

SALMAST

Ashot Allahverdian

Ashot Allahverdian, a professional beekeeper, and admirer of literature and poetry, in particular, was born in 1927, in Rostov, Russia. In 1933, his father, an Iranian national from Salmast, moved his family and settled in Haftvan (a village in Salmast province, in Iran).

Ashot completed the elementary education in the Haftvan local school where he learned Armenian and French. There were no secondary schools in Haftvan, so, from 1942-45 he attended evening courses of Arakel Babloian (well-known intellectual) who devoted himself to the sacred mission of teaching Armenian history and literature. After that, Ashot's education was self-acquired.

Since 1940, his teenage years, Ashot participated in the cultural events of the region as an amateur writer and actor in some theatrical plays. He also participated in the social life of Salmast as the Secretary of the Salmast Executive Council. In 1949, Ashot married and moved to Tehran, where he lived until his last day.

Since 1954-55, he collaborated in the Iranian Armenian periodicals such as youth magazine *Mankapatanekan*, *Tsakhavel (Broom, humor)*, *Lusaber (Illuminator)*, and in the newspaper *Alik (Wave)* until the end of his life. He wrote poems, comedies, short stories, and patriotic poems for children.

Ashot Allahverdian was working on an extensive research of Salmast. He tried various projects, knowing that he may not be able to finish all of them. Unfortunately, his historiographical work was completed only after the author's death by his son, based on the handwritten materials and notes collected for years.

On June 2, 1993, Ashot Allahverdian died. He was buried in Nor Burastan cemetery of Tehran.

The publication of this work was a cherished dream come true, owing to his son, Vartkes Allahverdian, in memory of his parents, Ashot and Aytsemik Allahverdians.

M. Georges

Salmast

By Ashot Allahverdian

Brief Historic Observations and Memories from Salmast

Salmast is one of Iran's regions with a historically rich and glorious past. This formerly province of Armenia was a spring for modern political and ethnic affairs with its beautiful land,

culture, landmarks, and heroic unparalleled battles. It is worth mentioning that the Vartanants Battle, the invasion of Khanasor, liberation movements, and frequent fights over the monastery of Derik (against Turks and Kurds), took place near this region, as well as the battle of Dilman (against Turk Khalil Bey), which ended with the glorious victory of commander Nazarbekian and national hero Andranik. There is a great expanse of heroic battles that left Salmast with unforgettable imprints and awakened pride in the heart of each Armenian.

Some scholars accept that the battle of Avarair occurred in the province of Artaz (the immediate cross border with the Khoy area), but they deny that the chapel on the hill (in the same area) belongs to Vartan Mamikonian's grave. Nevertheless, historical facts are evident enough to show that the battle of Avarayr undoubtedly took place in Khoy (Her) region and on the shores of our historic river Tghmute, which being turbid, never changes color. As for the chapel on the stillted hill, it encloses the holy ashes of commander Vartan, built by pious Christians to become a sacred place.

According to a legend, before 1828 mass immigration to Armenia, every year closer to the date of the Avarair battle, people from neighboring areas would gather in the chapel in honor and remembrance of the commander. The sacred chapel is destroyed, but the artifacts still testify our great heritage.

In 1981, the *Alik* newspaper published contradictory articles regarding Vartan Mamikonian's grave. Scholar Setrak Avakian's research of the aforementioned chapel's architectural structure is notable:

"The chapel was built according to the old Armenian architectural style. In spite of its small size, the chapel is noble because of its aesthetic majesty. It was built with stones at the base, but for the top part (especially the arches), bricks were used. The height is five sajens (15 arshins), and the width is three sajens. The small cemetery on the slope attracted many Armenians for prayers. But nowadays, it is like an orphan, like Armenians of Khoy who survived and took shelter there after the 1918 massacres."

It was known that the chapel, (when still standing), was researched by S. Avakian. The graveyard is also noteworthy. Apparently, other martyrs who happened to be companions, were buried next to the commander's chapel. This makes sense because the corpses of Vartan and his companion princes could not be separated and were buried in Khoy's public graveyard. However, even if it is hard to accept, the evidence of the graveyard coincides with the legend and is believable.

In our humble opinion, if any monument does not have dates of establishment, or was destroyed during some political affairs or natural disasters, then the best way and only source that helps us to come to a conclusion is our sacred legend.

In spite of the numerous disasters, massacres, burglaries, and emigration, Armenians in Atrpatakan were able to keep their Apostolic belief along with churches and education through perseverance and courage. The Monastery of St. Thaddeus, the splendid churches of Khoy and Salmast are living evidence proving that Armenians lived in Atrpatakan for thousands of years.

As scholar Norair Mamian states:

"Armenians settled in Atrpatakan at least 2000 years ago and lived there in peace with their fellow compatriots. Thus, Atrpatakan with its ancient past, was closely connected with different periods of Armenian history, starting from kings Artavazd and Vagharshak, the two founders of the Armenian Apostolic Church St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew to the newest era of the Armenian pursuit of freedom. The center of the Atrpatakan diocese was the Monastery of St. Thaddeus in province of Artaz for a long time. In 1833, the center was moved to Tabriz after

the province was emptied because of 1828's emigration. The preclacy of Atrpatakan is the oldest among all the Iranian-Armenian dioceses."

Also, H. Goroiants, in his historiography of "Armenians of Persia" (edited and published by the Armeniologist Tachat Poghosian in 1960, after the author's death) proclaims:

"For a long time Salmast was a separate diocese. From there, bishop Hakob participated in 1316's religious meeting by the order of king Oshin."

Here are some significant notifications from Goroiants's historiography:

"Shah Abbas forcibly evicted Armenians from Tabriz to New Julfa along with others from different Armenian provinces and from Old Julfa. There, all the people from Tabriz gathered in one neighborhood, which is still called the Tabriz Town. In 1617-1618, again, Shah Abbas forcibly evicted people from Tabriz, Maku, Khoy, Salmast, Urmia, etc., linked with other Armenians from various areas of Ardabil and Atrpatakan, and drove them to Isfahan. Until his death (in 1629), this tyrant dragged Armenians out of Atrpatakan and drove them to the Isfahan area seven to eight times." After Shah Abbas' death, aforementioned Armenians from Atrpatakan moved back to their land.

Unfortunately, some think that the Armenians of Atrpatakan -- more over Northern Iranian Armenians in particular -- settled in Iran in the beginning of the XVII century, which was Shah Abbas' time. There have been reports on the radio and TV about this issue, trying to prove that Armenians in Iran were only present for 400 years. That is an ignorant misunderstanding. Yes, in some cases, when it comes to Armenians' ethnic life and activities in Northern Iran, it is understandable to mention 400 years of history. However, it is unfair to ascribe 400 years of Iranian Armenian history in general, for it does not correspond with rigorous historical sources.

Mr. Andranik Sarian, a renowned scholar, examined this issue in his broad work, *The History of the Charmahal Province*. Refer to the section bellow:

"As opposed to the time period of the Armenians in Charmahal that began from the XVII century (the times of Shah-Abbasian emigration), the Iranian Armenian history started from far past. It has been often stated that Armenian colonies were established in the days of Shah Abbas the Great, however historiographical data prove the opposite."

Geographic location and Nature of Salmast

This historic province is situated between Khoy and Urmia. It borders with Tachkistan (from the West), and the Kurdish area called Soma (from the south). The city Khoy is located in the northern part, and Salmast is Khoy's administrative subordinate. From the East, the blue surface of Lake Urmia is visible. The historic name for Urmia was Kaputan, which means Blue Sea. The view of Urmia Lake is impressive especially from a summit. Being on a highland, it seems to flood the whole province from a slight motion. In the spacious desert, there are numerous villages next to each other with their fruit and poplar gardens. Mountains of Salmast are beautiful due to their tremendous appearance, green meadows, and colorful flowers. From every rock and every bush, you can hear the sounds of partridges, reindeers, and the tender babbling of frosty springs that gather and make tiny streams and flow through rocky ravines.

The southeastern mountain range that originates from Lake Urmia, embraces the whole province as a loop. From the mountains, a few are well known: Aghvan (that has cuneiforms on its left slope), Shitalat, Pir-Choban, Karnearugh, Araul (bordering Tachkistan), Shipran, as well as, cliffy pick Pir-Chavushe, that lay in the North (near village Khantakht). This cliffy mountain

is not attractive from a distance but as you get closer, the magnificent look of the carvings fills you with reverence. Some explorers assume that those carvings belong to the Sasanian era, because the name Ardashir Babakhany is mentioned on one of them.

There is a massive fortress with arched ceilings that leaves the viewers with mystic impressions and reminds them about its glorious past. On the summit of Karnearugh there is another castle similar to it, which makes researching difficult. The corrosive breath of centuries and disasters have destroyed the stony stairs, making it impenetrable.

In the desert, next to small villages, there are hillocks that carry the evidence of the pagan era. One of the hillocks called Butamin is known to be a Zoroastrian temple, and according to archeological research, it contains information of historical importance. There is a famous Arabic minaret known as an architectural obelisk for its enchanting splendor. The Salmast earthquake of 1930 destroyed this charming monument along with many others. The only thing that survived to be a heritage of the acclaimed past was the magnificent St. Gevork church of Haftvan that endured the earthquake. This victorious landmark is a proof of both our architectural viability and commitment to our apostolic faith.

After the earthquake, Salmast transformed at once. Dilman with its crooked streets became a modern city named Shahpoor (now Salmast). Also, many villages were updated with wider roads and spacious gardens. This remarkable land is also known for its mineral waters, mines, and crystalline springs. Passing by the western hillside, viewers can see the Givlarda valley near Derik with lush green meadows. This green valley between high mountains attracts people with its diversity of vegetation and delightful aroma, filling the hearts of all people with tender joy. Here is where Avo's proclaimed cave stands (from Raffi's "*Sparks*"). This cherished birthplace of the highly talented Raffi gave birth to many distinguished people such as intellectuals, philanthropists, and public figures whose biographies and activities will be provided below.

As we have mentioned, after the earthquake, Salmast gradually recovered and recomposed. Along with massive reconstructions, ethnic life in Salmast flourished and prospered. This period was the time for cultural prosperity. Besides preliminarily live institutions, in each and every village, new cultural unions, as well as theatrical and athletic groups were established. Some villages are mostly noteworthy for their cultural events and actions of allegiance, e.g. Haftvan, Mahlam, Payajook, and Kalasar. Every village had its own library, church, and school. Haftvan's "Goloshian" and Mahlam's "Rostom" libraries were known to have a vast variety of literature, and to periodically perform theatrical events, athletic contests, and lectures in different fields, such as art, literature, agriculture, and national holidays. The Armenian Salmast was a flourishing province until the days of World War II.

Mines and Mineral Waters

Out of all mineral waters (ponds), a few are popular: Derik's and Zndasht's hot pools, the latter contains a large amount of sulfur. The water flows out of a stillted rock and pours in a large basin where people can swim. According to the local inhabitants, this water heals fevers, allergies, headaches, and stomach disorders. There are various springs with different medical properties. The most delicious of all is Narzan spring, that splashes from the northern rocky feet of the Pir-Chavushe mountain and contains a significant amount of sparkling water. There is a similar spring in the gorge, closer to village Ajvaj, in the prairie of Sadaghian. Let's make a

note of Zola river, known as Salmast's Nile. It originates from western mountain ridges and flows directly through the valley dividing into various directions. Zola is a water supply for many settlements. The main part of coal, marble, and chalk mines is located in the southeastern and northwestern mountains. The lithosphere has been waiting for serious scientific research for millennia.

National and Historic References

Since former times, majority of the Armenians in Atrpatakan were settled in Salmast as opposed to other areas with Armenian population. However, there are no statistics from past that include data about the exact number of Armenians. We can collect information from demographics, estate notes, and parchments retained by the local government's archives that were translated by jurist Avakian. Here are some brief extracts from the translation:

"In the times of governor Ghazi Bey, the Persian King's subordinate from village Goharchin-Ghala, a plenipotentiary superintendent of Kurdistan to the border of Van... some Christians reported that the governor of Ghala Sanglari performs a number of violent actions against our people. Taking this into account, Ghazy Bey, a higher up ruler sent a maamur (an inspector) to that province and ordered to revise the previous amount of taxes according to the documents of the year 600 (hejri). He also ordered them to make sure that not a single dinar was taken away from legal taxes, and everything was to be written and presented by name to Molla Yusuf Pishnamaz (the son of Salmast's governor). He also ordered them to hold Mejlis to clarify this issue and report personally to him, to validate/authenticate to avoid future violations against the Christian's estates."

The investigating officer, after performing some improvements, got letters of gratification from both sides and sent them with reports to Ghazy Bey, who at the end validated the documents, affirmed by his officials.

"Signatures"

Zaman Bek (from Gharadagh), Molla Yusuf Pishnamaz, Ali Akbar Khan (Judge of Atrpatakan), Pirghuly Khan (Relative to a Tabrizian), Rahim Khan, Hasan Agha Sura (military clerk of Atrpatakan), Ibrahim Bek, Taghi Bek, etc."

It is noteworthy that the government, considering the fact that Armenians are the majority in the area, allows them to have an Armenian governor (Sar Parast) who being employed by government, had to report to the local judge about the arguments (disputes) between Armenians. Here is another passage: "The hillock Butamin belongs to the Church St. Thaddeus along with the valley beneath Butamin through the Gavlan village. There are two gardens and a mill in Haftvan that are the source of income for the church officers. Cursed are those who take an extra dinar from the estate of Butamin without the consent of the chief judge and the Armenians. The trading right is reserved for church representatives. The St. Gevorg church, in Haftvan, was built earlier than other churches and is known to be the oldest, and Butamin was known to be the holiest. Thus, it is essential to honor this church for it belonged to the followers of Jesus before Islam appeared... All servants of Jesus were killed by Jews and Nestorians and were buried there as stated in the document written in the year 600 (hejri)."

Thus, as it appears in the Butamin deed of purchase, Armenians were the majority of the population of Salmast. After the victory of Christianity, on the hillock Butamin, the monastery called St. Thaddeus was established and was known to be the oldest. Considering its historical value, the pious Armenians of Salmast rebuilt a chapel (after the church was destroyed) in the same area, next to the Spitak (white) spring, encircled with a fence. Although unattractive in appearance, the chapel inspired every pilgrim with some mysterious reverence. Every year in June, the chapel welcomed numerous crowds of pilgrims. After getting collapsed by an earthquake, it was rebuilt by the Haftvan community and survived until 1944. Now it has become arable like many other landmarks.

The hillock Butamin was a subject to archeological research (expedition) twice. First, it was in 1915 by the immediate permission of government; and the second, in 1933 by Jewish archeologist, named Barnat who was represented by a public figure from Salmast, Hayrik Salvarian. According to Salvarian, as a result, many statuettes and ancient (antique) pieces were found. Yet, the search was stopped (surprisingly) by the government. Now this historical hillock area is under the control of Iranian Archeological Institutions.

Historically written sources and ancient landmarks are evident that Armenians were in Atrpatakan, especially in Salmast, Khoy, and near St. Thaddeus for many centuries. These names were mentioned in historiographical writings multiple times. It is important to note that in these provinces and in Urmia, people spoke the same dialect (called Salmastsi) as opposed to the northern provinces of Atrpatakan (Gharadagh, Mujhambaar, Maragha), where the dialects are different from each other. As we know, northern Armenians in Iran emigrated from Caucasian Armenia after invasions of the Seljuks, and later Persian kings. Thus, nowadays Armenians in Iran are recognized to be Northern and Southern Armenian, and for this reason they have two representatives in the Iranian Parliament.

1828 Emigration from Salmast

The Russian-Persian war of 1827-1828 ended with Russian victory and the treaty of Turkmenchai (near the Miane city). One section of the treaty is about the immigration of Armenians. According to the passage, Armenians were given five years to sell their properties and go back to their motherland. This was with the consent of Tsar Nicolay and Prince Abbas Mirza, also with the knowledge of St. Echmiatzin's bishop. The religious class of Echmiatzin and the national representatives were immediately involved in the sacred work of repatriation by giving orders to religious and public leaders of Atrpatakan and providing unconditional support. Presenting details, certainly, is beyond our purpose, but we found necessary to give brief information related to Salmast.

Prince Abbas Mirza was absolutely against the Iranian Armenians' emigration. He promised favorable conditions and privileges in ethnic-religious life to prevent them from returning to their Caucasian motherland. Yet people were determined. Abbas Mirza could not tolerate the unyieldingness (obstinacy, intransigence) of Armenians and sought out suppressing methods. That is why he ordered to hinder people with the help of the local government, clergymen, as well as foreign consuls. In some cases, people's possessions were thrown from the carts, making it hard on repatriants. Abbas Mirza's two fervent participants were Shahbazian (in Tabriz) and Bishop Israyel (in Salmast), the priest of St. Bartholomew monastery in Aghbak. These fraudulent people (praised by Goroiants) committed many violent

actions against emigrants. Archbishop Nerses Ashtaraketsi, being in charge, due to Catholicos Yeprem's illness, overly indignant at Bishop Israyel's negative attitude towards emigrants, wrote a letter to the military leader, general Paskevich:

"I was notified that Bishop Israyel who was assigned by the Echmiatzin office to appropriately manage and support the emigration, leaving unattended behind his Christian priorities, with insidiousness and imminence, prohibits Armenians to go back to Armenia and has expectations. I asked the military leader general Chavchavadze to write the Commandant of Khoys to send Bishop Israyel to the Echmiatzin Monastery (under military surveillance) to be presented at the religious court".

We found it appropriate to make a note of two remarkable names. First is the Armenian Colonel Lazarian, who was assigned as the Mayor of Tabriz after the Russian occupation of 1827. He never hesitated to utilize his devotion to our people's emigration. As for the priest Ter Hovannes Hovsepian, he rejected the prince's offer after he was given 1600 franks by Abbas Mirza (through Nazar Shahbazian as a reward), and was promised the same amount annually from the royal court to ban the conveyance of migrants.

According to Goroiants, 45,000 people migrated to Armenia, mostly from Atrpatakan. They were settled in Yerevan, Nakhijevan, and Artsakh areas. The archives of Russian government indicate that 70,000-80,000 Armenians migrated across Araz, but this number is not credible.

The majority of migrant Armenians were from the villages: Hakhveran, Aslanik, Qubik, Chara, Hambanava, Ajvaj, Jeyvajuk, Hovadar, and Urrkava. Also, a big number of people migrated from the Kurdish province, Soma. The rest of the Armenians came down to settle in the valley villages.

The ruins of Armenian churches and other monuments are still in the referred areas.

The Climate and Nature of Salmast

The climate in Salmast is mild. In the summer time, the temperature reaches 30-32 C. Nights are cool and the sky is so transparent that the Milky Way stretching from south to north is visible clearly on the blue screen. Natives call that "Darmantsanik" (scattered straw). According to the legend of the Milky Way, St. Sarkis, while taking away his beloved on his fiery horse, was riding swiftly and his bag of straw opened and scattered in the sky. It is still in the celestial vault. There is an Armenian mythological legend that explains this differently. Based on the legend, Vahagn, the god of war, stole hay from the Assyrian god, Barsham (Bel). On his way to Armenia, he flew through the sky and the bag opened, spreading hay around. It traced a white belt, which is called "Hay-Stealers Way" in Armenian.

The name "Milky Way" comes from Greek mythology according to which, the goddess Hera, was breast feeding Hercules when the milk spilled in the sky creating the Milky Way.

Winters in Salmast are cold, temperature falls from 25-30 C to below 0. People say, sometimes snowfalls and breezy storms make wild chamois and the rein deers intrude villages nearby to find food and shelter. In such cold winters, villagers give hay and other food to hungry animals. As for the mad dogs, they instinctively feel their wretchedness and guard them as if there are wolves. When the blizzard weakens, satisfied animals return to the valleys.

This province has a picturesque nature and remarkable places. When passing through the green valleys and elevated mountains of Yonjalghi, your heart will be delighted by the

pleasant scent of colorful flowers and plants, and full of desire to skip along as a butterfly through the meadows, enjoy the honey nectar, and fill the whole mountain range in your soul.

The broad valley Khorkhora is located in the south of Tamar village. Travelers to Soma must pass its rocky tracks and rest on the grassy shores of the crystalline stream.

The high peaks from both sides of this valley are always covered by the veil of milky clouds. From the cliffy hollows, two parallel falls drop, which fill the canyon with their deafening noise as they crash on rocks below.

The rippling fields, gardens, meadows, and swampy reeds turn green in the spring (majority of which are in the Butamin area), and the exhausted flocks of wild ducks come down to swim softly in the shallows.

About the Fortress on Mt. Karnaroogh Legend

This overhanging mountain, south of Mahlam, guards the surrounding mountainous land with its stern appearance. From a distance, through the grayish clouds, three precipices are visible on the northern extensive slope of the mountain. People say, long ago a spirited and courageous prince named Zareh lived in the ancient castle with his beautiful daughter. She was so charming and spread her fame throughout the world. The three princes heard about her enchanting beauty and fell in love with her. Each of them sent ambassadors to Zareh for a proposal. Zareh thought that whoever she choose, the other two unsatisfied princes would hold a grudge, and his daughter's marriage could cause a bloodshed. He asked his counselors to find a peaceful way to avoid such tension. The reasonable and brave beauty asked her father for permission to regulate her marriage. The next day she announced her will. "Whoever can climb up the top of the mountain through one of the precipices first, showing that he loves me more, will become my husband."

