement on the Erzerum and Kars fronts, at the Sardarabad and Gharakiliseh victories, and on the Cilicia front. These organizations have collected orphans and refugees, provided shelter and nurtured them.

The Govdoon Reconstruction Union

A group of enthusiastic young Armenians from Govdoon had, for the first time, formed in November of 1911, in Providence, Rhode Island, the “Govdoon Educational Union,” which later was renamed the “Govdoon Reconstruction Union.”

The Union had undertaken, with great sacrifice, the construction of a water mill in their village. The members were also planning the construction of a school.

Aghdk and Govdoon were the two villages, which excelled in construction work. Today, the ruins of the structures remain weeping.

After The Massacres and deportations, hopelessness and depression have engulfed everyone. People have turned away from compatriotic organizations.

All mourned the death of their loved ones and relatives, and waited for news from them.

In Providence, a small group has remained from the “Govdoon Reconstruction Union.” Most of the members had left the factories and gone back to the fighting fronts in the Caucasus as “Gamavors—Volunteers.”

The National Volunteer Movement had shaken everyone. From America, with vengeance in their hearts, young men boarded ships everyday in groups to hasten to the battlefields. America had played an unprecedented role, not only in the volunteer movement, but also in every aspect of activities in the last decade.

Once in a while, letters started arriving in America from the Middle East. The curtains of hell opened up and the outcry for help was heard.

In November 1915, Murad arrived in Tiflis. He described everything he had seen with the bitterness of an eyewitness.

In 1916, the volunteer groups were disbanded (by the Russian Government, Tr.). Murad gathered his compatriots and went to Erzinga.

Some of the volunteers returned to America and again went to work in the factories. Desertion and disunity alienated everyone.

Fortunately, several clear thinking young men grasped the seriousness of the situation, hearing the outcry from the deserts,

went from city to city and convinced the Govdoon Armenians to assist their refugee compatriots. On April 15, 1917, the first convention of the “Govdoon Reconstruction Union” was held.



**Govdoon Reconstruction Union's delegates to the last convention in
The United States of America**

Here are excerpts from the report, sent to me by Mr. Mgrdich Kshigian, who was one of the active members of The Organization:

“All empty talks had ceased, and everyone’s glance was directed towards the desert. Towards the end of 1917, the Volunteer Movement started again. This time, the war front had

changed. The majority went to Cilicia, and entered the 'Eastern Legion,' which consisted of 4,500 members, most of whom were Armenians, under the French command. For this reason, the group was later named the 'Armenian Legion.'"

From the Caucasus to Cilicia, many fine men fell in the battlefields as a result of their self-sacrifice.

Every event reflected on and affected The Organization, so it started to weaken again.



Legionnaire Haytaian

In 1919, the third convention resolved to strengthen the task of assisting the refugees. Heart-rending letters multiplied, and the needs of the refugees became well known. To delay help was considered a fault. The Central Executive of The Union instructed

the Egypt Chapter to send Garabed Kshigian and Sahag Chimenian to the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Garabed Kshigian had already sent his younger brother, Ghugas Kshigian, with the same purpose to the deserts where there still were refugees. The Central Executive in America gave its approval for Ghugas Kshigian to continue his work as The Organization's representative. Approximately 100 people received monetary help regularly. Another chapter was formed in Adana in order to organize the task of assisting the refugees.

The conditions of the survivors eventually improved, they got married and established families.

In 1920, during the good days of the Armenian Republic, everyone's mind and heart were in peace with the knowledge that their assistance had saved the lives of the refugees. The Union had finally been put on a firm ground.

Marriage had become the main thought in the minds of the youth.

The "Govdoon Reconstruction Union," at present, has chapters in Pontiac, Massena, Detroit and Providence. Outside of America, there are chapters in Bolis, Egypt and France. The number of dues-paying members is approximately 250. The Organization has a cash amount of \$6,313.00.