The princes accepted her condition with fondness and tried to climb the steep precipices, rushing to reach her castle on the peak of the mountain to earn her eternal love. It was not easy. The curly haired, brave prince, who was the most flexible, reached the peak and conquered her heart. They lived happily ever after. The two other princes fell into an abyss and perished for love.

There are many legends about the chapels of Salmast that we are going to share later.

Educational and Public Figures

According to the verbal sources of the Armenian villages in Salmast, there were schools in the 1880s. Haftvan had two schools on the way to the village Ula, and another to threshing floors. Also, Payajuke, Kalasar, and Mahlam villages had schools where five teachers from holy Echmiatzin were teaching through Grabar (old Armenian). Back then, the Armenian Diocese of Atrpatakan was a subordinate of Echmiatzin. Of course, there have been schools in Salmast since long time ago, but they were not separate from churches. Psalms and "Narek" served as textbooks. Before the spread of new Armenian, teaching was executed by clergymen and what made the process hard was the language of teaching Grabar (which was different from the dialect spoken by students). That caused disappointment and some students gave up their

education. As Raffi mentioned, harsh (Ter-Todikian) methods were used in education, as for the “falahka” the harshest method was not helpful, moreover, it affected their psychology, mental development, and character.

We want to express our gratitude to Vartan Goloshian and Agripasian. These honorable public figures made big changes in the schools of Haftvan and other villages. They opened new schools and libraries, traveled through villages, and lectured on Raffi’s stories and novels, filling the hearts of young people with patriotism. In the short period of time, they gained popularity and soon became the initiators of Salmast’s enlightenment through their devotion to our nation.

In that time, a great landowner and court representative, Rashid Calabai was the tax collector in Salmast. Due to his priorities, Rashid was in conflict with the Haftvan people. He tried to forcibly raise taxes, asking one out of five (as in the other provinces), instead of the usual one out of eight. Haftvan and a number of villages, according to the deed of purchase (year 600), used to belong to Armenians, but the next kings ordered to conquer the villages and make them become royal properties.

Rashid Calabai, having in mind to suppress for the people of Haftvan, bought this village by deceit. He took advantage of the people and treated them with cruelty. As for the Haftvan people, they did not want to obey. Rashid, knowing their stubborn and impertinent nature, implemented a conspiracy. He invited the trustees and landowners from Haftvan to meet at his house and “peacefully” solve the tax problem. At the meeting, he repeated his proposition of the one out of five. It was rejected. Rashid did not accept their rejection, especially their boldness and ordered to arrest people. To take them into the pantry and torture them until they accept the new agreement.

The next morning, villagers led by Goloshian had filed a written complaint to the police against Rashid’s violations. The police promised to send an investigator to examine the problem. The inspector never came to Haftvan even after repeated appeals. It was obvious that the sheriff was bribed by Rashid and ignored people’s issues. The local officials respected Rashid for his position.

Seeing the indifference of the local authorities towards the people of Haftvan, the second night, Goloshian made a decision to defend the rights of the community using any means, even putting his life in danger. For that purpose, he gathered a group of brave young men, giving them strict military orders to surround Rashid’s house (in the western part of the village, on the way to Khosrova). A group of athletic young men, armed with sticks, watched over. A brave hearted woman named Sona, was brought down into Rashid’s yard, wearing a chador to avoid suspicion. The skilled lady opened the gate, letting in the crowd in. They arrested Rashid’s people, freed the Armenian prisoners, and took Rashid from his family room to the bakery (in the corner of his yard). The villagers did not touch the bakery full of goods and pricey items. They attacked Rashid and kicked him from left and right. He was pleading to Goloshian, as an honored teacher, to ban the beating. Goloshian knew the right time very well. He finally decided to stop the beating and the crowd obeyed him just as soldiers would obey their commander. Rashid fell on a chair, beaten and sweaty. Goloshian soon said, in a threatening tone, “From now on, you don’t have a right to step in Haftvan because all the people here are full of rage and harbor a grudge for your unreasonable acts. You have no choice. I want to advise you before it is too late. The villagers have unanimously gathered today to demand their fair right. They are asking you to sell Haftvan to them, the same way you bought it from the palace, otherwise your life will be in danger.”

While Goloshian was standing with a gun in his hand, and elderly woman entered the room crying, with her two stout sons. They attacked Rashid and beat him with their fists. Rashid was looking at Goloshian ignorantly. It became clear that the old lady's husband, bidza (old man) Ako, had died in the pantry from torture. Rashid worried because he knew that if the Armenians complain, the prosecutor would never ignore his crime. Also, he worried that he would be fired by the Palace. He begged not to report to the government and promised to pay the price of his blood. Goloshian, on his part, assured that the woman will not complain. The next morning in Dilman's authority's office, Haftvan was sold for 1500 tumans, 500 of which was a down payment from villagers, and 1,000 was lent by the Tabriz patriarchal prelacy as a temporary debt.

We wrote this story based on information provided by H. Melikian, whose great grandfather was one of the captives. However, we were not able to find a single document in Haftvan's old records. We assume it disappeared or became illegible. There is a review that we found in 1968 *Amenune Tareguirk* (page 435).

"The leader of the diocese in Atrpatakan, Archbishop Sukias, in 1884-85, bought Haftvan of Salmast for villagers. But the villagers didn't pay the full amount." Taking into account Goloshians activities in education and public affairs (especially his devotion and effort in making Haftvan a property of the locals) against the royal representatives Rashid Kalabai, the library (formerly called "Grasirats"), was renamed after him by the proposal of Arakel Babloian. Members of the Committee were Abraham Khudikian (Chair), Hovhannes Barseghian (Secretary), Mnatsakan Babloian (Treasurer), and people from various villages such as; Grigor Shalaoian, Aram Khachatourian, Mkrtich Galoustian, and Hayrik Salvarian. The proposal was accepted by the Committee.

"In 1888, Goloshian and Agripasian took with them Karapet Kulakszarian, from Salmast and entered the country, armed. On the way from the monastery St. Bartholomew, in the Gyaduk, they were attacked and killed by Kurds. Only Karapet was able to survive and return to Salmast. This murder left the Armenian community of Salmast in sorrow."

Here is how Karapet explains his survival from his inevitable death. "We were guests of the Monastery St. Bartholomew." The Archimandrite Bazuni, based on his words and attitude, did not seem to have a good character. Goloshian tried to persuade him to open a school within the Monastery, so that the children from surrounding villages could attend. The education of the new generation was a necessity for Goloshian. Nevertheless, Bazuni opposed Goloshian, insisting that "...Our nation needs robbers, burglars, assassins, rather than educated people, teacher! The school will not save us, you should act like a gangster against a gangster and a savage against a savage. I will not let any teacher enter and open a school here as I never did in the past." Goloshian was indignant and said in a threatening tone, "We'll see". He was displeased of the superior's narrow-mindedness and did not thank him while leaving the monastery. Half way through the trip, we were attacked and as a result, Goloshian and Agripasian were killed."

We also want to bring in a distinguished scholar, Yervand Ter-Mktrchian's opinion of Bazuni from his book *The Treasures of Vaspurakan*.

"...Bazuni was not willing to be a satellite of religious authorities. He never took their weak instructions seriously. He was against opening schools in a country full of burglary. Thus, he would threaten educated clergymen and prohibit the opening of new schools. He wanted to become the local Armenians' Mar Shimon or Sheikh Hamid, to be able to complete and become equal to the Kurds. With that, the local Armenians could have their religious group leader in his

image. Bazuni had those characteristics, thus the Kurds called him “Uldrum”, meaning lightening.”

In a different passage, Mkrtchian wrote, “When in 1888-89, Goloshian and Agripasian were traveling from Persia to Van. They were hosted by the superior of St. Bartholomew, Bazuni. After, on their way, they were murdered. Bazuni was arrested and accused, and somehow put in jail. After being a subject to court executions, he was freed and went back to his previous position. In 1889, he was transferred to monastery St. Thaddeus of Araz, and held office until 1900, when he was killed either by the people of Salmast or Khoi.”

According to a source, proving that Bazuni was arrested after Goloshian’s murder, we can conclude that Bazuni could not tolerate Goloshian’s plans of opening a new school within the monastery St. Bartholomew and was filled with hatred towards him. When it comes to the killers of Bazuni (people from Salmast or Khoy), Mkrtchian’s predictions were groundless and unfair because they were based on people’s negative opinion of Bazuni. However, Mkrtchian himself described Bazuni as a man of bad intention. In our opinion, Bazuni was killed by his followers.

The New Era of Education

After the loss of two renowned meritorious public figures, another distinguished intellectual came to the arena to substitute them. Mkrtch Avetisian was an educated chemist, a gifted writer, and a praised leader of the “Armenakan” Party.

Avetisian, after he arrived Salmast, devoted himself to its social, cultural, and educational life. Starting as a teacher and then as a coordinator, he brought a new spirit to the provincial youth, encouraging them with the ideals of patriotism and national liberation. The schools initiated a new era of education because of him. He would travel through different Armenian provinces of Atrpatakan and gain honor and acknowledgment everywhere. Avetisian was tall and handsome, with a black goatee, adding a unique expression to his mystic appearance. He soon conquered Salmast with his kind nature and righteous soul. Trying to reach his ideals of unity and patriotism, he put his efforts to overcome all disagreements and problems in the area. Taking to account the fact that the province had the biggest Armenian community in Atrpatakan (12000 according to Norayr Mamian), Avetisian planned to open a central secondary school in Haftvan. After consulting with the council of the diocese in Tabriz, he wrote to St. Echmiatzin’s patriarch, Khrimian Hayrik. He was given a positive approval from Echmiatzin to bring his good ideas to life.

Although a spacious lot was designated for a central school in Haftvan, after delays, the desired secondary school was established in Tabriz. Considering the fact that Tabriz, being an educational, trading, and craftsman center of Atrpatakan, would attract more and more Armenians from surrounding areas. Having this said, M. Avetisian is known to be the initiator of the Armenian secondary school in Atrpatakan. Due to his efforts, this school experienced a virtuous era rewarded with a generation of alert patriots.

In 1896, while retreating from Van, Avetisian’s armed group (along with Martik from Hnchakian party and one of the Dashnak leaders, Peto) consisted of 300 people and was united with unarmed provincial nomads. Near the monastery St. Bartholomew, they were attacked by the Turk solders and the Kurdish Chieftain Mazrik Sharaf’s gang. The battle took three days. Tigran of Shatakh was able to escape and notify Avetisian (in Haftvan), asking for help.

Avetisian reported to his close friend, the brave and revolutionary Armenak Yerkanian. He immediately led his regiment to the battlefield. Unfortunately, on the way, they clashed in a fight with the Kurdish armed forces and were forced to retreat.

After the Armenians used their last bullet, they were massacred. Martik and Peto, the spirited heroes of the Dashnaktsutyune, were killed.

In 1935, Tigran of Shatakh (mentioned ahead) was promoted as a manager of Haftvan. This is what he stated about the battle:

“When Avetisian saw the monastery St. Bartholomew from a distance, he sent three spies to make sure there were no military forces there. While waiting for them to return, Avetisian told the parable of Van: “Then crows from Noah’s arch sat on dead bodies and forgot to return”. But when we arrived, we found the bodies of our three spies under the gates. Later, we heard the shooting and realized that we were surrounded. We panicked. I heard the voice of Avetisian (who was injured): “Armenak! If you were with me, we would never be in this condition” (he was talking about Armenak Yerkanian). This is when Tigran fled in the dark to Salmast to ask for help, but as we know, Yerkanian’s brigade was involved in a fight with the Kurds and could not help.

After Avetisian’s death, the activity of the Armenakan Party declined. Armenakan’s, having their center in the villages Haftvan and Mahlam, had a noticeable number of followers in 1889-90, and were active in Salmast. Meanwhile, in the Saramerik and Payajuke villages, the operating parties were Hunchakian and Ramkavar. They were not as successful, having a few intelligent leaders with no experienced politicians. It is apparent that no matter how deep they were devoted to their ideals and principals, without a versatile and flexible diplomat leader, they would soon lose their political and ethnic influence and identity. This was the period of ethnic anarchy in Salmast. There was neither assurance nor a peaceful atmosphere. Some adventurers, pretending to be party leaders would suppress wealthy Armenians. Some negative members motivated by other parties became imposters, tending to ruin the reputation of the Dashnaktsakans. In spite of the number of supporters, the Dashnaktsakans did not have an office in Salmast. Thus, they could not improve the unstable situation or create a harmonious and safe social life.

In these unfavorable conditions, it was normal for the cultural and educational levels to decrease. Arguments, collisions, and fights with guns between parties would often occur there. Cruel and unsophisticated actions like this would take place even in pilgrimage areas. Their vulgar actions and irrelevant accusations against each other were severely harmful for the reputation of our race in the eyes of our local government. The community of Salmast was in chaos because of religious conflicts (among the Catholics, Protestants, and Apostolic churches) from one side, and struggles between political clans from another. In these unbearable times, the archimandrites Kirakos Aghajanian and Mesrop Papazian (the father of the renowned novelist, Vartkess Papazian, who was in Atrpatakan in 1891) were killed.

Although there were a few Catholic families. Salmast’s people stayed loyal to their Apostolic beliefs, and the actions of the Lazarists (Catholics) were limited in the Assyrian community. The situation in Salmast went out of control. To take our race out of that chaos and shameful condition, we needed someone to lead them to salvation. And the salvation arrived...

In 1890, the ARD (Armenian Revolutionary Dashnaktsakans), considering Salmast’s geographically favorable location (to connect with Vaspurakan for military and communication purposes), resolved to coordinate the revolutionary actions there. There were certainly other

convenient areas for the party's organizational actions, however, they were not as reliable for the transportation of weapons due to the strict surveillance of the government.

The local government was tolerant towards Aghbak and the monastery St. Bartholomew (cross borders of Derik), knowing that Armenians are loyal to the Persian government. Although Bahri Pasha of Van would often provoke the Chieftain Sharaf Bek and his agents to ruin the monastery of Derik and massacre the insiders, the brave Haydukees and Armenakans were able to save the historic monastery.

The monastery of Derik was located on the top, near Dushmana Canyon, on the border of Turkey and Persia. Now ruined, it was never known to be an architectural masterpiece. Previously, it was a church named after the Blessed Virgin. Before the first mass emigration of 1828, the village Derik was pure Armenian, and the monastery was known by the name of the village. The monastery played a historically significant role as an anchor for the faithful Haydukee groups, especially for transporting ammunition and helping the people of Vaspurakan (persecuted by Turks). This sacred monastery is another cherished landmark for the memories of the mournful yet splendid days.

In 1890, the Dashnaktsakans initiated their first procession to Salmast. They truly can be called the first missionaries of the Armenian national movement in Salmast.

The first Dashnaktsakan activist who settled in the monastery Derik, was Movses Ishkhanian from Karabagh. He became a superintendent of the monastery and rebuilt the ramparts with the help of other Armenakans. The revolutionaries Chato, Shero, Karo, Gevo, Levon, Nicol Duman, Hovsep Arghutian (Yervand/Ishkhan), Ms. Satenik Matinian (Tsaghik, later Arghutian's wife), etc. gradually gathered in the monastery.

Knowing that this group could be dangerous for them, the Kurds started attacking Derik. In the battle of Dushmana Canyon; Chato, Shero, Ishkhanian, and Nicole showed outstanding courage. The first three fell as heroes. After Ishkhanian's death, the Archimandrite Tavaklian (Zaki) took his position. Others followed him to Derik: Sarkis Mehrabian (under the name of a servant), Sako of Sevkar, Peto Abamelik, Jallad, Sarkis Ohanjanian, and others, about 50 people. They built walls around the monastery, warning the Turk authorities who sent 500 men to destroy them. For this reason, Tavaklian went to Tabriz and most Armenakans left Derik. A few brave men; Jallad, Vartan, Levon, Shero, Chato, Sako of Sevkar, and others stayed in Derik. The Kurds attacked the monastery. Karo and Gevo died in the battle. More than 400 Kurds surrounded the monastery, while Haydukees only had 17. They fought for six hours. Women gathered around Satenik Matinian to polish bullets and hand them to fighters.

Derik stayed still for years as the first stronghold of the Armenian Revolutionary Dashnak party, being across the border of Turkey, served as the main chain of communication with Armenia. Also, by the initiative of Movses Ishkhanian, the Armenian community of Haftvan purchased Derik. Yet, in 1928, it was sold to a Kurdish Chieftain by the order of Tabriz.

The aforementioned friends gathered in Salmast and started their national, public, and revolutionary actions. In 1898, by the commission of the party, Samson (Stepan Tadevosian) entered Salmast. He was a cultured and distinguished gunsmith. Having a Russian admission document, he was privileged as a merchant. He was trusted by the local authorities and was never suspected to be a revolutionary, thus, he was able to freely travel through Khoy, Tabriz, Maku, Urmia, and other Armenian regions, and even Vaspurakan (of course by the party's commissions). As a merchant, he was supported by the influential businessmen from Salmast, i.e. Budagh Manaserian, Karapet, and Avetik Arzumanians. Because of his nature and courteous

attitude, he was honored also by the local authorities and gained the name Khan by them. In the short period, he gained the trust among families of Salmast.

Simon Khan evoked great progress in Salmast's academic and cultural level. He increased the number of teachers in the schools and taught himself. For the first time in the village Kalasar (the main center of his activity), and other villages, Simon Khan organized theatrical groups (amateur), unions, and initiated Women's Charity Union. His popularity grew as he worked ceaselessly for the ARD party, traveling from village to village and city to city. He was able to resolve conflicts between different parties, cleared the community life from the uncompromising elements, and brought new groups of young patriots to the arena. With Simon Khan's efforts, Salmast regained its peaceful and safe lifestyle.

In 1904, Andranik with his partisans Murad of Sebastia, Kerri (uncle) of Yerznka, Kaytsak (lightning) Arakel, Avo, Sepuh, Seyto Poghos of Mush, Smbat of Mush came to Persia. He first came down and then moved away from the monastery of St. Thaddeus and went to Salmast. The Armenian people of Salmast showed exceptional hospitality to the distinguished hero and his friends. People gathered to salute them from Dilman to the village Kalasar, throwing flowers on their way. Andranik's group led by Samson, stopped in front of Raffi's residence (still standing back then), to honor the writer's remembrance, and continued the way to Kalasar. There was an unusual blast in the village, people were playing traditional instruments, dhol and zurna, and sacrificing animals.

In a few days, Andranik was notified that the Turks were waiting in Julfa to arrest him. After consulting with Samson, Andranik changed his route and went to Baku through Astara, and then Tiflis.

The Haydukees gradually entered Persia through Derik. Nicol got in a fight with the Kurds a few times. The most memorable was the engagement of October 2, 1895, where he was named Duman (storm) by his enemies. After that heroic battle, Armenians and Kurds were impressed by Nicol's courage. Here we want to describe the Kurds and their women in particular. They have a specific ethnic character and patriarchal traditions. They would sing the songs and honor heroes, even if the hero was an enemy. They composed songs about the courage of Andranik, Kerri, and others. Once in the battle of Derik, Nicol positioned in the storage area of Natian (on the verge of the village) to shoot the Kurds. No one could come closer, because the mow was in an open field, and in the day light Haydukees could easily shoot from inside. In the darkness of the night, the Kurds encircled the mow and started a fire from every side. Soon they saw the smoke coming out of the burning hay. In rejoice, they thought that Nicol had no chance to survive. Yet, the Kurds were greatly amazed, noticing that this iron man was able to escape by jumping through the rocks and reuniting with his friends. Kurd women, watching from the distance, were surprised seeing the outcome of that incident, and started to laud him.

This is not a human,
This is a hurricane.

After this heroic incident, the name Duman (hurricane) was attached to Nicol.

As we know, the Haydukes fought against Turks and Kurds many times around Derik, and always took victory. Due to this book format, just a few episodes of what happened are written. In addition, our heroes during the liberation struggle, ignoring fatal danger, carried ammunition through monastery to their blessed country with a great endurance. Let their luminous memories stay in our hearts forever. There was an exciting episode in those heroic

days that we read about in “Alik”. It is a touching story but can also be encouraging for the new generation, especially for the Armenian girls.

After midnight, the battle started against the Turk Askyars and Sharaf Bek. The praised heroes Sako of Sevkar, Movses Ishkhanian (who died in the scene), and Chato, were among fighters. There were numerous migrants in the monastery. Soon Sako notified Peto that the bombs and bullets were not enough to resist the enemy’s attacks. They needed to send someone to Salmast and ask for help (from the local forces).

“But who to send? We are already few in numbers,” answered Peto, holding his head in his palms.

“Me,” they heard a lively voice full of sincere feelings and uncontrolled anger.

It was the bellman’s daughter Osik.

“You?” asked Sako, rubbing his injured forehead and looking delightfully to her face.

“Yes, me!” A sixteen-year-old pretty girl stepped forward, with black eyes, erupting fire.

“Can you ride a horse?” asked Peto, examining her daring face.

“Better than any Hayduke...Kurds don’t shoot women,” she said, chewing her upper lip, and showing abomination towards their enemies and her willingness to take instructions.

The council decided to send the bellman’s daughter to Salmast, for there was no other choice. Soon, Osik rode on the back a horse furiously through the roundabout path to Salmast. Right when she left the gates of monastery, a few Kurds followed her riding their fierce horses as fast as a lightning. A sudden shot overthrew one of the horse’s backs and then the second rider, who was very close to Osik. And, the abrupt shots kept coming from an uncertain direction, each time wounding one of the Kurds riders. It was Argam, a stout young man who positioned behind a black rock. Making sure that the girl was safe from the pursuit, Argam set right his rifle and returned to the monastery.

“Good job”, proudly exclaimed Osik’s father and kissed his forehead.

The enemies started attacking again. The Haydukees threw their last bombs and confused the Kurds. The air was filled with flocks of black smoke, the bells of Derik started to ring with a pathetic bliss. There was no panic, no sorrow in the sad melody of the bells. For a moment, a mysterious silence reined in Derik. It was the bellman. A sudden shot rolled him down from the height of the dome. The mournful peals echoed in the Dushmana canyon and calmly quenched in the sunset mist.

It is sunset.

“The noise of the enemy’s pointless bullets sound and disappear.” Sako tells Peto that there are a few bullets and bombs left. The enemy’s purpose is to massacre the migrants, not to destroy the monastery. If not today, then tomorrow it will happen. They had better take advantage of the darkness. After a moment of strange silence, the council decides to leave the monastery to Khanasor. They burry the bellman in the front yard of the monastery, next to the holy grave of patriot Movses Ishkhanian. Shero and Chato are gone.

“There is no time for a long speech, we have to transport women and children to the monastery St. Stepanos the Marthyr,” says Peto of Van.

He signals Argam to leave with them. Argam was sitting on a rock, holding his head, and was lost in his thoughts. He lifts his head and looks at Peto with tearful eyes.

“No, I have to stay and wait for Osik.”

The Invasion of Khanasor

The massacre of Avetisian and his people greatly grieved the Armenians especially ARD's. Everyone was filled with rage towards Mazrik Sharaf Bek and his tribe for these barbaric actions against the Haydukes and the innocent migrants.

The idea of invasion belonged to Duman, the initiator and one of the active executors. The organizational office was designated in Salmast's Haftvan, Mahlam, and Payajuke. Here is the fragment from the "Alik" periodical.

"... There was an issue with keeping a secret about 300 volunteers from the local authorities from Salmast and other challenges like feeding them and getting basic necessities, such as clothing, shoes, socks, magazine, etc. Women of Salmast took care of those things with zeal. Unfortunately, their names were not recorded anywhere." *

Although the women's charitable fund of Tabriz supported this plan, the accounting job was trusted to the community of Salmast. It took great patience, and strong will to coordinate and care for 300 people with different backgrounds, psychology, character, and provincial dialect. The challenging job to train them to carry arms was executed with fondness by devoted people. On top of everything was the secret transportation of ammunition from the depots of Russia through Caucasus (Julfa or Gharadagh) to Tabriz and from there to the last haven, Salmast. Our Haydukes faced the inevitable danger of being arrested or even sentenced to death, and carried both physical and psychological difficulties. They disregarded the danger and took commission to achieve their cherished goals and desires of patriotism.

There was a young lady, named Maro, who was teaching at Payajuke and also participated in the organization of the Khanasor's invasion. She was in a romantic relationship with Karo. Thinking that their relationship will shake Karo's will to join the Khanasor invasion, she made a fatal decision. On December 2, 1896, she committed suicide, leaving a letter.

"You who preferred the liberation of Armenia over our happiness, you who sacrificed your love to higher ideals, do what you've promised. Put your life on the altar of our holy motherland. Let the poisonous revenge fill you as Bapken Siuni. Fulfill my last will. That's the only thing that will comfort my grave. I had the courage to burn all the bridges. Now you are free to act. Forgive me. Many kisses. Give my last greeting to our friends."

The whole community of Salmast was in shock because of Maro's tragic death. Everyone admired her brave and polite nature. Karo hurried from Tabriz to Salmast and joined the invasion after he swore on Maro's grave. On the night of July 24, 1897, volunteers under the command of Vartan swore solemnly in Haftvan and walked under the raised flag of the ARD party that Maro stitched. Then the regiment approaches. They slowly depart through the steep Mt. Araul. After they got closer to the field where Sharaf Bek's army was camping in more than 250 colorful tents, simultaneously started shooting, and attacking them. The Mazrik's run in a great panic. The wild cry of women comes through the dense smoke of burning tents.

Karo never returns...

*The central supreme council of the ARD party met regarding the invasion of Khanasor, which passed unanimously. However, the Vanetsies (people of Van), were against it.

A. Amurian

The Graves of Nine Martyrs

Whoever had been in Mahlam's graveyard, should have certainly seen the nine holy graves of martyr Haydukes lay next to each other. No one can pass them without emotions. Their tragic death touches the hearts of every visitor. During every grave benediction, the villagers visit their graves, bend, pray on their knees, and burn incense as a part of the religious ritual, to show respect with a great reverence.

After 1897's invasion of Khanasor, the tragic incident happened in the village Mahlam.

The Haydukes escaped from the chase of Tachik gang, arrived to Salmast and were given a shelter by an old, kind woman. They were exhausted, hungry, with their feet bleeding from rocky roads, and clothes torn to pieces. The old women took good care of them as loving mothers.

It did not last long, because even "the walls have ears". The landlord of Mahlam reported to the judge of Khoy and Salmast, Zargham ol Molk and recommended to arrest the "ghachaghchies" (bandits) hiding in the village after he was informed about this secret. The old woman heard about this betrayal and told them to leave as soon as possible and look for a safer place to hide. The Haydukes immediately started to get ready. Meanwhile, she wrapped some bread and cheese in the floral tissue (drying her tears), so they could survive until God leads them to freedom.

The Haydukes hurried to Jevajuk mountain, skipping through the gardens. Zargham ol Mulk immediately sent a command led by the traitors and Haji Khan, armed with two cannons. 300 Kurdish gangs from the neighboring province, Soma, joined the troops. They besieged Mahlam village. Right after the army was notified that the "ghachaghchies" left the village and rode horses to the nearest Jevajuk. The Haydukes noticed that they were being pursued by the government army, and there was no hope of survival. Their injured feet only let them reach an old fortress and hide.

The army started shooting from cannons. The Haydukes never responded. They had enough bullets to kill a reasonable number of soldiers, yet they decided not put the village in danger (although they were betrayed). They would never confront the local government.

Haydukes came out of their hiding and announced that they never had anything against the Persian government, that the weapons they carried was for self-defense against the mob, and that bearing arms was not prohibited by the law of Persia. However, if there was any suspicion by the government, they were ready to hand over their guns and surrender.

The heartless Haji Khan did not accept the Haydukes' proposal and ordered to shoot them. Then, he ordered to behead the Haydukes and sent the heads to Zargham (in Kohnashar). The soldiers brought the beheaded bodies to Mahlam and threw them on the square. The priest Vartan, with a great bitterness, buried the Haydukes' bodies in a funeral procession.

When the Archimandrite Khachik (who replaced the Catholicos) claimed the heads of the Haydukes from Zargham, he responded that the Tachic government carried them. In reality, Zargham ordered to take photos of the heads and bury them in one of Kohnashahr's old streets. The Archimandrite Khachik Datian, could not ignore this tragedy, so he addressed the religious leader of Atrpatakan, Bishop Ayvastian. He filed a complaint against the local authorities, with a plea of the Russian Consuls and British Consuls. As a result, Haji Khan was fired and the heads of the Haydukes (killed by Persian and Kurd soldiers) were returned to the Armenians. On October 30, there was a funeral once again. * The traitors Stephan and Khus Arakel, by the

verdict of the party's central committee in Atrpatakan were executed on January 3, 6 p.m. *Droshak* wrote, "The committee's verdict regarding the other traitors will never stay in secret."

The other traitor was undoubtedly the landlord of Mahlam. One night, the Haydukes invaded his house and murdered his whole family. They did not pity even the baby, thinking that he may inherit the father's blood. The names of the nine Martyrs are; Khachatur Harutyunian, Mokatsi Harutyunian, Ulemezi Stephan, Khizakhntsi Hayrik, Shatakhetsi Gabriel Muradian (Munjo), Nahapet Yeghiazarian (Nakho), Harutyune Khachatourian, Mokatsi Galust Galoian, and Avetis Ohanian (who's portrait is absent).

The Migration of Salmast from 1914 to 1918 and the Battle of Dilman

The Armenian population of Atrpatakan experienced hell during WWI. In December of 1914, massive groups of Armenians migrated to Caucasus in panic, predicting the invasion of the Ottoman forces in Atrpatakan. Left helpless, the Armenian families of Salmast, Khoy, and other provinces were in a great depression: the winter frost, women's panic, and the sad cry of children, in that fatal moment seemed to be no hope of survival. People did not know what to do, where to go, where to seek refuge, especially when in the scary winter storms, they could not even leave their homes. The alarming bells of the churches would ring ceaselessly about the ominous danger. The horrified and anxious crowd was moving spontaneously to the church courtyard which was full of people.

"Hurry! The Turks have reached Derik..."

The horse-back groups approached Kohnashahr, to prevent the enemy's progress, so the local people could have time to move.

In shock, the national leaders were encouraging people to leave everything except for some food and warm clothes and move in the direction of Caucasus.

The caravans of the migrants got on the roads to Khoy and then Caucasus. The mountainous roads were closed because of the heavy snow. Elderly people could not walk through snow that was up to their knees, and they would fall and even die. Some children died from frost bite in their mother's bosom. Mothers buried their children in the mounds of snow, plentifully sobbing to leave their breathless bodies for wolves.

Leaving behind the dead bodies of their loved ones, the group of migrants parted to Tabriz and Caucasus.

Yet, not everyone could migrate. Those who stayed in their homes, were massacred by Turks. In Salmast alone, 800 people were beheaded in Tigran's basement, near Haftvan's mill. It is noteworthy that most Persians pitied their Armenian neighbors. They sheltered Armenian families and because of this some of them survived the horrible massacre.

About 300 families found refuge in Dilman city. In the beginning, the Turks showed tolerance to the Armenians. Some naïve Armenians left their shelters for daily errands. This was planned by the Turks to gather information about the approximate number of Armenians. Local Persians knew the Turks' intension and were warning the Armenians not to leave their homes and show themselves.

One day, a group of drummers in military uniforms went from town to town, frequently stopping to grab attention. They announced that before sunset, all the Armenians must gather in the Tavari Meydan (the cattle square), to go to Kohnashahr for road building. They also warned local Persians not to hide the Armenians, otherwise they would face punishment. The

local Persians knew about the potential danger and tried to persuade the Armenians not to show up, but they did not want to cause problems for the Persians. 800 people gathered in the designated location. Even the priest Vartan Mamikonian, a pious and simple-hearted old man was in the crowd. There was a dexterous young man, named Armenak from Aghbak. He approached the priest and said, "Father Vartan, this drumbeat does not sound like it is taking us to work, it rather sounds like death. What do you think?"

The priest answered, "Don't worry, their taking us for work."

Armenak replied, "Then what's the point of taking old people like you?"

The priest did not answer... Armenak's point made sense.

From that tragic massacre, only two people survived: Armenak, who at the time was 25, and Assyrian Yusuf Khashlo. In 1945, Armenak (whose grandchildren live in Tehran), told me this real story as an eyewitness.

"In the sunset we gathered in Tavari Meydan, where on Fridays people sell cattle. A few armed Askyars (horseback riders) drove us away through the western gates of the city. We lined up, and soon 30 soldiers surrounded us, as I thought for our own safety. The Askyars led us to Haftvan, as opposed to their announcement of taking us to Kohnashahr. We were passing near a deep canyon (in between Dilman and Haftvan) where the stream Dilman flows. It originates from the river Zola and supplies water to surrounding villages, but mostly Dilman. When we were near the canyon, I was anxious because if the Askyars were to kill us, the place was very convenient. But we crossed the stream with no incidents. The crowd was reassured, especially Ter Vartan, who was stroking his gray beard, realizing that we had just survived an inevitable loss. We arrived in Haftvan. The shiny, marble dome of the church St. Gevorg welcomed us in the moonlight. Ter Vartan stood for a moment, crossed himself and murmured a prayer. One of the Askyars saw that and swore in Turkish. Ter Vartan crossed himself again after the silent prayer. This time, the Askyar yelled and slapped the priest. The poor priest fell in the frozen stream on the side of the road.

To be honest, back in Dilman, when we were gathered in the Tavari Meydan, I had decided to run away. Once, I tried to walk away as if I was going to the restroom but one of the soldiers saw me and hit me on my head with the handle of his weapon. I touched my wet head, it was bleeding. After this barbaric incident, I was determined to run away from those wolves.

We passed through the village. The village once full of Armenians, where from every house and cabin, laughter and songs would be heard, now has become desolate, and a silent graveyard. I could hear the meowing of hungry cats and howling of mad dogs.

In front of Zako's door, a group of dogs were fighting for a skull that had nothing left but long gray hair. The soldiers were watching the dogs lacerate their owner. For a moment, I was ready to run, but then I thought about the hungry dogs, they were dangerous.

We passed near Kazar's house, one of the wealthy people in the village, and known to have good wine. The Askyars had obviously found Kazar's pantry, got drunk, and were in imaginary heaven. We heard female voices, crying and begging for help, coming through the wild and impudent laugh of the Askyars. They drove us like livestock to Ojagh's huge front yard with tall fences. It was the last house of the village. To the west, there was Haftvan's mill and a house called Tigran's Bagh, big enough, with an excellent vineyard, a spacious basement, and huge casks. Later, I noticed that they were going to behead Armenians there. I first looked around Ojagh's yard. I was examining to find a convenient way to escape. Unfortunately, the walls were too high.

We shivered under the walls to take a breath. Everyone was so tired. Soon, a group of Tachics approached us. They took 200 people with them. For a moment, we were horrified, for the soldiers drove our people, treating them harshly as if they were livestock being taken to butchery. Soon they took another group. Meanwhile, I came closer to Ter Vartan.

“Father, do you think they are taking people to kill them?”

“I don’t think so son, if they were killing our people, we would’ve heard the shooting.”

“Isn’t there another way of killing them? I am from Aghbak, father, I know the Tachics well enough. They grudge a bullet, the beheading with a sword or a rock is preferable for them”

This time, the naïve priest became entangled in doubts. I never saw him again.

It was very cold. The watchmen made a fire on the long roof of the stable, which was on the way to Ula. They gathered around the fire from time to time, to warm their bodies. For a moment, all the watchmen gathered near the fire (on the western part), and that was the only chance to escape through the eastern side of the roof, hoping that the light of the fire won’t let them see further. I made a hole with my knife in advance to put my foot and climb to the roof. When the soldiers came to take our people again, I saw blood on their clothes. That shook me for a moment. Yet, I was certain that I would be free from the yataghan. I was determined to flea so there would be no doubts. For that purpose, I started watching the Askyars gather near the fire. When they started smoking cigarettes on their knees, I said to myself, “Armenak, run!”

*See *Droshak* 1899, Photos of the beheaded.

I put my foot in the hole of the wall and threw myself on the roof with supernatural strength. Then, I jumped from the roof to the street, the tumble shook them and they started shooting in the dark. It was already late. I fled through the alley and was in the field of Ula, on my way to the Kurdish village, Jevajuk, where I had an acquaintance from Aghbak. From a distance, I could hear shooting from every Turkish post in Haftvan. They may have thought that the Armenian forces attacked the village, hence they kept shooting uninterruptedly. Later, I noticed that taking advantage of the chaos, Khashilo (Assyrian) also fled from the butchery, where all the wine pits and wine jars were filled with the bodies and heads of innocent Armenians. In one of the wine pits there was the priest Ter Vartan’s beheaded body. Later, people from Mahlam took his body and buried it under the walls of church St. Zoron. His tomb stone is still there today.”

After beheading and shooting 800 men, the Tachiks forcibly took beautiful, Armenian women and girls from Persian families... and gave them to the Kurdish chieftains to ameliorate their relationship.

The Battle of Dilman

Dilman’s battle took place in the spring of 1915, in the spacious field between the villages Dilman and Moghanjughe.

In a few kilometers from Moghanjughe, on the way to Khoy, there are hillocks that are convenient for military purposes.

Recently, I have (the author) been reading a book, *Caucasian Front*, translated from Russian by Ashot Muradkhanian. In 1977, it was published in *Alik*. This book has commander Chernozubov’s memories of general Nazarbekov and the Commander of the first regiment, Andranik. We have to mention that Commander Chernozubov represented both leaders with

praise, showing their courageous nature in fights against the Tachiks, as well as in the victorious battle of Dilman.

Giving accurate and unbiased information regarding any historic event is the priority of each author. However, there are authors who tend to distort historic facts, according to their assumptions. Those authors are guilty in the eyes of readers and generations to come. There are many haters of Armenians among Russian commanders and even among new politicians and authorities, yet there are righteous thinkers, who uphold other nations with dignity.

“I can only praise the military actions of the first regiment. In the first fight, it showed exceptional bravery, always protecting the sides of the front position and accomplishing the hard moves of diversion. Our accomplishments in the fight for Ashnak, Brushkhan, Khanik, Kotur, Sarai, Molla-Hasan, Bilejik, and Garabel were greatly caused by the actions of the first regiment, led by the brave hearted Andranik. He was a courageous and experienced leader who had a clear understanding of the situation. As a tough commander, Andranik had a great reputation among the volunteer soldiers. Commander Chernozubov described a number of scenes of the battle where the soldiers and mainly Andranik showed courage: “I’ve always seen Andranik as a warm patriot, a soldier of Armenia’s freedom, and a battle-savvy person who deeply loves his motherland. Andranik had high popularity. People sang songs and composed tales about him. Russian and foreign newspapers would write about the astonishing and heroic deeds of Andranik. His life and military actions became the material for dozens of books and researches”.

As a result of Dilman’s battle which took three days, Khalil Bay fled to Tachkistan horror-struck, leaving behind the dead bodies of 2500 Turkish soldiers. The battle of the second incendiary division of Commander Nazarbekian and the Armenian voluntary first regiment was led by glorious national hero Andranik ...

The Migration of 1918

After three years of a relatively peaceful period, the provincial Armenians were exposed to a new danger in the spring of 1918. The Turkish forces, this time under command of Ali Ehsan Pasha, approached Caucasus through one line, and invaded Atrpatakan through another, to conquer Maku, Khoy, Urmia, and Salmast. In those critical days, the retreat from Van occurred, the unforgettable city that stays as a worshiped name in every Armenian’s heart.

Led by Levon Shaghzoian and other leaders, one part of the migrants passed Igdır to Caucasus and the others went through Kotur to Salmast and settled there.

Meanwhile, the Julamerikians (Assyrian highlanders) from Turkey retreated by their leader Mar Shimon’s command.

The military forces that retreated from Vaspurakan and the Armenian soldiers that stayed in Urmia and Salmast after the decomposition of the Russian army, played a significant role in the self-defensive fights with the Turks.

The Last Retreat from Van to Salmast

Priest Harutyun Ter-Mesropian described the pathetic retreat of Van in his book, *The Memories of Life*.

“We ultimately left Van with deep emotions... It is a great tragedy when you do not have the tiniest hope to return... The sight of retreat was extremely touching. We arrived in Kotur and waited for a delayed response from Khoy to pass Julfa. Meanwhile, Kurd Smko, known to be a hater of Armenians, took advantage, invaded Kotur’s inaccessible heights, and massacred the Armenians who lived in Kotola’s mountain gorge. In the morning, Smko attacked us. We fought back stronger than ever and Smko retreated in the most dishonored way. We lost a few people. Levon Shaghzoian was injured in his back. We were instructed to move to Khoy and Salmast. 22,000 people from Vaspurakan and 3,000 trained horseback men entered Salmast. Local Armenians showed hospitality, but first we came down to a wealthy Persian village, Moghanjugh. The Persians also showed hospitality. The villagers pitied the Vaspurakantsis that suffered and welcomed them with honest sympathy. They never hesitated to support us. We enjoyed their traditional acceptance. Right when we arrived to the village, five carts of excellent lavash was sent from Haftvan. The representatives of the Haftvan community came to meet us. They accommodated the soldiers near the church. Salmasttsi people and charitable unions supported the migrants as much as they could. There were a number of leaders in our group. First, there were only three from Vaspurakan. Later, when the Haftvantsis came, the number extended. The Vaspurakantsi leaders were Levon Shahzoian, Kosti Hambartsunian, and Commander Melkonian, as for the Salmasttsi leaders; they were Samson Khan, Arakel Vartanian, Samvel Mesropian, and the Assyrian leader, Agha Petros. They were the only hope for the migrants. To make a decision regarding the migrants, the supreme council met in Ghalasar. They decided to move to Caucasus. Although, Agha Petros insisted on going to the South and join the British, the council persuaded him to join the migrants with his fellow Assyrians and move to Caucasus.