The Organization shows great compassion and sacrifice towards orphans, refugees and the indigent. Right at the present, The Organization wants to rescue seven orphans from the Kurds of the Samusadu region, with the help of Turkish shepherds.⁴⁹

The ninth convention of the "Govdoon Reconstruction Union" took place in America on December 26, 1926, in a very spirited disposition.

A group of capable, serious and decent young men have dedicated themselves to work, and have made every effort to uphold the name and trust of The Organization.

* * * *

⁴⁹ According to Marnos Hagopian of Aleppo, the orphans are: Takuhi Lghrian, Antara Kehlejian, Akad Mndodian, Shakeh Begian, Azniv Kshigian, Mariam Der Khachadrian and Mariam Jolian.

The Murad Fund

The “Murad Fund Committee” was formed as part of the “Govdoon Reconstruction Union.” Its purpose was to immortalize Murad’s memory. Through the help of a political organization, it has become a compatriotic undertaking.

The purpose and bylaws of the “Murad Fund” states:

Article 2: Open up a factory in Govdoon and name it after the immortal Murad. In case of unfavorable political conditions where Govdoon does not become part of Armenia, and a place in Armenia is not built to be called Govdoon, the factory is to be built in Armenia’s Capital.

Article 3: In order to realize the above purpose, The Fund must have a capital of \$10,000 to \$15,000, \$10,000 of which shall be used for the building and equipment, and the remaining amount shall remain for general expenses.

Article 4: The “Murad” Factory will have a local governing body, ratified by the Central Committee of The Organization.

Article 5: Factory apprentices will be accepted with or without tuition.

Here is the general picture of the situation.

The changing political conditions, from day to day, could possibly confront us with unexpected situations, such as the loss of our independence and the dangers of assimilation. We need to be alert and ready to meet the challenges facing us.

The “Govdoon Reconstruction Union” is a place with a purpose for existence, and a station for knowledgeably following world events and political conditions in order to prepare us for sacrifice once again.

* * * *

Names and Number of Surviving Family Members of Govdoon Villagers

<u>Currently living in Govdoon</u>	<u>Number of Family Members</u>
Andonian, Muso	2
Kasparian, Mikael	5
Kibarian, Hovhaness	2
Mikaelian, Mardiros	2

Living in Syria

Hagopian, Elmas	1
Hagopian, Marnos	1
Muradjian, Elmas	1
Tngrian, Mgrdich	1
Topalian, Krikor	1

Living in Greece

Azadian, Araksi	1
Azadian, Melik	1
Begian, Maritsa	1
Begian, Zaruhi	1
Chlbakian, Harutium	4
Kasparian, Yeghia	1
Kralian, Dikran	1
Kzirian, Vosgian	1
Meneshian, Zhnev	1
Muradian, Arshag	1
Msrian, Aghajan	4
Pilavian, Aram	1

Living in Bulgaria

Chivian, Hovhaness	1
Giurgenian, Bartogh	1

Giurgenian, Dikran	1
Giurgenian, Kevork	1
Giurgenian, Mardiros	2
Giurgenian, Parsegh	2
Giurgenian, Tateos	4
Giurgenian, Yeruvant	1
Meneshian, Hampar	3
Meneshian, Iknadios	3
Mikaelian, Hampar	1
Muradian, Kalust	2
Muradian, Simon	3
Muradian, Krikor	1
Muradjian, Krikor	1

Living in Rumania

Asarian, Avak	4
Asarian, Melik	4
Asarian, Nshan	1
Kralian, Hayg-Aram	1
Kralian, Yervant	1
Kshigian, Mirijan	1
Kshigian, Nerses	1
Kshigian, Mkhig	2

Living in Egypt

Chimenian, Harutiun	1
Chimenian, Kevork	1
Chimenian, Sahag	1
Chivian, Dikran	1
Der-Khachadrian, Mikael	2
Kralian, Harutiun	3
Mikaelian, Garabed	4
Mikaelian, Krikor	2
Mikaelian, Mikael	1
Reizian, Arakel	3
Reizian, Harutiun	2