The Assyrians showed exceptional courage in the fights against Ali Ehsan Pasha, yet Agha Petros (previously promised to provide 5,000 soldiers) could only present 500, bringing up groundless excuses. It was clear that he wanted to discourage the army because of unaccomplished plans to join the British. Agha Petros’ intention dissatisfied the Supreme Council. At the same time, the Jilos that migrated from Julamerik area along with the Armenians, had a powerful force both in Salmast and Urmia. Although they were capable of confronting Ehsan Pasha together, Agha Petros left his defensive position and moved his army to Urmia. Vahan wrote in his memoirs, “Meanwhile Andranik arrived in Khoy with his soldiers, he sent three messengers to Salmast to meet Levon Shaghzoian and Samson Khan, but they arrested the messengers and interrogated them separately” *

Vahan did not mention why Andraik sent the three messengers of Mush to Salmast. In the *Amenune Taregirk* (yearbook), we found the same episode with some differences.

“Andranik tried to proceed to Persia through Caucasus to join the defensive forces in Atrpatakan. He was barely near Khoy when under the Turks’ pressure, he was forced to retreat toward Zangezur.”

We gathered absolutely different opinions and data from periodicals and historians. Andranik and 500-600 Sasuntsies approached Khoy through the Persian Julfa, having in mind to proceed to Salmast and Urmia to join the British forces. However, he did not have enough power to cut through the Turkish army or contact the Armenian forces in Salmast and Urmia. Therefore, he retreated to Urmia and later to Zangezur.

As we mentioned above, according to Vahan’s memoirs, Andranik sent the three messengers from Khoy to Salmast. As we can see, the purpose of Andranik’s arrival to Khoy is

unclear. There are also contradictory opinions that distort both the historical and political truth, as well as question the real purpose of Andranik's actions.

Briefly, we met the same essence in several different writings: "Andranik arrived in Khoy, and under the pressure of the Turkish forces, retreated to Zangezur."

Why did he come? Why did he send messengers and why he retreated, or why did he write to Levon Shaghoian, asking him to help the migrants cross Caucasus? Nevertheless, the purpose of Andranik's urgent arrival to Khoy stays unanswered for many people because he could not ignore the severe political situation in Caucasus and could not neglect the fatal crisis in Armenia and try to join the British forces.

**Alik, 240, Vahan's memoirs*

In those chaotic times, the British general, David sent a delegation led by Commander Gibo to negotiate in Caucasus. Andranik, as a daring general, responded to Gibo: "Western Armenia perished. There are barely any Armenians left, but you keep quiet monk. Armenians have perished because of European countries. The hands of your kings are dipped in Armenian blood...

The truth is, England came to Baku for oil, Armenia has no value for them. The fox knows very well where the chicken coop is. You want to become the owner of that oil by paying for it through Armenian blood. I have a single desire, Mr. Gibo. I don't want your homes to collapse as ours did. I want the war to pass through London for two days, so the Turks just once undress your royal highness, your queen."

Commander Gibo and his captains perplexed for a moment. They supposedly had never been this offended.

* * * * *

Vahan's notes:

"The migrants from Salmast rioted. People from Rshtunik, Shatakh, Moke, etc. announced that they authorized Mr. Levon to decide what to do.

Levon stood up and presented Andranik's telegram where he wrote, "We have retreated from Karin... One end reached Sarighamish, where we'll be waiting for you to continue our way to Caucasus. If you won't make it on time, after we leave, the road will be closed... You will be in serious danger..."

The cavalry would watch over the roads until the migrants safely crossed. Because of the enemies pelting fire, certainly, many people died. Some migrants would collapse and die, leaving their helpless children with a hope that someone passing by will take them, yet many were slaughtered by the enemy. Some migrants were infected. Dead bodies were left on the roads. There was no time to bury them...

During this atrocious fight, after a moment of silence, a young man named Simon exclaimed, "Fellow compatriots! Don't be scared. The Turks retreated."

We were amazed because there was no organized force on our side to confront the Turks. Both battalions were decomposed and scattered within the migrants, concerned about their own families. This was a divine miracle...

Later, we noticed that the same day that we retreated from Salmast, Andranik approached Khoy from Julfa. The Turks decided to avoid being cut from the back and losing numerous soldiers, so they retreated to confront Andranik. Of course, it was a disaster to leave Aram in that critical moment for Yerevan, however as people say, "There is no evil without a

common good". Yes, it was for our advantage that Andranik left Aram. Because of him our people were saved from a massacre...Let his memory be glorified..."

*See Levon Shaghzoian, *Alik*, #240 (12,248), Vahan's memoirs

* * *

Migrants from Salmast arrived to Urmia, after having noticeable losses on their way. The ARD party immediately initiated the organization of the army units. The local Assyrian defensive forces and the Assyrian highlanders called Jilo (from Julamerik) joined them. During 1915 massacre they retreated with the Aghbaktsies to Salmast, led by their religious leader Mar Shimon and reached to Urmia's provinces Trkavor and Mrkavor.

The Tachic army attacked Urmia from Baranduz's direction. After long fights the mixed forces of defense in August, 1918 migrated to Hamadan, losing significant forces on their way. From Hamadan, one part of the migrants went to Kermanshah, and the rest settled in Ghazvin and Tabriz. Later the majority of Assyrians, and the Armenian migrants from Vaspurakan, Salmast, and Urmia with a support of the British, moved to Bakuba, Mesopotemia (with Levon Shaghzoian and other leaders).

Migrants were used to their land climate, the blooming highlands of Urmia and the coolness of Lake Van. The desert's sun darkened their golden skin. Pretty girls became like Africans. But, worst of all was death. People would fall in the hot sand and flounder like chickens who had their heads cut off. Also, hunger was a dominant factor. The British would give them very little food. Soon they started to enlist young males, later even the elderly, with good pay. They would train people with their future political purposes, for they would never sacrifice the British soldiers to form a government even under their supervision. It was preferable to sacrifice Armenians and Assyrians to achieve their political goals.

The Armenians were enlisted to support their families and save them from starvation. Later, they realized the potential danger of losing their lives and leaving their families with no support and resigned. The British could not tolerate this easily. They threatened and even punished the Armenians.

Levon Shaghzoian and his colleagues tried to overcome the problem and explain the refusal of the Armenians with the purpose of returning to their motherland. According to Vahan, about 10,000 Armenians were sent to Caucasus and the rest were sent to different Arabic countries (Syria, Iraq, Quvate, Egypt, etc.), where their descendants live today.

To summarize, almost 90,000 migrants (including those from Salmast and Urmia) scattered in various areas. Some were victimized in horrible conditions and a small part as we have mentioned, fled to Ghazvin, Tabriz, Salmast, and other cities of Atrpatakan, through Hamadan.

* * *

Andranik (once again) was determined to carry those migrants through Caucasus and organize the available forces to Armenia's advantage, since the Turkish armies were approaching to Armenia to execute another genocide. Also, he would want about 60,000 people to settle in their own land rather than scatter in Mesopotamia. Without a doubt, we must admit that Andranik's goal and credo were to gather migrants in small yet independent Armenia. The

most credible proofs were the three messengers of Mush, sent by Andranik from Khoy to Salmast. Their purpose unfortunately was not recorded clearly in history. Also, there is a telegram addressed to Levon Shaghzoian to announce the representatives to quickly lead the migrants to Caucasus (Armenia) before the closing of the Julfa Road.

The Murder of Mar Shimon and its Motive

In 1917, when the Russian army was weakening, the Assyrian Jillos assembled around their leader Mar Shimon as a brigade. Having in mind to create an autonomous Assyria with the center, Julamerik (as they announced in leaflets). This fact made the local Muslim population of Urmia and Salmast concerned. As a result, the local government suggested the Jillos to disarm and leave the borders of Persia. The Jillos refused to obey and were in fights with the local gang. This of course, affected some of the Armenian villages of Urmia and Salmast. In some cases, the Armenians were killed as Christians who were supposedly supporting the Assyrians. The Khans of Urmia and Salmast, and the secret agents encouraged the Chieftain Sumko, known also as Ismael Agha, and promised great gifts to kill Mar Shimon to weaken the Jillos' power, outwaying Sumko's and other ethnic forces in the area. Sumko delightfully accepted the offer because he was sure that after he gets rid of the Jillos' religious leader, he will gain more power in the area.

Sumko (or Sumtko) was well known in the nearby provinces as a cruel gangster, a hater of the Armenians, and one of the most negative chieftains among the Kurds. He gained this reputation after he punished defiant chieftains by cutting their right arms or throwing them in the gorge from the overhanging mountain in the Chara settlement. Everyone was frightened by his brutalities, yet he feared and respected the ARD, after he lost the battle of Kotur Valley and barely escaped, leaving dozens of dead soldiers in the battlefield. The Dashnaktsakans on the other hand, were respected by both the local authorities and Persians for their loyalty.

Before Mar Shimon migrated from Tachkastan (1915), his sister Mar Surma, who by that time lived in the village Khosrova near Haftvan, was in a relationship with Sumko. After Mar Shimon settled in Urmia's Mrkavor area, they became even closer. Soon, Sumko, who lived in Chara, gained Mar Shimon's trust through their letters. Mar Shimon was hopeful and counted on Sumko's support to accomplish his desired plans of creating an independent Assyria.

One day, Sumko sent a fake invitation for negotiation at Kohnashahr to Mar Shimon. On March 3rd, as in the invitation, Mar Shimon, accompanied with 120 soldiers, his brother Davit, and commander of the first Assyrian battalion, Sondratev, went to Kohnashahr (Old City).

After a polite conversation which took 40 minutes, Sumko accompanied Mar Shimon to the street. Right when they parted, Sumko injured Mar Shimon's arm with a gun. Mar Shimon jumped out of the cart to find shelter in one of the nearby shops, but Sumko commanded his people to shoot him on the street. Mar Shimon's brother and general, lightly injured, found shelter in one of the neighboring Armenian homes.

A dreadful fight began between Mar Shimon's soldiers and the Kurds. It lasted until the night time. As a result, 100 soldiers from the Assyrians were killed and only 20 had escaped.

Closer to sunrise, the Assyrian army bombarded Kohnashahr from the areas of Salmast and Urmia. The Kurds had blocked the roads to Chara, where Sumko was. The Persians of Kohnashahr tried to confront the Jillos, but the cannons forced them to retreat to the village Hakhveran. The Assyrians conquered Kohnashahr and burned part of it. They took the corps of Mar Shimon and freed his brother and the general. The next day, the Jillos buried Mar Shimon in

the porch of St. Sarkis church of the village Khosrova, with the permission of the Armenians. After this, Sumko attacked the Assyrian village, Patavor and massacred both Assyrian and Armenian families. On the third day, a message came through Gumet, that the Assyrian army had moved toward Chara to attack Sumko. Knowing that their condition may worsen, the Assyrians asked the Armenians for help. The ARD party released flyers to notify our people to ignore the provocative actions (in Haftvan and Payajuke) and conspiracies of some malicious Persians and severely prohibited them to take part of the engagements. There was a hope that both the government and conscious people would end those meaningless and dangerous fights. After hours of battle, the Assyrian army conquered Chara along with the neighboring villages and as revenge, massacred the inhabitants. The villagers stated that the river Zolla was bloody for a whole month and was not useful for drinking. *

Sumko managed to escape to Khoy (with nearly 150 soldiers) where he joined the local gang and executed in a mass slaughter house, killing Armenian and Assyrian migrants that were sheltered in Khoy (700-800 people).

After Sumko's escape, the Persians addressed the Armenians, asking for support in establishing peace in the area because neutrality was not enough when the Jillos were still fighting. The Armenians responded that they had also put efforts to cease the fratricidal fights and build solidarity. The next day, the judge presented a written appreciation letter to the Armenians. A day later, the Armenian and Assyrian representatives gathered with local authorities to establish friendship and loyalty. During the meeting, the Assyrians addressed the fact that they found the letters in Sumko's house in which some high-ranked Persians congratulated Sumko for successful execution of Mar Shimon's murder. The Assyrian commander asked for 10,000 Tumans, wheat, and sugar, as a penalty for Mar Shimon's murder and the instigation of the fights. This proposal was not accepted by Persian representatives. The government also denied the written proposal for its political content. The Assyrians attacked the Dilman city, plundered reckless behavior and killed many to revenge the Persians for supporting the Kurds in Mar Shimon's murder. Thanks to the ARD's efforts this vengeance ended.

In 1919-1920, Sumko was killed in the city Ushnav, where he was invited (with the same pretext as Mar Shimon) by the command of Reza Shah.

*Notes from the book *Bordering Provinces*.

Ethnic Customs, Traditions, Costumes, and "Escapades (Ghaributune)"

The Armenians of Salmast are different from one another with both their physical appearance and customs. There are tall and strong people and also short and sickly ones. Modern Armenians of mountainous areas are fit and cheerful. The Salmastis with opportunity to travel to Russia were more advanced than those who did not. We cannot deny that they were more open minded and civilized. Later, they influenced the local backward people, who as a result, adopted their lifestyle, customs, and gradually succeeded in educational, cultural, as well as various economic areas.

The dialect of Salmast is different from northern and southern regions of Persia (except for the provinces; Urmia, Khoy, and Artaz). The provinces of Atrpatakan with the Armenian population were similar in terms of traditions, customs, and ethnic costumes.

In the past, the Salmastsi men wore white pants, and short or sometimes long outer garments with silver convex buttons. Instead of a belt, men would wind a ribbon or lace, stitched from linen or woven from wool. Wealthy people (women) used a triangular shaped yaylugh, embroidered with colorful and delicate yarn. They wore similar socks (made of wool) with floral designs on the edges that had long laces to hold and tighten the ends of the pants. Sticked shoes (charukh) or Persian mashadi slippers were the main types of shoes.

The elderly women had brown or white shawls with which they wrapped their head, while younger women used kasinkas (kerchief) from colorful fabric. Women of the upper class wore kerchiefs of more delicate and transparent silk (imported from India), showing their dark braids. Teenage girls mostly wore kazmas (relatively older/traditional outfits), embellished with colorful beads, silver coins, or metallic hoops. Some had golden earrings. A veil attached to the kazma waved around the neck. Under the veil, there were long braids going down their backs and one on their chest. Women wore long floral dresses (derias) and youngsters wore short ruffled skirts, half open vests with embroidered zigzags and rose blossoms on each side of the chest to symbolize their girl status. Brown socks with greenish dots or triangular shaped laces were in style. For jewelry, they wore bracelets, chains, necklaces, and earrings.

According to the patriarchal tradition, the grandfather was the head of the house. He authorized all work in the family such as field jobs. After death, his oldest son took his position. No matter the size of the family, after marriage, the son would stay with them. In spite of disagreements and grumbling (especially among newly wed brides), everyone had to obey the elderly and bare the difficulties in silence (crying secretly). Brides in general, had a status of slaves in the house, and were subject to disregard and offense. The brides were not able to complain to their husbands about being offended by their in-laws because their husbands praised their parents as saints and accused the wives even when innocent. Some mother-in-laws, because of their stubborn nature, would suppress their daughter-in-laws.

Not only in Salmast, but also in all Armenian provinces, a ruthless tradition of arranged marriages was common. Parents arranged their children's marriages without asking their opinion just to fulfill their own expectations. Basically, the destiny of the bride and groom was the decision of the parents. Often in Salmast, the parents decided their baby's future spouse while still in the cradle without thinking about their happiness and possible difficulties of those inappropriate marriages. The daughter-in-laws lacked any rights in the house. Even the simple right to dine with the elderly members of the family. As the ruler, the mother-in-law was in charge of making decisions such as which daughter-in-law needed a new holiday dress. She kept the key for everything including the food storage, so that the daughter-in-laws would not dare to eat or give the children anything without her knowledge. Younger brides had veils to cover their noses and mouths so that they would not have the right to speak. If they needed to communicate (for serious matters), they used sign language. Mother-in-laws even interfered with the personal relationship of the married couples. She often could separate their beds pretending to be concerned of her son's health. Sons always obeyed their mothers even in unfair situations. After the mother's death, her power would be passed down to her oldest daughter-in-law. Although more tolerant, she maintained her reputation and position in the house.

Salmasttsi women were very hospitable (exceptions are rare), with a simple pious nature, liveliness, generosity, and cheerfulness. They loved modern trends and mingling with neighbors. They did not tolerate alcoholism. They were eloquent but loved to gossip. Of course, most Armenian women had that "virtue", but Salmastsis had mastered the art of gossip. They

did not gossip about one person. Instead, they gossiped about others to you and later, about you to others.

The Occupation of Women

One of the most popular skills among the Armenian women in Persia was weaving and embroidery. Since old times, Armenian women, both in the villages and cities, kept this sophisticated art.

People say that a young Greek lady opened a workshop in Haftvan and taught women the skills of embroidery, tailoring, and other crafts. People also say, that the Greek girl was among the other missionaries who were sent by the Greek Women's Benevolent Union to expand Catholic faith in the area.

Different missionaries such as Protestants and Catholics were always present in Salmast, yet the Armenians were always against them and persecuted their preachers.

In 1934, when we were kids, a group of Italian Catholic men and women settled in the Anna Baji's house in Haftvan.

Twice a week we attended their meetings. Very few elderly people participated in the sermons. Most of us were children. Though our understanding of religious issues was fairly poor, we liked to be there to enjoy the pastries and different sweets, being shared in packages each time.

Once the Italian missionaries gave us pictures of Jesus. The next day Haftvantsi women hurried to Anna Baji's house and asked for those pictures. They were given different images, one nicer than the other. Women took them to their homes and hung them on their guestroom walls. They lit candles in front of the image, they prayed on their knees, and the mystery of sacred faith filled the house. This process did not take long. The Haftvan board of trustees deported the Italian missionaries from Salmast after long debate. Later, they returned to Assyrian villages and supported families that were in need. To expand the Catholic faith, they organized schools, built churches, and other establishments.

Soon, Salmasttsi women became proficient in new ways of embroidery. With ease, they were able to make a variety of elegant pieces. In the past, the main decorations in the house were embroidery and handcrafted items. The floor was usually covered with bamboo mats, in some cases, carpets or rugs. Around the room, different sizes of pillows were arranged (in Persian style) with floral ornaments. Those who had tables, chairs, and beds would cover them with handcrafted sheets (decorated with loopy waves). The silk embroideries of different landscapes, birds, flowers, deers, etc. were hanging on the walls. Yet the most beautiful of all decorations was considered the image of "Mother Armenia", hanging nearly in every cabin, same as the novelist Raffi's image on the golden background.

"Escapades to Abroad"

"Escapades to Abroad " called "Ghaributyun" by the Salmasttsis was a habitual thing. Long-term "foreign escapades" usually had negative effects but also had advantages. Young people did not want to waste their lives on husbandry. They would strive for success both academically and financially. They always repeated the wise proverb of their ancestors, which was a stimulating credo for them, "fish grow in the sea". Some migrants went to Transcaucasus

and others to various cities in Russia, where they practiced trading or worked in hotels and factories. There were studious, lively, and bold who learned foreign languages and opened factories or trading offices in a short time. Some even became successful merchants, had connections in foreign countries, and became wealthy. Most of them moved their families and never returned to their birthplace. These success stories spread in Salmast quickly and encouraged young people, filling their hearts with zeal. Thus, some parents married their sons with the girls they chose and after five or six days of marriage, sent the new groom to abroad. Of course, not everyone was meant to succeed, especially those who left their homes as teenagers. They often had the same destiny as poor Gikor.

Some wasted their lives in abroad. Some came back with decent earnings, bought small land, built a new house, and continued the traditional lifestyle. Those who returned, brought with them new clothes, customs, and manners. This way, new trends and customs followed the old ones. Life gradually improved and prospered, as did the people. In the 1890s, A. Ataian wrote about escapades to abroad : “Although traveling abroad was a well established habit, women’s morality was respected in Salmast. Exceptions were rare.” When it came to the punishment of a seduced woman (as it appears in Ataian’s writing), there was no such thing in neither the Ecclesiastic nor State laws. In those cases, the law only allowed divorce. A long time ago (according to Ataian’s description), in Tiflis, there was an issue. Here is a brief summary of what happened.

... Melik Khudadad wanted to marry his son with the landlord’s beautiful daughter, before the wedding, he was notified that she had been in love with Hatam. The landlord was upset and killed Hatam. Melik Khudadad ordered to disgrace the young lady by tying her braids to a horse’s tail and riding through the village. Her brother could not tolerate this shame (he also was depressed because of Hatam’s murder) and struck Melik’s home. Since he did not find Melik, he murdered a few members of his family and escaped to the hills... (Z. Darian, “Sayat Nova”)

Similar incidents occurred by the orders of tyrant meliks and princes who never had respect for ethnic or social rules.

There is a folk piece “Ghaributyun”, about Salmast’s migration/escapades that we present.

In 1892, my father and mother sent me to an escapade abroad.

I said I will go.
Who knows if I will return.
I asked my uncle why am I shaking?
May God punish the Kurds,
I will not eat their beets and onions.
It is a cold winter,
I have no hat on my head.
Only 25 ghran (currency) is my budget for travel.
During Lent, I sat at home.
My permit was written by Mirza Husein Khan.
I called my mom to prepare my cloths.
I asked my mom why am I confused?
I brought the bowl of cheese and ate it.
I said I will go.

They sewed my cloths the night before,
My jacket is long like a cote.
We sat on Gharakshlagh's donkeys,
My mom was crying,
My donkey was braying,
And my heart was burning,
I said, I will go.
We reached Evoghli Maraka,
I stayed in molla's house.
The Turks stole our dog.
I couldn't sleep until the bank of Araz,
I said I will go.
We crossed Araz.
The soldier who had the weapon, looked in my bag,
He took out the vodka.
We reached Tiflis,
I said what a beautiful city is Tiflis,
Salmast is just a mow next to it.
Avag, take out your charokhs and wear boots,
I am Avag, The grandson of Gozal from Drishk,
I led the donkeys and the carts,
And crossed the Russian border.
I said I will go.
It has been 25 years of "Ghaributune"
The pain is as heavy, as a mountain, inside me,
I wish I can stuff my carts,
And return to my beloved Salmast.

Khachagogh

It is amazing how Salmasttsis never get offended when they are called Khachagogh (cross stealer). They answer that Murad, hunter Avo, and Fahrard were khachagoghs in Raffi's "Khachagogh's diary", who later became the pioneers of our liberation struggles as it appears in Raffi's "Sparks". Raffi dedicated this novel to them, for they lit up the extinguished sparks of patriotism among our people. We are proud to be venerated with this honorable name.

"Don't comfort your heart in vein, one Salmasttsi can say, we are branded with this nickname, khachagogh, and it will never be gone even if there will be no Salmasttsis left in the world".

Bard Harutyun

Bard Harutyun or Haro, was born in Salmast's Armenian village Sarna. His birthdate is not known because it is not even mentioned on his tombstone. There is only a poetry in Azeri and the year he passed away. We will get back to this later (at the end of the passage).

The Bard Harutyun was a traveling retailer, he also practiced husbandry. He mostly sang in Azeri language. His reputation as a Bard was all over Atrpatakan's both Armenian and Persian provinces. He had no eBarkhoudaianquals among Persian Bards.

Harutyun was known as the most talented Bard of his time in Atrpatakan. His love songs and philosophical proverbs are being sang even nowadays in both Persian and Armenian feasts. Bard Harutyun's tomb is located in the Armenian graveyard, next to chapel Marina, in his birthplace village Sarna. In 1960s, after Sarna was left with no Armenians, late intellectual Arakel Babloian addressed the local government and the Armenian Patriarchy in Tabriz to move Harutyun's grave from Sarna to the courtyard of the church St. Gevorg in Haftvan. His efforts were not successful.

There is a group picture next to Harutyun's grave, published in 1966 in the book "Armenian History of Atrpatakan" (Divan Atrpatakani Hayots Patmutyun) by archimandrite, Demirchian, Prelate of Tabriz. We found appropriate to note that near the northern wall of Haftvan's St. Gevorg church, there are remainings of grave tombstone from old times with references to bishops, archimandrites, priests, renowned figures, etc. Those graves are eroded or covered with mildew, which is why they are hard to read. In the past, a scholar named Hayk Achemian, made photocopies of those notes and studied them. Now in the Sarna's graveyard, very small number of tombs are left with Bard Harutyun's name. Local Persians took most of the stones for their construction needs.

Let us get back to the carvings of Bard Harutyun's grave. There is an image of a small saz (string instrument of his) and a writing "Here Bard Harutyun rests, who took part in Keshishoghli Eyvaz... Died R.M.L.E". As we can see, his birth year is left blank. Which means it was not known then. The alphabetical sequence of symbols translates to 1786, the year he passed away. On the other side of the tomb, a stanza in Azeri is carved.

I am the ghul (hulk) Harutyun of Salmast.
You'll face your destiny,
Do not touch the heavy rock,
Unless you've trained your strength.

In 1961, the national academy's institute of literature after M. Abeghian published a voluminous book called, "Armenian Bards" by Hasmik Sahakian. This publication includes Bard Harutyun's biographical features and poetry (both with various errors). For instance, the village Savra is mentioned as Harutyun's birthplace. However, the truth is that he was born in Sarna, as we mentioned before. Sarna is located in the south hillside of the central city, next to the Kurdish village, Jevajuk. As for the Savra, it is in the west, on the way to Kohnashahr. It is interesting how the book does not mention Harutyun's tomb or death. It is still unknown where the author got information about him losing his eyesight (because of crying) after the loss of his seven children. We can neither deny nor prove this point since there is no verbal or written data. One thing that is known for sure, a long time ago in the village Sarna, eye disease (trachoma) was a common sickness such as tuberculosis in Kohnashahr. People even say that other villagers did not want to marry Sarnatsis. Those serious sicknesses were being cured by home remedies. Lately, a skillful lady named Nubar would cure trachoma and other eye diseases with natural methods. She was called Hakim (medicine lady/healer). We think that perhaps, Harutyun was unfortunate to lose his eyesight, since the sickness was badly scattered in Sarna.

Most Armenian songs by Harutyun are forgotten, a few are still known. People say, once, Harutyun's beautiful wife complained because he never wrote a song about her after praising other beauties. Thus, he composed an offhand song.

I woke up in the morning and saw your face,
I got lost, Pari.
You took my wisdom, made me a fool,
Gathered people around me, made a crowd, Pari.
I wonder where you are, you are a beautiful shamama, a red apple.
The flame of your love burned me, scorched me,
And left me with no strength, Pari.
Don't break your promise.
Your chest is a mattress,
Your arm is a pillow for me.
Move your braids, open your face.
I want to see if you are a gem, or may be a brilliant, Pari.
Here is the whole story,
I am Salmasttsi Arutune,
And I spend my day in kivli Kurdistan...

This song, as well as two others were published by the Institute of Literature in Yerevan. The phrase, Kivli Burastan is originally kivli Kurdistan, where kivli means whole. Bard Harutyun meant that he spent his whole day in Kurdistan but not burastan (meadow). The word burastan does not connect with this poetry, in terms of expressing an appropriate thought, or corresponding with the poetic art of the time. Below are presented two of Bard's Armenian songs.

Comb your hair and let the glim fall on your face

Comb your hair and let the glim fall on your face.
May the wind blow and wave your braids.
The world (life) is five days only, men don't own it.
It is just a short period, let the wind blow your braids.

One of them is in Isfahan, and another is in Kashan.
The merchant who buys them will benefit greatly.
Your braids, when measured one thousand times with silk,
Are still more pricey. Don't give away your braids.

They are two commands for Harten,
You gave me concern with no cure.
Twirl your hair around your neck,
In spite of those who are jealous.

* * * * *

What a graceful way of walking,
I would die for your slow arrival,

You are wearing flat shoes,
Your swinging walk is to die for.

Your fan is always around.
Who rebuked you,
And made you lean your neck?
Your cry is to die for.

Your long neck, with a necklace.
Your blush face, with a red vale, I want to kiss.
You burn my heart with the fire.
Your twin moles are to die for.

You're dressed like a new bride.
My heart is happy as long as you're here.
You laugh when in the mood,
Your laugh is to die for.

I am Salmasttsi Harutyun.
I try to ask for your love,
You answered with your head,
Your gesture is to die for.

Salmast Public Figures and Teachers

We have talked about a number of public and revolutionary activists, as well as teachers who had remarkable influences on Salmast's life. However, we found it proper to introduce cherished names of selflessly devoted people who made a difference in cultural, educational, social, and ethnic life since 1900s. The accuracy in terms of the exact year or village for each teacher's activity is certainly questionable, for they would move from village to village and substitute. The names of praised teachers are; Markar Ter. Ghazarian, A. Aghabekian, Samvel Mesropian, Grikor Harutunian, Aram Baroian, Mikael Hovanesian, Gegham Tadeosian, Jibrael (Jibo) Vartanian, Hakop Babloian, A. Dadash, etc.

The names of the teachers (1893-94) whose group picture appears in the first volume of the annual *Raffi* are; Martiros Varjapet, Stepan Chalkhian, Mrs. Yeranuhi Zorabian, Yervand Frankian (superintendent), Mrs. Taguhi Otian, Hovanes Petrosian, Avet Vartapet, Asatur (later priest), Armenak Aftandilian, Gaspar Hakopian, Gevork, Simon Khan Harutunian, Armenak Gerasimian, Mihran Zurikian, and Andreas Poghosian (later priest Ter Ashot). As we have mentioned above, after the horrible massacres and migration of 1914-1918, the wretched and miserable people of Salmast return to their patriarchal homes from foreign countries and other provinces in Persia. The same way remnants of Urmia returned. As for Khoy, there were no Armenians left (in the areas of St. Thaddeus), everyone was murdered. Just a small part was able to escape to Tabriz and find refuge under the protection of Archbishop Melik Tangian. The residing Archbishop was a merciful father for all Iranian Armenians (especially those from Atrpatakan) and was known for his sacrifices just like Khrimian Hayrik for Caucasian

Armenians. He was a beloved right reverend for not only material support but also for saving many lives from inevitable death. Both authoritative names, Melik Tangian and Khrimian Hayrik will remain in the Armenian history forever as devoted patriates.

Returning migrants with hard work and patience of a swallow repaired their ruined nests full of hope for a happy future. Day by day, life came back on track, flourished, and prospered. Both cultural and benevolent unions came to life again. The schools improved their qualities, thanks to the efforts of the intelligent and gifted teachers, newly graduated from the secondary schools of Tabriz prelacy: Tachat Poghosian, Artak Badalian, A. Amatuni, etc. With enthusiasm, they undertook responsibility to solve the imperative problems of our people. Salmast, once bloodshed, revived again. Both educational and construction works became lively. Gradually the peace, happiness, traditional customs, and rituals went back to their routine, forgiving loss and pain.

The Salmast Earthquake of May 7, 1930

After experiencing cruel and harsh political challenges of burglary, massacre, and migration, Salmast faced a horrible natural disaster that will never be forgotten by Salmasttsis. Compared to all calamitous incidents, nature was the most merciless towards people, their homes, and brilliant historical monuments. The earthquake took many lives not only from Armenians, but also from Persians and others. The city Dilman was completely destroyed. Many villages were ruined. The earthquake happened on the May 7th, 1930 after 1:00 am, but it continued to shake the earth for days. The underground waters elevated and filled the yards in Haftvan. The meadow of village Grishk became a temporary lake and disappeared the next day. It is hard to describe the level of horror people went through. There was a chaos, the dogs' howls, the thunder roars, the cry of women, the noise of crushing poplars, the painful calls of deadly injured people, and on top of everything, the dense cloud of dust reigning the sky, as well as on the earth, keeping everything in the dark.

Salmast, barely recovered after migration, this time entirely it went to rock and ruin, and human losses were double. Nevertheless, Salmasttsis managed to confront this lethal disaster because of their unique sturdiness and brave soul. They rebuilt their ruined homes in more contemporary styles this time, with beautiful gardens and wider roads. The old features of villages were substituted with luxurious buildings and boulevards.

In 1932, adjacent to Haftvan church, an elementary (six year) school with its office, library, and auditorium was established by the generosity of Avakians.

In Payajuke, Manaserians founded a school and a library. This was common for other villages too. New churches were built, not as magnificent as in the past, they had gates covered with sand and looked more like a chapel rather than a church.

Here are the names of the teachers who taught in the villages of Salmast since earthquake to our days: Samvel Mesropian (superintendent), Mrs. Almast Harutyunian, Hakop Poghosian, Hovaness Barseghian, Arsen Goloian, Andre Hambartsumian, Vartan Nalbandian, Ms. Nvart Sarukhanian, Arakel Babloian, Suren Poghosian, Samvel Ghazarian, Mkrtych Galstian, Aramayis Ghazarian, Savet Ter-Stepanian, Aram Aghabegian, Father Ter Ashot Poghosian.

Later, in the schools of Haftvan and Shapour (both in Salmast), Mrs. Vartoosh Muradian and Mrs. Manoush Barkhoudarian, selflessly taught our language to the new generation without

any material expectations. Special thanks to Mrs. V. Muradian, who made one of her house rooms a classroom before the school was established.

In 1973, Father Ter-Minasian taught in Shapour school, named after Raffi. We apologize for not remembering all the names of dedicated teachers.

As we know, in 1935, by the order of Reza Shah, Armenian schools were closed and went under government's control. As a result, Persian teachers started teaching in every school. All the Armenian related subjects were prohibited, except for religion class. The senior priest, Ter Ashot Poghosian, because of his kind nature and friendly relations with Haftvan's superintendent, Mirzadula Safayi, was able to get his approval to teach Armenian one hour each day. Superintendent Safayi was a noble and kind man, always tolerant to Armenians, and he must be remembered with great appreciation.

Agricultural Practices

Although husbandry was updated with modern tools in Salmast, only elderly men would practice it, along with farming and cattle breeding. The majority of young men, as we mentioned, preferred jobs in foreign countries. Mostly in trading and craftsmanship. The soil in Salmast is fertile and lately it was being cultivated with new technologies. In 1945, bee keeping was established. Some native Persians were practicing beekeeping. The bee families were being kept in baskets and that was not as successful as the frame systems from industrial point of view (known as Dadan or Langstrot). A beekeeper, named Okhikian introduced the beehive method to Persia, using standard wood frames which were very productive in terms of nursing and getting more honey. Okhikian's "Savalan" brand is famous in Persia. Many families in Salmast started to practice beekeeping. There were nearly 4,000 modern Dadan beehives. All beekeepers had professional literature from Armenia, such as books published by internationally renowned professors in that field, such as M. Kotughian, H. Vartanian, and Z. Tumanian. It could be useful for beekeepers to know that the Dadan beehive with 12 frames (introduced in the 1860s), was named after its author, a famous Russian professor. As for the Langstrot beehive, it was created by an American professor in 1851 and was named after him. Beekeeping was known since ancient times, with different methods. The old methods of keeping the bee families in the tree trunks were used in the cities until the 1960s. Beekeeping in the woven straw baskets is still common in Atrpatakan. Yet, in the Kurdish areas, bee families are being kept in clay jars.

According to professor Kotughian, beekeeping was adopted in Armenia since ancient times. "... the afore-mentioned facts witnessed that beekeeping started to develop in Armenia since the distant past. People used to value honey as a healthy food... In the Yerevan State Museum, a manuscript document by Alexanos is kept where the beekeeping is introduced in detail. It is a unique medical book. According to H. K. Akinian, the book was most likely written at the end of the 17th century in the Karabakh area but the exact date is unknown because the manuscript is incomplete."

There is another short passage that is interesting and valuable. Xenophon wrote in his book, *Anabasis* (431-354 BC, chapter 35): " 10,000 Hellenic soldiers, while retreating, passed through Armenian mountains. They saw villages with numerous beehives. They ate so much honey that they had stomach ache, diarrhea, dizziness, and started to stagger like drunk people. The next day, all of them were fine and healthy again." Now, 90% of bee families in Persia are

kept in framed beehives. Langstrotes are popular in the Northern and Southern parts of Persia, and Dadan's, in Atrpatakan. The name of Salmasttsi Ishkhan Minasian is well known in western Atrpatakan as a skillful beekeeper. Last year (1991), he was chosen by the ministry of agriculture as an exemplary beekeeper, and was awarded by the President of Iran.

There were many honored craftsmen in Salmast. One of them was blacksmith Markos Ojakhian. His sickles were the best among all others in Salmast. In pottery, Tigran Babakhanian was best known. His clay jars and other items were both beautiful in appearance and useful for cool and fresh content. There were also famous carpenters, jewelers, silversmiths, carriage makers, such as Mnatsakan and Ishkhan who were known in many provinces. In the stone processing and carving, Kartash Tigran was known to be the best. He created elegant sculptures such as ornaments, writings, and crosses on the tombs. Also, in the cheese production, the Salmasttsi Allahverdian brothers who came back from Russia, were the initiators of the red (Dutch) cheese factory in 1934 in Shapour. Now, the agriculture in Salmast is mostly modernized and has prospered in most areas. Although there are not many Armenians left in Salmast, their significant presence in the Salmast history will stay forever.

Salmasttsi Intellectuals and Benefactors

Since this humble book is devoted to the province Salmast, we chose to mention those intellectuals and benefactors that were originally from Salmast. Among those benefactors, there were individuals with exceptional generosity who provided the means for establishing educational and cultural institutions, and were rewarded by two of our catholichoses. We apologize to miss any names of benevolents or for inaccuracy in the biographical data. We provide brief information about their lives, as much as we were able to gather. Also, our purpose is to cover the life and carriers of only those Salmastti benefactors and intellectuals who lived in Persia, but not outside the Persia.

Markar Sarkissian

The great national benefactor Markar Sarkisian was born in 1891, in Haftvan. For a while, he was in Transcaucasus, but later returned to Iran and founded various factories. He sponsored many charitable projects and showed exceptional generosity for Iranian Armenians. In 1954, he established Mariamian secondary girls school in Tehran, in remembrance of his late daughter Mariam.

Markar Sarkissian lived in Tehran. In 1963, after his sudden death in Tabriz, his corpse was transported and buried in Tehran's former graveyard in an honorary funeral.

Brothers Sarkissian

After Markar Sarkissian's death, his sons Gurgen and Vazgen Sarkissian followed his path of benevolence. With their donations, St. Sarkis church in Tehran was built in remembrance of their father. They also established a modernized office building next to church in remembrance of their beloved mother Khanum Sarkissian.

Sahakians

Late Mikayel Sahakian was born in 1902, in Khosrova village. His two brothers Israyel and Jibrayil were also businessmen in Caucasus, who later moved to Tabriz and founded industrial factories.

Next to Haykazian-Tamarian school in Tabriz, there is a new excellent school, after national benefactor Mikayel Sahakian. He initiated the construction, but after his death, his brother Israyel and relatives completed the work. After Israyel passed away, in 1958, his wife, children, and brother Jibrayil built an Armenian spacious school in Tehran's Armenian neighborhood Heshmati.

Arzuman Avetisian

Arzuman Avetisian was born in 1898, in Salmast's village, Kalasar. After returning from Russia, he lived in his birthplace for years and then moved and settled in Tehran.

He was the founder of the first sausage factory with modern equipment, where a big variety of delicatessen products were produced. In 1968, Arzumanian, in remembrance of his late son Avetis, established a Armenian hospital in Tehran which had a modern structure and was equipped with advanced medical technologies of the time. To manage the hospital, the Armenian Social Union created a Council consisting of doctors: A. Simelofian, Z. Nersisian, G. Sarukhanian, E. Sogoian, S. Harutunian, S. Stepanian, and others.

The benefactor's son, Mr. Gevorg (Yura) Avetisian (also a benefactor) was an honorable member of the Council who undertook the organizational jobs of the institution with an exceptional commitment.

Aram Budaghian

Aram Budaghian was born in 1892 in Salmast's Payajuke village. He was the son of Jibrail Budaghian, a member of the Iranian Parliament. He was the founder of the Budaghian trademark, and overall a well known figure both in Persian and foreign trading.

Aram Budaghian completed his elementary education in the Aramian National School in Tabriz. He later graduated with honors from the secondary trading school in Tiflis and continued to a higher education at the University of Moscow. While his father was alive, Aram settled in Tehran and undertook the management of the company. In the XV through XVIII sessions of the Iranian Parliament, he was selected a PM to represent the Armenians of Atrpatakan. He consistently supported almost all projects on behalf of educational and social prosperity of Armenian society in Iran. It is especially noteworthy his generous financial support in a costly project of creating water supplies for the Armenian graveyard in Tehran. Aram Budaghian died in 1967 of December 1st, in Tehran. Unfortunately, his funeral was plain. It was not suitable for the reputation of a person of his caliber.

Avakians

Benefactors Avakian brothers were active donors in different areas of social life, not only in Haftvan (as we have mentioned, they established an elementary school in Haftvan), but also in Tabriz.

The Avakian brothers (now settled in New York) have been supporting educational institutions and churches of Atrpatakan. Lately, by the means of Mr. Mesrop Avakian, the façade of Atrpatakan prelacy was remodeled. The Avakian brothers provided 1,000 US dollars to Armenian institutions through the prelacy council. The Avakian brothers, along with the Sahakian brothers, established 16 shops that benefitted the prelacy of their rent. The Avakians founded the branch stores of their rug manufacturing brand in various cities of Iran.

Manaserians

We were not able to gather accurate information about the benefactor Manaserian family from Payajuke. However, their name is well remembered by our people as well as in written sources for the unconditional financial support during our liberation moments. The Manaserians have established schools in Payajuke and other villages and provided the teachers' salaries. They are known for their generosity in numerous events.

Catholicos Stepannos of Salmast

A number of historian scholars of the past believed that Israel Ori initiated Armenia's liberation project and put his efforts to free Armenia from foreign dictatorships with the help of Europe. Yet the renowned scholar and armenologist Hakop Ter-Hakopian (Irazek) published an extensive research in 1969's yearbook *of Raffi*, where he denied that opinion. Below are given a few fragments from the article.

"...The role of a patriarch of an Armenian liberation struggle is preserved to Stepannos V Catholicos of Salmast (in chronological order), who was the pioneer and the first wellknown political figure in our history. There is a widespread wrong opinion among us that Israel Ori was the pioneer of Armenia's independence, who represented the Armenian cause to the European governments. Even those who have historiographical research work experience in the given area, keep repeating this mistake as if it were a historical fact... Catholicos Stepannos was born in Salmast. But the circumstances were took him to Constantinople where he grew up and received his education. In 1514, Sultan Selim, after taking a victory over Shah Ismayil, deported numerous Armenians from Persia to Polis, mostly merchants and craftsmen to supposedly benefit Iran. Young Stepannos and his parents were among the migrants. He is sometimes known as Polsettsi for the amount of time he lived in Polis. Catholicos Stepannos was an educated and distinguished catholicos. He was a scholar and a great author. He has a number of valuable works. In 1541, Catholicos Stepannos went to Echmiadsin and was selected as the Catholicos Grigor XI Buzandastsi's deputy. After Catholicos Grigor's death in 1545, Catholicos Stepannos became the Catholicos of all Armenians. His ministry coincided with the most tragic days of Armenia. One of his considerable and coveted diversifide purposes was to emancipate the eastern part of Armenia and restore the political independence and autonomy of our people. For that purpose, in 1547, he organized a very confidential meeting of a significant importance in Echmiatzin with distinguished religious and worldly people. At the meeting, they made a unanimous decision to address western governments for support in the

liberation of Armenia from the foreign tyranny. For this purpose, the council selected a delegation to go to Europe with a mission. The scholar Irazek thoroughly recorded the delegation's activities in Europe, Catholicos Stepannos encounters the Pope, European Emperors and rulers, as well as overall historic unions at the time. Below is given a brief conclusion of the research.