Living in France

Andonian, Krikor	5
Bedigian, Mariam	1
Bedigian, Nazeli	1
Bedigian, Suren	1
Bedrosian, Mgrdich	2
Changovian, Vosgi	1
Garabedian, Hagopos	3
Ghngoian, Aghavni	1
Ghngoian, Lusig	1
Hagopian, Mushegh	3
Hagopian, Simon	1
Hagopian, Vartan	2
Hagopian, Vosgian	4
Hagopian, Zartar	1
Kralian, Mandrig	1
Kralian, Mariam	1
Kralian, Zvart	1
Kshigian, Ghugas	6
Kshigian, Nerses	4
Kshigian, Sahag	1
Kshigian, Vahan	3
Kshigian, Vartevan	5
Kzirian, Yezegel	1
Mikaelian, Armenag	4
Mikaelian, Taniel	3
Minasian, Mikael	2
Mndotian, Kevork	2
Mndotian, Novart	1
Muradian, Hagop	1
Muradian, Mariam	1
Muradjian, Boghos	3
Mushmulian, Hovhaness	4
Mushmulian, Kevork	1
Nurian, Alexan	1
Nurian, Hampar	4
Tarpinian, Nshan	1
Tngrian, Araksi	1

Tngrian, Yeghia	1
Tngrian, Vartkes	1
Zarzorian, Tshkhuhi	1

Living in the United States of America

Andonian, Aram	5
Andonian, Artin	1
Andonian, Bartogh	3
Andonian, Mardiros	2
Andonian, Sarkis	1
Andonian, Simon	2
Asarian, Sahag	4
Azadian, Ghazar and Dikran	3
Bailian, Mgrdich and Sahag	2
Bajakian, Hovnig	2
Bajakian, Kalust	2
Bajakian, Khachig	2
Bedigian, Harutiun	4
Bedigian, Kapriel	3
Bedigian, Levon	2
Begian, Arshag	5
Begian, Bedros	2
Begian, Manug	3
Begian, Mardiros	3
Begian, Markar	4
Begian, Miss Mushgunag	1
Begian, Mosig	3
Begian, Nshan	5
Begian, Sarkis	1
Begian, Simon	1
Chêlbakian, M.	2
Chêlbakian, Mesrovp	2
Chêlbakian, Vahan	2
Cheozenian, Kevork	4
Chivian, Hovsep	5
Chivian, Nshan	3
Dakessian, Garabed	1
Dakessian, Garabed	5

Dakessian, Hagop	4
Dakessian, Movses	1
Dakessian, Vahan	5
Dakessian, Vosgian	1
Der-Khachadrian, Garabed	5
Der-Khachadrian, Manug	4
Giragosian, Mirijan	5
Giurgenian, Hagop	1
Giurgenian, Hovhaness	2
Giurgenian, Vahan	4
Hagopian, Bedros	6
Hagopian, Hampartsum	6
Hagopian, Norsho	4
Haytaian, B. and Krikor	6
Haytaian, Nshan	4
Kasparian, Margos	3
Kasparian, Mikael	5
Khachigian, Takvor	4
Kibarian, Khachig	2
Kibarian, Simon	6
Kralian, H.	1
Kralian, H.	5
Kralian, Yervant	1
Krikorian, Kapriel	4
Kshigian, Artin	1
Kshigian, Bedros	4
Kshigian, Garabed	3
Kshigian, Kevork	2
Kshigian, M.	3
Kshigian, M.	4
Kshigian, Manug	1
Kshigian, Mgrdich	1
Kshigian, N.	1
Kshigian, Sarkis	4
Kshigian, Simon	3
Kzirian, Kevork	4
Kzirian, Toros	3
Mikaelian, Antranig	2
Mikaelian, Kevork	1