"Soon after the meeting, as a head of delegation, Catholicos Stepannos traveled to Polis, where he met the warm hospitality of our people. However, the negotiations in higher level were unsuccessful, because of the inner uncompromising state. After Polis, the delegation approached Rome, met with the Pope, from there, with great hope, to Germany, Poland, etc. After knocking the doors of Europe one by one, they were faced the same indifference. The desperate Catholicos changed his way to Moscow, unfortunately he got the same answer as before and the same excuse about their unfavorable inner situation. The Armenian cause failed. Catholicos, the pioneer of Armenian liberation, returned to his homeland, to his office completely empty handed.

In 1556(57), he departed from this unjust world forever and took the sacred dream in his heart.

Tachat Ter-Poghosian

Late Tachat Ter-Poghosian was born in 1905, in Salmast's Haftvan village. He was the son of the province's senior priest Ter Ashot Poghosian. He became literate in the local school, later went to Tabriz and graduated from the secondary school of the prelacy. Next, he was accepted to the Gevorkian Academy.

He became an intellectual model for his exceptional multi-literate interests. Tachat Ter-Poghosian was a member of ARD party, chief editor of a daily *Alik* newspaper, and is known to have a number of historical-philological research works.

In 1925 he undertook the position of a district superintendent of Salmast. He vigorously participated in the party and social life.

In 1937 with the coauthor Hovsep Tadevosian started the literary and scholarly periodical *Navasard*, which was around for two years. One of the results of his diversifide activities was the wall calendar *Raffi*, which has been continuously published for over 40 years in Iran and gained popularity. In 1969, Tachat Ter-Poghosian initiated the yearbook *Raffi*. In 1970, came out the second volume. Unfortunately, the third volume was published after his death, with efforts of his daughter and distinguished Iranian Armenian scholar L. G. Minasian (who edited the material). In 1968, late Tachat Ter-Poghosian edited and published Nazar Goroiants *Armenians of Persia*. Although the work was handwritten and very hard to read, Ter-Poghosian put great efforts to edit and published it, considering the advantageous value of the work.

Gevork Darfi

The poet Gevork Darfi was born in 1907, in the village Saramerik of Salmast. He completed the elementary education in Salmast, later went to Tabriz, and graduated from the secondary school of the Prelacy. Besides being a gifted poet, Darfi was a merited play writer and

a translator. Some of his creations such as *Siavush and Sudabe*, *The Bloody Crown*, and *Mesrop Mashtots* are famous. He also did many translations.

Gevork Darfi was a frank patriot, devoted to his people and motherland. He wrote many works, some of which are still unpublished.

Artak Badalian

Artak Badalian was one of the graduates of Tabriz Prelacy's secondary school, who had a great contribution in the teaching area.

Artak Badalian, a deserved teacher and a devoted public activist, known to be the most loyal to revolutionary mentality in Atrpatakan, was born in 1905, in Haftvan.

He completed the elementary education in his hometown. As a result of 1918's massacre and other barbarian actions of Turks, Badalian family escaped and settled in Tabriz in 1919. The fourteen-year-old Artak entered the secondary school of the Prelacy and graduated in 1924-25 school year. Inspired with the national ideology of the school, Artak Badalian started his teaching career in 1929. He started from Salmast's Armenian schools, later taught in Ghazvin's school Կաթնի after Raffi. After moving to Tehran, Artak Badalian taught in the Haykazian, Kushesh-Davtian, and Kushesh-Mariamian elementary and secondary schools until his retirement.

Artak Badalian actively took part in the publishing Armenian textbooks for Iranian Armenian schools. The textbook *Spelling Rules* of Armenian language by Artak Badalian is still used by the teachers of both elementary and secondary Armenian schools of Iran.

It is also important to mention that he established the *Pionian* library within Kusheshian-Davtian school, and worked as a senior librarian for years.

In the book *The History of Armenian Prelacy School in Atrpatakan* (p. 226), the library established by Artak Badalian is mentioned to be the only systematic library in Tehran with 12,000 listed Armenian books (not to count foreign language books).

Artak Badalian with a few intellectuals (One of them was late Aram Garoneh) published the periodical *Lusaber* for children and teenagers.

In the 1973, he was awarded by Khoren I, the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, with a medal of St. Mesrop for his activities in educational and public arena. In 1992 (May) Artak Badalian passed away, leaving the memories of gratitude and regard in the hearts of thousands of students. *

Ter Ashot Poghosian

Ter Ashot Poghosian (religious name Andreas) was born in 1881, in the Haftvan village of Salmast. As a priest of Haftvan, he served until 1943-44, and moved to Tehran.

Before being assigned to religious service, Ter Ashot took part in Iran's constitutional debates as the leader of local forces. In 1918, along with migrants from Vaspurakan to Salmast, he participated in bloody fights against Ehosan Pasha. In 1919 he was assigned as a priest of Tabriz. **Alik*, 1992

Grigor Shahoian

In 1970 (June 4), Grikor Shahoian, a devoted public figure died in Tehran. He was born in 1899 in Haftvan. The primary education he gained was in the local school. Because of his hardworking nature, he gained a multilateral educational level through self education.

In 1918, he entered Mesopotamia with migrants and undertook a responsible public role. He continued his education with his brother Levon Shahoian at the American missionary school of Bakuba.

He was a member of the local Ramkavar Party. In 1930, he returned to his birth place and continued his personal and public activities.

Levon Shahoian

The intellectual, Levon Shahoian (pseudonym Shahuni) was born in 1907, in Haftvan. He completed elementary education at the local school. In 1918, he entered Mesopotamia and continued his education at Bakuba American Missionary. Later, he moved to Bagdad and settled there.

His first poems were published in *Armenian's Kochnak* (bell). He collaborated with different Iranian-Armenian and foreign periodicals. In 1928, Levon Shahoian's first book, *A Bouquet of Poetries* was published. In Tabriz, 1933 and in Beirut, 1966, a collection of Stanzas called *Shogher* (gleams) came out. His poems are different from both past and present styles, are plain and lack emotional quality. He also has short stories. *Mukhsi Kostan* is one of his nice pieces.

Arakel Babloian

A distinguished public figure and renowned intellectual, Arakel Babloian was born in 1883, in Haftvan. After completing his elementary education at the local school, he went to Caucasus with the first migrants and completed his secondary education in Armenia and Russia. As a man of exceptional talent, Arakel Babloian was in close relationship with Armenian intellectuals in Moscow and was able to widen his knowledge in multi-literate ways. In 1923, the longing for his hometown brought him back to Salmast to serve his compatriots. With his hard work and devotion, Arakel Babloian made a difference in many areas of agriculture and educational-cultural life of province. In 1943, without any materialistic expectations, he started a boarding school in one of the classes in the Avakian School for students with higher educational goals. He lectured in a variety of fields such as agriculture, literature, and social life. His plain cabin became a library and a gathering place for every age. This virtuous man was an inspiration for everyone with his exceptional love for literature and patriotism. In his business, he found time for collaboration with *Lucaber* and *Alik* periodicals,

For many years, Arakel Babloian would publish the calendar *Yerkir*, which was welcome by Armenian families for its comprehensive content. We have to admit with reverence, his selfless activities in the social life of his province. A public figure indeed is loyal to his mission, when he becomes a defender of moral principles and material sources of the society with his righteous soul and high intellect. Arakel Babloian was a role model who stayed loyal and served his community until his old days as a member of Salmast's executive council, as well as a secretary in different Armenian institutions.

Amatuni Arzumanian

The worthy public figure and intellectual model, Amatuni Arzumanian was born in Kalasar village of Salmast. After his elementary education in the local school, he migrated to Russia with family, where he completed his secondary education in both Armenian and Russian. He went back to Kalasar with his parents and practiced teaching. He became a superintendant and was a devoted national activist. After the earthquake, like many other well-known teachers, he left to go to Tabriz and later settled in Tehran. There, he was elected to the Armenian Prelacy Council and for years, its Secretary. Amatuni Arzumanian collaborated with the periodicals *Alik* and *Lraber*. He has independent works and translations from Russian.

Mrs. Almast Aharonian

Mrs. Almast was born in 1906 in Salmast's Haftvan village. Because of the Ottoman invasions of 1914, her family crossed the river Arax and settled in Tiflis. Her father, who stayed in the village with six other relatives, was massacred by the Askyars. Almast graduated from Hovnanian Girl School, later the family moved to Krasnadar (area of Kuban). Here, she devoted herself to teaching Armenian language to migrant children from Kars. In Krasnadar, she met Andre Aharonian, who later became her husband. After the revolution, the circumstances were so unfavorable for them, that they moved back to Iran. That year, they lost their one-year-old daughter, Rita. In 1929, they settled in Salmast, where their son Henrik was born. The family faced financial difficulties because Almast's husband did not know Persian. So, he moved to the city Shahsavar and got a job of an accountant in the Russian oil company. Meanwhile, Mrs. Almast continued teaching the Armenian language at a Haftvan school with solicitude toward students.

The 1930's earthquake caused big damages and losses to the local people. She multiplied her efforts to be useful for her people. The same year, she gave birth to her second son, Levon. This time her husband left to the south to work in a railroad building company.

In 1935, when Reza Khan forbid the Armenian schools and teaching of Armenian language, Mrs. Almast made her small house a school where she taught Armenian children the Armenian language.

In the summer of 1936 the family moved to Tehran, where her husband started a grocery store. Along with her public activities, Mrs. Almast also supported her husband. The same year their third son George was born.

In spite of their business, both Andre and Almast Aharonians took education of their sons, seriously. Thanks to their efforts, their children got higher education. Almast Aharonian in her entire life loved working and silently shared all responsibilities and concerns with her husband. In her free time, she loved to create embroideries. In 1983 her collection of embroideries was rewarded with admiration and appreciation by specialists. She passed away in 1986.

Samuel Sarukhanian

Samuel Sarukhanian was born in 1922, in Tabriz. He finished the local Haykazian-Tamarian (unisex) school, and then the secondary Memorial (Ebn Sina) school.

Inspired with ideals of patriotism and civil life since teenage years, he was a public activist. During WWII, when foreign forces invaded Iran, Samuel Sarukhanian undertook the position of a head manager of the Rostom-Gaspar library in Tabriz, and in spite of pressure and hardship served with dignity.

In 1951, Samuel Sarukhanian moved to Tehran, where he continued the mission of a patriot. As a member of a central administration and later as a president, he worked for Armenian Ararat cultural-athletic institution.

Samuel Sarukhanian is the founder of the bookstore Nairi and the printing shop Nairi where he initiated the publication of the calendar Nairi, in 1954. It is still being published by S. Amirkhanian.

He also was a reconstruction committee member of chapels St. Thaddeus and Stepannos the Martyr. He had his consistent presence in the works of building the walls around Raffi's house and organization of celebrating Raffi's 150th birthday anniversary (in Payajuke). He collaborated with the daily *Alik* and was the member of editing staff for years. After long illness, Samuel Sarukhanian passed away in 1986, April 12 and was buried in Tehran's Nor-Burastan Graveyard.

Raffi's 150th Birthday Anniversary Celebration (in his birthplace Payajuke)

1985 was a new era for all Armenians both in Armenia and outside the world where an Armenian heart would beat. In this significant year, our distinguished novelist Raffi's (Hakop Melik-Hakopian) 150th birthday was celebrated. The event was more impressive and touching because it took place near his house in Payajuke, which became a stack of rocks after Salmast's earthquake. The village was in turmoil. People from every area of Iran arrived to express their respect and acknowledgment towards renowned novelist and freedom pioneer, Raffi.

The project of building walls around Raffi's house and a memorial was initiated by the Armenian Diocese of Atrpatakan and confirmed by the Diocese of Tehran. The Iranian-Indian Diocese also participated in this project.

The Committee members were Mr. Levon Abrahamian, Samuel Sarukhanian, Varuzhan Arakelian, Raffi Gasparian, Andranik Hovanisian, and Serzhik Amirkhanian.

The Administrative Council of Salmast also brought its participation: Mr. Nerses Ter-Poghosian (secretary), Murad Muradian (Treasurer), and Artavazd Babakhanian.

To elucidate the circumstances, there is a need to mention that the reconstruction of Raffi's house which was conceived by Samuel Sarukhanian, Varuzhan Arakelian, and Commander Emil Hakopian in 1962-1963, in accordance with the Armenian Diocese of Tabriz. The Armenian Diocese composed a Committee, consisting of Mkrtych Galstaian (Raffi's immediate relative), Hamazasp Khoudaverdian, Mnatsakan Baroian, Suren Ter-Stepanian, etc.) and donated 100,000 Reals which was spent for only on the foundation and other works of leveling the ground. Later, some people were against this project and proposed to spend the funds on building a new Armenian school in the city Shapour (Salmast). They accomplished it. For that purpose, another 220,000 Reals were donated by Tabriz and Tehran with the support of Senior Priest Mesrop Minasian, Aram Khachatourian, and Nerses Poghosian.

Through the official deed of purchase, an existing building was bought as a school named after Raffi. The reconstruction of Raffi's house was left behind until 1982-1983 when the new committee executed the reconstruction loan, devoted to writer's 150th birthday.

Representatives of religious, public, and various social fields were present at the event, including the leader of the Iranian-Indian diocese, Bishop Goryune Babian (later Archbishop), the deputy of the Armenian Diocese of Atrpatakan, Senior Priest Bagrat Melkonian, the priest of Urmia Garnik Keshishian, representatives of three Iranian-Armenian prelacies, MP and representative of Southern Iranian-Armenians, Mr. Artavazd Baghumian, journalists and compatriots from different areas (Geardabad, Urmia, and far New Julfa).

People gathered around a stone table brought from church, with Raffi's bust on it. After the religious ceremony, scouts represented a suitable program. The Komitas choir from Tabriz, conducted by Mr. Vartan Vahramian performed at the event. The choir sang "Serop and Soseh", "We are Honest Soldiers", "Volunteer's March", and other appropriate pieces, inspiring all listeners with a great affection.

There were also lectures and poetries. At the end of the event, bishop Goryun Babian pronounced words of appreciation addressed to the Armenian Prelacy of Atrpatakan for initiating this great project, also Tehran's and Iranian-Indian Armenian communities for support. He expressed appreciation to performers and gave special thanks to the native Salmasttsi Samuel Sarukhanian for his impressive speech, which earned long and passionate applauds. The bishop also spoke about Raffi's life and creations and emphasized on his novels, as a priceless heritage that educated and inspired us with the ideas of liberty and patriotism, generation by generation.

At 4:00 p.m., the crowd approached the Armenian graveyard on the nearest hillock where on the black tomb stone was written: Here is resting Jeyran A., mother of Raffi, born on 1819, died on 1904, October 28.

Bishop concluded his speech with the words "We bow to the tomb of our great novelist and leader of liberation struggle, Raffi's mother". Next, everyone sang "Our Father". For a moment people thought they were present at Jeyran's funeral.

Levon Aharonian

Levon Aharonian was born in 1930, in Haftvan. In 1936, the family moved to Tehran, where he completed his elementary education at "Spahr" and "Jamshid Jam", and the secondary at "Tamadon" schools. Levon Aharonian belongs to the generation which lacked the opportunity to learn Armenian because of the prohibition of Armenian language. He completed higher education at Tehran's "Honarhayeh Ali" Institute (department of Chemical Architecture). For 12 years, he worked for Boniad Mostadel Abeary state company under the Ministry of Agriculture, doing research on lands and irrigation. In 1956, he married Ms. Bella Muratur. They had two children. In 1959 Levon got scholarship from an agricultural company adjacent to UN and moved to Holland with his family. In 1968 he resigned his position and moved to a private company. Levon Aharonian was a shareholder of an international shipping company "Sati", which later became one of the most powerful companies in the country because of Aharonian's hard work and efforts.

After the Islamic Revolution, he did not leave the country and continued his devoted work next to his 300 employees.

Levon Aharonian was elected MP and a Chair of the Prelacy Council. He became the president of the administration of shipping companies of Iran. According to his colleagues, he was able to coordinate the companies and avoid becoming a state property.

Aharonian had an opportunity to meet with different layers of Iranian Armenians. He was impressed with the level of devotion, dignity, and love towards our language, culture, and religion and saw it in humble working class. He remembered his late father's words

“Those are the people who keep our race.”

In 1984 Aharonian found out that the Zeytun town of Tehran needs a secondary girls school. He donated the means and expressed willingness to the leader of the Diocese to build a school in remembrance of his parents Andre and Almast Aharonians.

Unfortunately, they could not get a permit for the school, and he decided to build a preschool. In 1990, the designated land for the preschool was consecrated by Catholicos Garegin, and in January 10, 1991, it received the blessing ceremony by the leader of Tehran's Diocese Archbishop Artak Manukian. In 1993, the construction works were finished, and in 1994, February 3, the official opening ceremony took place.

The preschool occupies 1,500 square meters of space, has 8 classrooms, an office, and an auditorium for 300 people. 320 children currently enjoy their new school. At the opening ceremony, Mr. and Mrs. Aharonians were rewarded with the Kondak (Epistle) of Catholicos of all Armenians, Garegin II. The Catholicos of Cilicia granted Levon Aharonian the title “The Prince of Cilicia”, and his wife was honored with a medal.

Since 1986, Levon Aharonian presides the Board of Trustees of Armenian Hospital A. Avetisian.

After the terrible earthquake of Armenia, the Prelacy assigned Levon Aharonian as the Chairman of Committee to immediately deliver help to the suffered people. In 1992, he organized a charity fund for the same purpose and sent two airplanes full of food and medicine to Armenia.

On March, 1991, he visited Armenia and met the Prime Minister of that time V. Manukian. At the meeting, as a part of improvement of Iran/Armenia relationships, a decision was made to examine the transit roads. Levon Aharonian prepared a report “The Economic Roads of Armenia and Their Strategic Setting in the Southern Caucasus”, and submitted to the three ministries of Iran. The work was appreciated by the government. Aharonian unconditionally supported the committee of Meghri bridge construction assigned by Armenia. With the team of Armenian MPs of Iran, he persuades the circles of government about the necessity of the bridge.

In 1991, Levon Aharonian, as a member of the delegation, took part of the meeting of “Armenian Businessmen”. The professionals from 58 countries gathered to discuss the plans of economic prosperity of our country. Avetisian presented a notable speech. He also decided along with his five colleagues to create a center for economic information of Iran and Armenia.

After Armenia's independence and after Iran officially acknowledged the independence of our country, the same committee addressed the Iranian government and got the permission to found Iran/Armenia trading institution. Now it is officially registered by the Iranian government. The group of Iranian-Armenian businessmen, and Aharonian as the Head, put their efforts to expand the commercial relations between Iran and Armenia

In 1993, again as the Head of large group of businessmen, Aharonian participated at the Assembly of Armenian Businessmen, which was greatly appreciated by the Catholicos Vazgen I, and the President Levon Ter-Petrosian.

Traditional Customs

Marriage and Wedding Matchmaking

According to traditions, provincial weddings occur mostly in the fall, because in the spring and summer people are extremely busy with the agricultural works. That is the reason why in rural areas, feasts happen after the harvest works are done.

The wedding ceremonies used to be more elaborate, because the relatives and friends from far would come and the feast would take days. Of course, each day had its own tradition and ritual.

Before, the right of marriage was preserved to the parents. They would decide for their sons and daughters who to marry, in other words, the decision of their children's destiny. Therefore, it was not only a responsibility, but also a concern. If their proposal was denied, it would have affected their family name.

Nowadays, parents by pass that responsibility and the couple decides to marry and then address parents to organize the traditional ritual of proposal as a formal custom. Parents' opinion, certainly is not always ignored as well as their interference in the couple's marriage, considering their experience. In some cases, young people make this serious decision without deeply knowing each other and picturing the future. They often get attracted by the appearance or the status. In such cases, the marriage cannot be a reliable future. Thus, a lot has changed in our traditional weddings (especially when it comes to city weddings).

Modern weddings do not have the same charming sound and rhythm of dhol and zurna, that would cheer up everyone sitting and obsess with an irresistible desire to dance. Nowadays, they dance "gyond" (group dance) which has mostly jazz beat copied from African dance style (chacha). We are certain in our opinion, that the dancers of gyond in Urmia are similar to the whole Atrpatakan.

If you have noticed their dance has original choreography of our tradition with graceful movements. Asking for the bride's hand is a traditional custom and the first symbol of couple's union. A group of people from the groom's side would go to the future bride's house and each of them would try to convince her parents by introducing the groom's general features, age, occupation, social status, etc. If the groom was from the same village as the bride, the parents most likely knew him, if however, he was from a different village, it usually took a longer time for parents to gather information (even about his health) and make their final decision. They were especially aware of epilepsy or psychological disorder that could appear after marriage. In the old times, the lack of medical checkups made it hard on bride's parents to find out the health conditions of the potential groom. Thus, some would even try to find out from the groom's relatives, yet that was not always successful or reliable.

"Bey"

When the parents give their approval, any jewelry such as a necklace is given by the groom as a "bey" (In some areas called Barga), and the day of an engagement is being determined.

Engagement and Kavor Khabar

A few days before the engagement party (which takes place by the priests' ceremony), a copper tray full of sweets, raisin, date, roasted garbanzo, a bottle of cognac, decorated with white and pink ribbons is being given to a worker to take to kavor's (bestman) house. This is to notify him of the date of the upcoming engagement event. The worker takes it on his head and gets a tip depending on the kavor's generosity. On the day of the engagement, kavor sends "khon" in the same tray to be delivered to the bride's house as a "shirinlugh" (way of congratulating and sharing the happiness). Usually teenage girls and boys deliver the "khon" and offer it to all the guests. They sing and dance under the sounds of tar-kamancha, enjoying the hospitality until the next morning. The bride gets presents from guests. Salmasttsis did not have a tradition of giving money as a present, this is something new that not everyone agrees with. As we have mentioned, the "khon" provided by kavor is shared with the guests, who raise their drink and exclaim "May God gratify" or other wishes. While the dinner is being served, a Tamada (host) is chosen to propose a "kenats" (toast) which is unanimously cheered by everyone before consuming their drink. After each "kenats" a song or a "toosh" (a few notes of loud music) is played.

Khena or Henna

A few days before the wedding, the tradition of henna is celebrated in the bride's house, usually in the present of bachelors and bachelorettes of the village. It is rare for elderly people to participate in the henna ritual. The night before, henna is being prepared. One of the bachelorettes puts the tray of henna on her head and surrounded by the other young people approaches the bride's house with happy sounds of "zurna" and "dhol". They first dye the bride's hands, after that all the single people do the same. Some people dye only their pinkies as a sign of participation. This tradition is borrowed from Persians and what it symbolizes is not clear. In our opinion, sharing or participation in this ceremony means to have the opportunity to marry in the future to reach their "muraz" (dream). The second morning, an elderly woman from the groom's side with a large bouquet of flowers and a man with a pitcher full of wine, explore the village accompanied with musicians. The woman approaches each house giving a flower to the eldest of each household, while the man offers a cup of drink wishing them the same happiness for their son. After the words of appreciation, they invite the family to the wedding.

In the provinces of Atrpatakan, the wedding took a whole week. A few days before the wedding, the groom's father with a few old men would go to the bride's house to "kasamat" meaning, to decide the "bashlugh" (the amount of money to be given to the bride's father in exchange for her). A noticeable amount of wine, meat, butter, and rice used to be given along with money. The day before the wedding, in front of the groom's house a bull or two would be slaughtered for the wedding. Young women and girls would dance around to the beat of "dhol" and "zurna". The neighbors gathered to drink a cup of wine, wish happiness to the couple, dance, and have fun until the late night.

Marriage

On the wedding day, a few relatives of groom go to the bride's house carrying trays of sweets, pastries, gifts, and the bride's dress. Later, everyone with a loud music of "dap" and "duduk" dance and sing and go to deliver the bride. The immediate relatives of the groom are invited in. If there is not enough space, the rest are seated around the outside tables, where they are served food and drinks from bride's father, and continue the feast while the bride dresses.

A group of young ladies or newly wed women dress the bride up, and accompany her out of her room with groom, where people cheer them up with loud songs and applauses. "Dhol" and "Zurna" encourage everyone to dance. After the bride is dressed up, her father approaches her, kisses her forehead, and ties a delicate shawl (as a belt) around her waist. This symbolizes tightening the bride's back, so in the future she will have children and continue their patriarchal race. Next, she apologizes in front of all the guests, kisses her parents' feet and begs their blessing. She turns around the tonir three times, kisses the edge of it, and leaves her father's house in tears. The relatives of groom dance in front of her and take her out of the house. Meanwhile, from the roof, fruits, flowers, and silver coins (from the groom) are splattered on her. When she leaves her house, the musicians usually sing the traditional sad song and make her family members cry. Here is a sample of the content.

They take me, dear grandma,

They separate me from my mother and father...

This sad music lasts only until the bride leaves the house. People from groom's side sing, dance, make loud noises, holding the trays full of food, and walk the bride and groom to church. Some villagers knife a sheep beneath the couple's feet and earn a reward from kavor. All of these expenses, including the church, lay on kavor, who does it without complaining, for it is honored as a sacred tradition. The sexton in the church closes the entrance and earns a present from kavor. After the ritual, the crowd walks to different directions because of the belief that the bride may return to her father's house if they take the same direction.

Stealing a Hat

The meaning of this tradition is to carry the news about delivering the bride and earn a present from the groom's father. If the bride were from the same village, a few young men would run to inform the groom's father (having kavor's written permission in advance). If the bride were from a different village, they would ride horses and the fastest would take the hat. This tradition is a proof that Armenians were competitive many centuries ago.

Until lately, some Salmasttsis would believe that the enemies tie evil "kapuch" (knots) in between bride and groom so they could not enjoy intimacy. That is the reason why they would leave the bride and groom's cloths unbuttoned until the ritual. They would even put a lock (closed) in their pockets, to secure them from an evil spell. This superstitious belief is in common for the neighboring races also.

When the crowd arrives to the groom's house with the same happy exclamations, songs, and dances, from the roof and from every side, wheat, raisin, dry fruit, various sweets, and silver coins are spread on the bride's head as a way of wishing abundance to the new family. The skilled kids would collect whatever comes across. While the bride enters the house, the groom's mother and sister crush a big plate to prevent the evil and let the goodness come in

with God's grace. Next, everyone sits beside the bride and start exclaiming that the bride wants "nstelen" (a prize, supposedly permitting to be sited). After receiving a gift from the groom's mother, she sits, in the specified place, decorated with nice pillows, encouraged by happy applause and sounds of "toosh". When the food is served, the bride does not eat, and this time the crowd exclaims that the bride wants "utelen" (a prize to start eating). After getting the next present, she starts eating. Everyone enjoys food and drinks, and tamada (host) conducts the event with all traditional elements until the next morning, when everyone is happy and satisfied and returns to their homes.

Bokhcha/Ozhit

The same day, early in the morning, a few men and women from the bride's neighbors deliver her ozhit (dowry). If she is from a rich family, one or two carts are needed, if not, a few young female workers carry on their heads bags and boxes to the groom's house. The groom's family and relatives welcome them with happy noises and loud sounds of musicians.

There is a habitual way of presenting the ozhit to relatives and neighbors. One of the skillful ladies shows the items waiving them in the air one by one and explains their usefulness. Even lingerie is being displayed. Next, comes the list of presents. This imprudent demonstration is a reason for gossip. Luckily, these rude phenomena disappeared but ozhit is still valid and is a challenge for some mothers who like to show off. Some even compete with their neighbors and relatives, and even if the budget is tight, they borrow from others to impress with the splendor of their daughter's ozhit. Those families deserve jeer, as opposed to those humble ones who only provide decent ozhit, even if it is only a vase.

There is one more important thing we forgot to mention. After the bride's arrival, before the dinner starts, the the groom, kavor, and a few relatives, accompanied by musicians, approach bride's house to invite her parents and immediate relatives. The bride's family hosts them with warmth. Sazandars (band, mostly dhol and zurna) play happy and loud music, everyone encourages them by exclaiming "toosh!" The dancers call "shabash!" (money given to dancers as a reward for musicians). People generously put shabash in their hands, afterwards the dancers give it to musicians.

Sweet Tea

After the wedding, kavor's mother/sanamer, stays at groom's house. Each province has its own traditions and customs, which are a mystery for youngsters but not for adults. The purpose of sanamer's presence in the house overnight is her being a credible witness of the bride's chastity.

Sanamer enters the bride and groom's room with a mysterious smile and puts a plate with two apples and a knife in front of them. She murmurs a prayer and crosses in the air to secure them from the spell and solemnly leaves them to enjoy their honeymoon.

The next morning, a new khon is being send to bride's mother by groom. This time, in a tray they put sugar (a huge piece of solid sugar), sweets, and fabric for the bride's mother, as an appreciation for her daughter's regard.

Usually khon is delivered with a delicate white cover, yet this one is different, it is covered with pink satin, embellished with rosebuds, to symbolize the bride's virginity.

This last ritual brings a great happiness to both families (because of the bride's virginity and the absence of any spells). Both families call their relatives and neighbors to drink sweet tea and wish the newly wed many sweet children. Bellow we give a brief description of some customs following the wedding.

Khnamapativ and Other Customs

The bride's and groom's parents mutually host each other called Khnamapativ. Later, they exchange gifts and hospitality in different occasions, such as Tyarnuntarach, Hambartsum, Navasard, etc. They however used to be official and consistent back in the past. Nowadays, it is mostly formal, but is an alive tradition which is being passed to next generation. Those traditions are part of our culture and need to be kept as key elements in the new generation's ethnic mentality and psychology, in terms of maintaining our ethnic and cultural values.

New Theatre of Haftvan

In 1943, a group of Haftvantsis (from different unions) with the help of executive committee and youth organized a group and built a contemporary theatre in Haftvan, then considered a center of Salmast province. First, they went to Tabriz to discuss this idea with the Armenian Prelacy and of course got the approval of Archbishop Melik Tangian to implement their good purpose.

A group of people were assigned as members of Haftvan's Cultural Committee: Badalian Poghos, Barkhoudarian Levon, Baroian Yeprem, Baroian Arsen, Mahtesi Sarkisian Martiros, Shahoian Grikor, Sarkisian Markar.

This committee published a booklet called "Hushardzan" (monument). Bellow are given fragments of the booklet.

"A massive section of Persian-Armenian community lived in Salmast for centuries, endured massacres, migration, violence, political and economic difficulties, and managed to keep alive traditions as well as their ethnic image. For centuries, Salmasttsis not only did not disappear in the darkness of environment, but they created schools, libraries, and theatres, prerequisites of both individual and community development and prosperity.

To insure our progress in Haftvan, schools, libraries, and theatres are being established and remodeled. As for the "Hushardzan", it is going to complement the insufficiency of our school and teaching of our native language."

This purpose, certainly, requires material means, expected to be acquired from benevolent compatriots of Tehran and Tabriz. According to the announcement of "Hushardzan" for this initiative not only Armenian but also foreign donations were collected and fulfilled the results.

The booklet mentioned the names of benefactors from Tehran, Tabriz, and other places, one by one. We found appropriate to present the number of benefactors and amount donated, as well as donations from Haftvan, which shows the level of devotion of locals. It is also known that no other villages except for Haftvan participated in this charity. Only Mahlam community

collected a decent amount and built a plain theatre, which, in a year, crumpled down (luckily in the night time without any human loss).

Here is the amount of donations:

Tehran	487 people donated	140 000 Reals
Tabriz	93 people donated	28 600 Reals
Haftvan	93 people donated	10 000Reals
Total	684	178 600

Demographics

The census of Armenian population in Salmast was always controversial, because being exposed to various political events, disasters, Ottoman or Kurdish invasions, as well as migrations and partial massacres of 1914-1918. The population declined over the time because of these conditions. On the other hand, thousands of Armenians moved to Salmast as a result of 1877-1878 Russian-Turkish war, or 1896 Vaspurakan’s massacres (from Aghbak area). Some returned to their homes, some settled in Salmast. Because of this calamitous situation, the Armenian population of Salmast continuously decreased and increased over the years. After the Russian-Persian war of 1828, Armenians migrated to their Caucasian motherland and it was the worst decline of population in Salmast.

According to some sources, only 34 000-35 000 Armenians (including Kurdish province, Soma) were in Salmast. We will get back to this later.

Another contributing factor was the periodic migration which became a tradition among Salmasttis. Some people had businesses in Caucasus or in Rostov (New Nakhijevan), and after they succeed in their businesses, moved their families and settled there.

According to Goloian, most Salmasttis who moved to Caucasus, settled in Yerevan, Nakhijevan, Ordubad, Artsakh, and surrounding areas.

Before the immigration of 1828, in the mountainous villages of Salmast, Armenians represented noticeable population. Here are the names of those villages: Hakhveran, Nzrava, Jeivajuk, Aslanik, Derik, Ajvaj, Kabik, Zango, Hovadar, Hambanava, Shidan, Urkava, and Chava.

The Immigration during 1828 Russian-Persian War

The war caused the biggest and most massive migration. As a result, from every province of Atrpatakan, Armenians moved to Caucasus and to various areas of Russia. Some part of migrants scattered to different cities of Iran, and the standing of the Armenian Prelacy declined. The violent attacks of Kurds emptied the Armenian villages and provinces. The Azery khans and beks took over the lands and properties that belonged to Armenians.

Khoy

Khoy is located in the north-west of Atrpatakan and borders with Salmast from the south, Maku from the north, the Turkish boundary from the west, and Kukhlar on the way to Tabriz from the east.

People travel to Europe through Bazergan (continental way), which is the border of Iran and Tachkastan, designated by NATO for both travelers and transportation of goods.

There are mountains Avrun, Zeylkhan, and Ghoturin on the way to Khoy, and the blooming mountains Zorava in the southwest. It is hot in the summer, but the overall climate is mild. There are large areas in Khoy, and the river Ghotur is being used to water those lands.

Zulzula Bulagh (earthquake springs) and Khosh Bulagh (sweet springs) supply drinking water. There are mines of salt, which is exported. The long canyon of Kotur is another mine, but because of its impenetrable paths, it is useless. The river Ghotur flows near the hillock where Vartan Mamikonian's chapel is located.

In the Kohnava village of Khoy there was a church which disappeared and only insignificant signs of it are visible. The village Diza also had a church, now ruined, with numerous inscriptions. In the Mohlagan, a brick church is still standing, with distorted inscriptions, hard for researching.

Khoy encountered the biggest migration in 1805 and 1828 (during Russian-Persian war), after that, in 1914-1918, when the population of Khoy was massacred by the command of Khalil Beg.

In 1896, Sharaf Beg with his Kurds attacked Kotur and massacred Armenians. One part of Armenians stayed in the Khoy after being converted to Islam forcibly. They practiced craftsmanship. According to Frankian, in 1905, there were 258 Armenian homes in different villages, from which 110 were in the city of Khoy, 86 in Seydvar, 22 in Mahazan, 18 in Diza, 17 in Shorav, 4 in Var, and 1 in Para. The names of four villages with total of 20 Armenian homes are not mentioned, for they were supposedly returned after migration. Except for the Seydava, in the mentioned villages, Armenians lived with Azeries.

In 1905, German humanist Dr. Lepsius established a German-Armenian orphanage, which was beneficial for those miserable days. He also founded a union in Germany to help particularly Armenians. The name of that hospital-orphanage later changed to "Eastern Missionary Union". It had educational, arts and crafts divisions, where the orphans were being trained. This missionary, however had hidden agenda to spread the protestant sect. Mostly Assyrians were inclined to this.

In 1933, the office of the missionary was still in Salmast. They would offer some money to poor families and persuade them to give up their Apostolic belief.

The Monastery of Derik

In 1890, the Archimandrite Tavakalian remodeled the Monastery and purchased lands. The number of Armenians was noticeable then. In 1895, Kurds attacked Derik, destroyed both the village and the monastery.

Maku

The city Maku embraces a giant cliff, hanging as a cloud on the city and is threatening to collapse and destroy it in case of earthquake. This area is ruled by the Khan. Before Reza Shah, the Khan of Maku was almost independent. The great Khan of Maku known to be the judge as well, was called by the locals Sardar. On a hillock, near Maku, there is a splendid palace, where Sardars ruled hereditarily. Lately, Murteza Ghuly Khan who simultaneously was the judge of the

city could not unify and hold down the Khans like his father Temur Khan. As a result, his power got decomposed and Maku lost its independence, in the days of Reza Shah.

The population of Maku mostly was migrated from Caucasian provinces, during the war of 1828. The Khans treated the villagers the harshest way and punished those who did not obey, by throwing them in the canyon after tying their hands and legs.

In about 15 versts from Maku, there is a village called Kishmish Tapa, with 67 Armenian homes, a church, and a priest. On the eastern side of the province Maku, along the bank of Arax the famous monastery of St. Stepannos the Martyr is located. This monastery possesses the distant village Darashamb with 30 poor Armenian homes. The Armenian Prelacy of Tabriz remodeled the monastery as a pilgrimage place. The Armenian population of Maku (about 180 homes) was under protection of the St. Thaddeus's priests (sometimes it was under Archimandrite Gevork). Armenians of Maku, as well as Kurds were the villains of khans. Before 1946 mass migration to Armenia, there were numerous Armenians in those areas. The process of migration was mostly organized in the areas where Armenians were exposed to the risk of assimilation, like in Mahabad area.

Kurds

The Kurds in Maku were divided to different Ashirats (ethnic groups), such as Jelaletsik, Mlanthsik, Brukthik, etc. Before the Russian-Persian war of 1828, they dominated Armenians and locals. In 1905, in the city of Maku there were 180 Armenian homes. The area was accountable to the priest of St. Thaddeus.

The Monastery of Apostol St. Thaddeus

The monastery is located in the province of Artaz*(Maku), in the south-western part. It is near a gorge, surrounded by cliffs. The monastery has a spacious porch, ramparts, and a few cabins. There are rooms used for the monastery needs. A stream flows near the monastery. Lately it has been equipped for pilgrims.

According to scholars, this glorious monastery has a history of 13 centuries. The level of sophistication in terms of both sculptures and architecture makes the monastery a unique artwork even today.

In half a verst to east, there is a hillock where the virgin Sandukht has perished. There is a small chapel (now partially destroyed). Around the chapel, field Shavarshanian stretches with a village Kurkh-Bulagh (forty springs). Above the village, there is a ruined stronghold on top of the four-layered hillock. People say, it was Sanatruke's mansion or stronghold.

There is a legend among the locals. According to legend, there was a mansion on top of the hill, where a gentile king lived. His daughter did not believe in idols, so the king punished his "incredulous" daughter and ordered to murder her.

Before 1990s there were 40 Armenian families in Kurkh-Bulagh. They practiced husbandry and cattle breeding, and overall had peaceful life under the protection of Kurd Dahar Khan. After Dahar Khan's death in the battle against Tachik army, the enemy attacked the village, robbed, and ruined it. As a result, people fled and scattered. The monastery endured all devastations of nature and barbarian enemies for centuries, and still it is standing with its

splendid glory. The sacred walls and sculptures carry the scars caused by enemies' cannons, as a living witness of Kurd and Tachik raids against Armenians.

The name of the former priest, the Archbishop Simeon is remembered by locals with reverence for its benevolence. The western part (the main part of the monastery) was built by his order. The monastery had villages (even in Salmast) and estates as properties. The prelacy center of Atrpatakan was moved from this monastery to Tabriz in 1870.

Superstitions

If the candle went off by itself, that means there is Satan in the house. In such cases, people should cross their faces and say "Hisos Kristos" three times with a loud voice or light up candles, so Satan runs away. People say Satan is afraid of candles, therefore, candles are being lit up in the church. Also, it is dangerous going to church in the darkness of the night, unless you hold a candle.

*This province was called Artazke, Artazk, Artavazd, or Shavarshan. It got the name Artaz, when Artashes II ordered Smbat Bagratuni to populate the province with captives brought from Alank. Artaz comes from their name.

About Life

*Soul is a bird. It is innocent and peaceful like a dove, and when it flies away from a dying body, it will never return.

*The soul is located in the left side of a person, as a beating heart. Some say that soul is the blood. When the angel comes to take the soul, he said "You were born from soil, be a soil", and takes the soul.

*The soul sits on the incense-tree, when the angel Gabriel blows his trumpet, the winds will rise and will even the mountains and canyons. The flood will kill all existing people. New people will be created, small enough to hide behind bushes, but much stronger and smarter than us. The bones of dead will arise, and then the bodies and souls will argue and complain. The soul will say "You adorned yourself and left this kingdom for me, inside the cold earth, with a heavy stone on me." Then the soul will go by God, and the body to the grave to decay. Then God will measure the soul's sins. If the sin is heavier than a fingernail, the soul will go to Hell, if it is lighter, then the soul will go to Heaven and sit on an incense-tree.

*A giant fish spins in the big sea. Its head and tail do not reach each other, but when they reach each other, the world will end.

*Under the pillow of a new woman in labor put Narek (Narekatsi's praised *Book of Tragedy*) and a knife, so the evil souls won't change the baby.

*It is recommended to feed the new woman in labor onion and garlic, so the stench keeps away the Satan and his corruption.

*It is a sin to kill a cat.

*Killing a swallow is also a sin, because it lights up God's lamp. There is a song about this matter.

Swallow, swallow, a righteous bird of God.

Whoever hits you, may his pinky bleed.

*It is a sin to kill a stork or a dove.

*To avoid getting a disease from a sick person, one must say: "I am coming from the mill."

*If the toddler does not talk, the mother steals the first bite from priest and gives it to the baby so he/she starts talking soon.