Mikaelian, Mesia	4
Mikaelian, Mgrdich	2
Mikaelian, Nshan	4
Mikaelian, Shahgiul	2
Muradian, Barsig	1
Muradian, Dikran	2
Muradian, Magar	4
Muradian, Mardiros	1
Muradian, Minas	3
Muradian, Nshan	3
Muradjian, Bedros	3
Muradjian, Ghazar	3
Muradjian, Khachig	4
Muradjian, Mgrdich	4
Muradjian, Nshan	3
Muradjian, Sahag	5
Muradjian, Sarkis	5
Muradjian, Tateos	1
Muradjian, Varaztad	4
Murtadian, Garabed	6
Mushmulian, Hampartsum	3
Mushmulian, Krikor	4
Mushmulian, Mardiros	2
Mushmulian, Nazaret	3
Mruzian, Yermia	1
Nrian, A.	1
Nrian, Harutiun	4
Nrian, Mirijan	1
Nshanian, Arshag	4
Nshanian, Kalust	4
Orhnadsian, Armenag	2
Orhnadsian, Krikor	5
Orhnadsian, Miss Mariam	1
Pilavian, Harutiun	4
Pilavian, K.	2
Pilavian, Karekin	2
Pilavian, Vahan	4
Poladian, Drtad	1
Reizian, G.	2

Reizian, Harutiun	1
Sarksian, Khachig	3
Shamoian, Mardiros	2
Shamoian, Sahag	2
Shamoian, Hayg	2
Sirabian, Artin	2
Sirabian, Hagop	2
Sirabian, Hovag	6
Sirabian, Mardiros	3
Sirabian, Mihran	5
Sirabian, Serovp	4
Stepanian, Hovhaness	2
Tarpinian, Hagop	1
Tarpinian, Nazaret	6
Tarpinian, Shmavon	6
Tarpinian, Y.	1
Topalian, Barunag	2
Topalian, Boghos	3
Topalian, Garabed	1
Topalian, Garabed	4
Topalian, Khachig	3
Topalian, Krikor	5
Topalian, M.	1
Vartanian, Dakess	3
Vartanian, H.	1
Vartanian, Kalust	5
Vartanian, Khoren	4
Vligian, G.	1
Vligian, Nshan	1
Zarzorian, G.	4
Zorian, Nshan	3
Zorian, Sarkis	3

Living in South America

Asarian, Asar	1
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Living in Bolis

Aghababian, Mrs. Dalig	1
Azadian, Tateos	4
Bedigian, Boghos	2
Chivian, Hetum	4
Chivian, Magar	2
Hagopian, Mrs. Nora	2
Kralian, Harzevart	4
Kshigian, Arshag	1
Kshigian, Mgrdich	2
Kshigian, Sarkis	2
Kzirian, Hovhaness	1
Meneshian, Vosgian	4
Muradian, Aghavni	1
Muradian, Mikael	2
Muradjian, Karnig	6
Muradjian, Khachig	3
Nurian, Hayganush	1
Orhnadsian, Simon	1
Reighian, Tshkhuhi	1
Reighian, Srpuhi	1
Sirabian, Apkhar	2
Tngrian, Parsegh	1
Vartanian, Mikael	1
Vligian, Mirijan	3
Zobian, Mateos	1
Zorian, Gostan	2

Total Survivors

In the U. S. A.	398
In Armenia and elsewhere	188
Bolis	55
Govdoon	11
Unknown	5
Total	657

Prior to 1915, the population of Govdoon was 3000 people.

Deceased in the USA, starting from 1910

Chivian, Harutiun
Giurgenian, Vartkes and Vahan
Hagopian, Kapriel
Kralian, Tateos
Kshigian, Garabed
Kshigian, Margos
Muradjian, the eldest son of Kok from the Guguz family.
Mushmulian, Toros
Paylian, Simon and Senig
Tngrian, Tavit

END