*While pouring hot water, one calls the name of Jesus, so the children of evil spirits won't get hurt and their parents won't get mad at that person.

*Sweeping the house at night time might cause the abundance to disappear.

*If the cat cleans its face, a guest will come.

*At the Ascension Day, those who have cows share the whole milk of the day with those who do not.

*If a magpie makes a noise on the roof, it means either mail or a migrant will arrive soon. There is a song for this occasion.

Good magpie, with a golden barley in your beak,

If you brought a good news, come again,

If your news is bad, may your leg break.

*If a dog howls like a wolf, it means either a family member or business is in danger.

*A barren woman can't visit a new mother within 40 days after labor. However, if the barren woman is a close relative, they hide the baby and let the woman see only the mother.

*When the moon is surrounded with the halo, it is a sign of eclipse.

*If the new moon is vertical, it's the sign of a dry month, if it is horizontal, then the month is expected to be rainy.

*In the night of St. Sarkis celebration, young bachelors eat dry pokhind, and whoever gives them water in their dream, is believed to be the future spouse.

*During Lent, a pastry of luck is being baked and whoever gets the piece with the hidden stuff (a coin, a button, etc.) is going to be the luckiest one of the year.

*During Palm Sunday, the branches of a willow are taken to church where after the blessing ritual, each family takes a branch to hang it on the wall after braiding into a wreath. It is believed to be for the good and prosperity of that family.

Sowing

Here is the list of products sold: wheat, barely, millet, sunflower, tobacco (that expanded lately), yellow and red watermelon (both round and oblong), cantaloupe (round and striped), cucumber, pumpkin, beans, clover, and sugar-beet. Lately, the government lent means to expand the sowing of sugar-beet in the area to supply the sugar factory of Urmia. Greens and vegetables like basil, marjoram, mint, tarragon, celery, tomato, eggplant, pepper, onion, garlic, cilantro, cabbage, carrot, and leguminous plants.

The fruitful trees were apple, apricot, pear, walnut, plum, quince, silverberry, peach, sour cherry, almond, fig, and mulberry.

From wild trees, poplar, maple, willow, and ash-tree are the most popular. Domestic animals and poultry in the area are horses, donkeys, mules, buffalo, sheep, goats, oxen, cows, camel, pigs, chicken, geese, ducks, and doves are in common.

While birds; hawk, magpie, dove, crow, lark, cuckoo, starling, swallow, coltsfoot, quail, owl, nightingale, wild duck, stork, hoopoe, and daydagh and nerkarar (as pronounced by natives).

Wild animals: wild boar, chamois deer, roe deer, wolf, fox, jackal, rabbit, bear (not too many), and beaver.

Mines: chalk, sulfur, plaster, black tufa, copper, charcoal, and other mines, which are mainly located in the Kurdish area called Soma.

The quarries of black tufa are on the heights of western mountains of Kohnashahr. It is mainly used for building purposes. Armenians would also use tufa for graves. The name of Tigran the stone mason (or bricklayer) is well known.

Pilgrimage Places

We cannot say that Salmastis are strong believers. They rather keep traditions inherited from their ancestors. Pilgrimage was an occasion for a feast, especially for the younger people. They would take a variety of food and items of comfort to stay until late and a party, sing, and dance, and sacrifice animals. Prishvar was known to be the main pilgrimage place, preferred by most families from Tabriz. Other pilgrimage places were St Astvatsatsin (in the eastern region of Havftvan), St. Paul (on the way from Haftvan to Ula), St. Thaddeus (near Butamin), Zorabar-Commander Vartan (in the western part of Mahlam), St. Zorun, St. Sarkis (church Kochamich), the monastery of St. Astvatsatsin- Virgin or Derik.

There were about 50 churches and chapels.

The Armenian Population

According to A. Ataian (1906), before the migration of 1828, there were 2,000 Armenian families in Salmast. As a result of the massacre of 1896 in Tachkastan, hundreds of families moved and settled in Salmast from Aghbak. The villages mostly had crooked and stenchy roads (because of manure) and mud houses. Only rich people had brick houses with windows. The villagers used to have ivkaltu (storages for wheat and flower). There were spacious rooms, an open tonratun (a bakery for making daily bread), and a koghtik (a room where fruits were hanging from the ceiling). There was also a closed tonratun, a stable, and a hay-loft.

Tradional Dishes

Kufta, shorva, dolma, barbeque, kebab, omlet, mash (beans), Lent dolma (made with minced walnut and beans, wrapped with grape leaves), panjar (from various plants and walnut mistures), Khash, leaf dolma, cereal, chash, chuvchur (dish with eggs, no meat), dzavar (crushed wheat), korkote, dila shorva, fried meat, soup, harissa, kashovi (rice pilav), brian (whole lamb, baked in the tonir/ground oven), ghaila/ghavurma, bornai (pumpkin dish), halva, khavits, murtukha, kngrun (with flower and molasses), khoris (type of halva), pokhind, hasuda (butter, flower, and molasses), rushta, atam hatik.

Domestic Items

Here is the list of items for the hastatun/bakery: tasht (big wooden bowl for making), okhlav (rolling pin), tasht (metallic, large bowl used for laundry or bath), kulik, kuzhe, hamayil (same as kulik but bigger), karas, takhtak (a short table used for rolling dough), khacherkat (a cross-shaped, metal for holding trays in the ground oven), antrots (poker), putik, dzutzum (clay barrel for making butter), ghazan (large pot), rubejik (a pot with handles), erkank (hand mill), balen (milk or yogurt pitcher), samavar, chaydan (teapot), apse/kasa/pnak (plate), jurai (pot), tava (pan), sakhen (bathing bowl).

Marzka is an oval tool for baking lavash. It is made of flexible branches covered with soft fabric. A piece of dough, after being rolled into a big oval, goes on the marzka and then to the hot walls of tonir. After the lavash is ready with the help of a metallic stick called shish, the baker takes it out. Types of bread are lavash, taptupa (round bread with a hole in the middle), bonbo, round, unsalted bread, and gata with sweet khoriz. The main domestic items were the furnace, lamp, bafrik (a paddle for cleaning the snow), sand (a log with a deep hole for mincing wheat), yerkank/mill (two round rocks with holes in the middle, spinning on each other to mince wheat, salt, pepper, or to make pokhind), marzon (sickle), tapurik (a large pan for cleaning the wheat), chankrik (tool for mixing soil), khop, gutan (a metallic tool attached to a few oxen and used for field work), khurik, jarjar (for crushing the wheat), lampa (a tool used for separating wheat from hay), loots (yolk), chopan (to keep the yolk on the bulls neck), araba (a four wheeled cart).

Jangyulume (jujuna)

At the Ascension Day, girls make jujuna (this custom is still alive). On Wednesday evening, they go towards the herd returning from the field. They lift seven small rocks with their mouths and throw them in the green jar called kanachik, without speaking a word. Then they add water, tighten the cover, and take it home. At home, they put the open jar on the roof, so the rocks see the stars Leyli and Majnune at night. On Thursday morning, girls decorate the jar with flowers, sing jangyulume and dance holding the jar. In the separate jar, they pour water and each participant throws something (a ring or a button). A young girl dressed up as a bride with a veil takes out the items one by one and reads a quatrain for each one, as if it were the owner's fortune. Here are some of the poetry pieces.

The moon is under clouds,
I am the one in your mood.
Where did I love you?
Under the stems of carnation.

I am settled in Salmast,
My ring is made of almast.
My admirers have arrived,
My golden belt is ready.

It is cloudy near the brook,
Golden bushes are piled up,
Let me pass through the way,
And see my migrant brother.

Songs of Jangyulume

My heart will bleed, if I sigh,
What should I say to my yar,
He'll return when the year turns.
My yar went through mountains,
My yar went through my heart,
He left hurt, and won't return,
I'm afraid.
She was a flower with a scent.
She came and passed in front of me.
I saw and loved her.
I stay longing for her.

I loved, they took my yar away,
They gave me yara(wound) and took away.
What an evil world.
They tore my heart and took away.

I give my heart, you give yours,
Oh my graceful beauty.
My heart is a black field, your love is a red rose,
Let it bloom there.
My heart is a night, your love is a bright star,
Let it shine there.

In the silence of the night
A song approached to my heart.
Whose heart was that love and sorrow
It brought and filled in my heart.

A black cloud on the hill,
A partridge on the rock.
We promised each other
On the top of high hill,
On the green bank of the spring.

I have sifted Calabat,
I have salted/seasoned a koghap,
Thousands of troubles and pains

I have buried in my heart.

I took a jug, went up hill.
I couldn't find fidan yar.
Give my my fidan yar,
So I wont' be in distress.

I praise the chill of the hill,
I praise the fair boy's height.
I haven't seen him for a year.
I praise those who did.

There is a violet near tree.
Jangyulume, Jan-Jan.
My yar is a blossom like you,
Jan flower, jan-jan.

There is a cellar behind my home.
Bachelors came and left.
They turned into precious stones,
When I tried to catch them.

Bard Harutyun's Turkish Songs

Oh beautiful marjoram,
May God keep you in the water.
I won't let you away from my heart,
Even if my name is disgraced.

In the marketplace of Tabriz
A girl is holding paper and pen.
To write down her sorrow and pain.

Khlvlik

People celebrate Khlvlik in Navasard. According to a belief, it is a fairy devil, that approaches people in a friendly way to trick them. He takes them and throws them to the gorge. This character was used to scare or discipline naughty children. This would affect them psychologically, so people changed it into an entertaining holyday. Children attach a sock on the end of a long string and let it down through the neighbor's roof-hole. They sing a traditional song for this occasion asking for raisin and nuts. People in the house fill the sock with fruits, and children lift the sock up and go to the next neighbor's door. Since it coincides with Navasard (new year), people start a new job or leave the old job, because that day is considered the end of working period.

Riddles

A long strand through Nakhchavan.

Ant

A long oude with a flower at the end.

Candle

I came running from a hill
And threw a jidan seven gas.

Lightning

Round jar, a yellow kid in the middle.

Egg

My father is my son,
I gave birth to my mom.

Egg

It won't enter the paian,
Unless you cut its tail.

Raisin

There is a tree with two leaves.
One is white, one is black.

Day and Night

If I sing lullabies, it cries,
If I put it down, it is quiet.

Saz

Two brothers behind a hill,
Never see each other.

Eyes

Proverbs

I tell my wife, to let my daughter-in-law hear.

A game for a cat is a death for a mouse.

I am agha, you are agha, who will mill our wheat?

If the donkey were good, would die in the owner's yard.

A light (help) for everyone else, but a hollow for us.

A fire for us,
A blessing for others.

While Shushan dresses up,
The sermon ends.

Whoever has appetite, has no pilaf.
Whoever has pilaf, lacks appetite.

He was born as a donkey and grew up as an ass.

I am the one who was at church,
Are you saying Lord save.

I am at your house. Whose house were you?

A snake's sting will heal, a tong's bite won't.

A Kurd won't say his yogurt is sour.
If you let a girl decide,
She will choose a zurnachi.

You won't get full by fellow's food.

A kid won't stay under the basket.
A soft word can take the snake out of its nest.

While a wiseman is thinking, a dumb will cross the river.

A dumb threw a rock in a well, thousands of wise people couldn't take it out.

You can't put your hey on his strand.

This is a wine, not a tan (yogurt drink), and not for everyone.

A sugar in the dog's mouth.

A priest in the house, A Satan in the outside.

My mother-in-law died, so my space expanded.

Curses/Oaths

May the devil take you.

May god give you a rash and no fingernails to scratch.

May your food be on the rabbit's back.

May your mother die.

May you be longing for a gharib (migrant).

May your mother be in torment.

May your mother be childless.

May your jigyar (soul) hurt.

May you wear black.

May your home destroy and a garden be instead.

Black sun.

Blessings/Benedictions

May the rock you touch become gold.

May God save you.

May you blossom and flourish.

May god bless your mother and father (May your mother and father rest in peace).

May Father Abraham's blessing be with you.

May you be in the light.

May God tie your green and red (marriage).

May you accomplish your goals.

May you harvest ten out of one.

May your house be prosperous.

Head Decorations and Ornaments

Women would comb their hair once in a few days and leave a line in the middle called zilfir. The two bunches of hair twist near the ears and the ends roll around the white fabric attached to kazma behind the head. Kazma is an oval sheet of metal wrapped in a wool or cotton fabric and a satin with fringes from the outside. One kind of kazma has braided fringes like a shawl that turns under the chin and goes on top of the head. On the forehead, it goes chtik or jahad with four golden or silver coins from both sides to decorate the kazma. In front of strangers or in the pilgrimage places women would attach a white, green, or pink veil from the back that reach their backs. This last element would add a unique effect to the whole ensemble, especially for tall and elegant-looking ladies.

Villages of Salmast During 1905-1910

Names	Homes	Population
Haftvan	463	2600
Payajuke	350	2000
Mahlam	200	1100
Ghalasar	121	685
Savra	168	809
Saramerik	90	450
Sarna	90	450
Old City (Kohnashahr)	125	625
Akhtkhana	60	305
Ghزلja	45	262
Kelashan	28	130
Drishk	24	125
Sheytanava	19	87
Vartan	21	105
Khosrova	36	140
Keojamij	15	66
Jeyvajuk	6	33
Ula	6	
Total	1853	10250

In XIV century, Salmast had a separate prelacy because of the noticeable Armenian population. The prelacy office center was Haftvan. In 1316, the prelate was Bishop Hakop. The ARD party center was in the village Kalasar, where in 1904 Garegin Njdeh with Samson Khan organized the liberation movement. According to Y. Frangulian, before the war of 1828, the population of Salmast was 40,000, one quarter of which were Armenians. Now a number of villages, such as Hakhveran, Humbanava, Shetan, Aslanik, Zango, Qabik, etc. are Kurdish.

The name Salmast came from the local Persian word Salum (health), based on healing climate.

Haftvan

As a center of Salmasttsi Armenians, the prelacy was in the Haftvan in 1900s. This village used to excel the others in terms of education and cultural life. It had a school (for both genders) with five teachers and 120 students. Unfortunately, the names are not recorded.

According to the records, five out of 23 villages of Salmast were Armenian: Haftvan, Mahlman, Payajuke, Ghalasar, and Saran. The records do not show the names of 20 mountain villages and Kurdish province, Soma (with 25 Armenian families) where Armenians lived mixed with Kurds. In Haftvan, there were 700 Armenian homes, with 2314 pure Armenian population. In the days of 1828 war, number of people from this village migrated to Armenia. The name of

the village comes from Persian words haft (seven) and divan (court). Another version which is more possible is seven establishments. In 1900s there was a charitable fund called Hayuheeats (belonging to Armenian ladies).

Visitors of Haftvan

First time, the Aylvazian jazz band visited Haftvan. The performance of jazz band was accepted with an exceptional warmth. The songs “Hey Jan Yerevan” (performed by Rashid Beybutov) and “I Brought Greetings from Armenia” people learned by heart. After this, local Armenians would sing both songs before starting special events and parties (standing up).

Next, Shara Talian visited Haftvan with his wife. This concert was also welcomed by locals.

Later, Tatul Altunian’s song and dance band came to Haftvan. The concert took place in the front yard of the school, because of the number of people attending. It is hard to describe the emotions of people towards performers. They delivered Altunian to the auditorium on their hands. The concert had started with the dance “Shalakho”. Their professionalism inspired the audience. After number of dance and song performances, the band presented national heroic songs (both old and new). Lusik Koshian sang “I am Going to Army” and once again touched the audience with deep emotions of nostalgic memories.

After the concert, the band enjoyed the Haftvantsis’ hospitality until late night. Saying farewell to Altunian and his cherished group was very hard and emotional.

Payajuke

The name Payajuke originated from Turkish words paya (cattle-shed) and jiy or julugh (place). In 1900s, there was a school with nine teachers and about 100 students. The school was built by Manaserian brothers. The village also had a theatre named “Raffi” and a library with 1,000 books. The village was aghalugh (belonging to an agha/landowner), so the locals used to pay taxes one out of seven to the landowner. Later, the brothers Budaghian bought the village and it became the property of Armenians. The village had 350 homes with 1878 people, 349 of which migrated.

The house of renowned Raffi (destroyed in 1930 earthquake) is located on the west from Payajuke’s ruined church.

Mahlam

Mahlam is located eight versts from Shapour. It has a church, St. Gevork, monasteries Suvertak/St. Vartan, and pilgrimage places.

The earthquake destroyed the Armenian church St. Zorun (St. Zoravar). The name Mahlam is a distorted version of a Persian Marham (remedy). There were 185 homes, with 1048 people in 1904. The locals were known to make various cures, and marham was an ointment used for different wounds. Mahlam had a school with two teachers and 82 students. The village was a royal property called Khalisa. Villagers would pay one out of eight taxes to aghas. In 1950, a Kurd named Sofi bought one third of the village.

Here are the famous family names of Mahlam and Haftvan: Mahtesi Baghdasarians, Mahtesi Hakopians, Avakians, Melkonians, Baroians, Ojakhians, and Babloians.

Ghalasar

It is a purely Armenian village on the bank of river Zola, on the way to Shapoure.

The villagers interpret the name as Persian Ghala (stronghold) .

There were 121 homes with 684 people, two schools, three teachers, 100 students, and a library named Artsruni (offered 1300 books). In the village, a charitable fund was established by the Armenian ladies, called "Raffi". There were two fountains, a stony church, and two chapels called Mar Govargiz (St. Gevork in Assyrian). In 1910, the representative of the ARD Samson Khan settled in Ghalasar.

Savra

According to Raffi, Savra/Savrkegh was the birthplace of Khachagogh (Raffi's famous character). Before it was called Ghuzulkiand, meaning golden village in Azery.

According to the legend, Shah Fath Ali visited Salmast and when he saw Savra from the heights of St. Hovanes Monastery, exclaimed: "I traveled Iran, Turan, and saw Eden after(sohra)". He was delighted by the view of village gardens. The word Sovra (later, after) became the name of the village which later became Savra.

There were 168 Armenian homes, 815 people, 354 of which migrated (according to Ataian). There were also 200 Azery families.

The village had one school, two teachers, 80 students, and a small library. The village was Khalisa (belonging to royal court) and payed one out of eight taxes.

Saramerik

This village is located in the Northern hillside. There are 100 Armenian homes with a population of 634. There are also 30 Azery homes in the village. Saramerik had no school. Because of the water shortage, people would use swampy springs as the main source of water.

Sarna

In 1900s, the village population was purely Armenian. It is located on the right side of river Zola, next to Jeyvajuke. Before migration of 1828, Sarna was a big village with 104 homes and 543 Armenians. Sarna had one school with 30 students. There is a church (or a chapel) in Sarna called Markhina (Mar Yurkhanna/St. Hovanes in Assyrian). Next to southern walls of Markhina is burried renowned Bard Harutyun.

On the first Sunday of Easter, people with feaver or shkhtuk (wart) would go to church and pray for cure. According to a superstitious belief, after a set of words and a ritual, the sickness or the shkhtuk would go away.

Akhtakhana

This village had 60 homes with 305 Armenian population, a school and 30 students. Akhtakhana is one of the villages where the government prohibited to ring the church bells, so people were called to a prayer by kochnak/small bell.

Ghuzulja

The name Ghuzulja is a Turkish word meaning a measure of gold. Up until 1828 migration, the village was purely Armenian. Now there are 90 Azery homes and 45 Armenian homes with 262 Armenian population. There is no school in the village, so people practice at home.

Vartan

According to a legend, this village was established by Vartan Mamikonian. It is located in the north from Shapoure and is neighboring Saramerik. There are 27 homes with 194 Armenians. It used to be purely Armenian, and many times was a target for Kurdish invasions. Now the village belongs to sunni muslims and the language spoken is Azeri. On the hill, there is a chapel called Hakh Nazar (true covenant) and a graveyard. According to a legend, Azeries thought that Nazar the saint was Muslim and at his burial turned his body facing their mosque. The next day they found out that the saint's body was facing Armenian church. They did not touch the grave any more. The locals also tell that Azeries saw a burning candle passing by the tomb.

There is a mineral spring in the village which heals fever when people swim in the water.

Khosrova

This village is located in 10km from Shapoure, on the western side of Haftvan. There are 400 Assyrian homes, a school and a convent. According to elderly people, Khosrova used to be completely Armenian. After 1828 migration, the Assyrians came from Julamerik (Vaspurakan) with their Catholic priest and settled there. Based on a legend, the village was established by the order of Armenian king Khosrov and was called Khosrovabad/Khosrovashen. The village belongs to French missionaries and pays one out of eight taxes to them. Missionaries opened a school, where Armenian children also attended in the past.

Drishk

The name means potter and it originated from the main occupation of villagers. Some masters who lived before 1920 are still known, such as Tigran Babakhanian, Misak and Aram. The village is located in the southern part of province Salmast, on the right bank of river Zola, and in three versts from Shapour. Before 1828 migration, Drishk was a purely Armenian village with 300 homes. Before 1930 it became a property of aghas.

Sheytanava

The village had 25 Armenian homes.

Ula

Ula is located in the south of Haftvan, near river Zola. Before 1828 it was a purely Armenian village.

Gyulizan

Until 1828 it was Armenian. In 1930s Armenians, Assyrians, and Azeries lived together.

Patava

It is an Assyrian village, neighboring Khosrova, with 100 Assyrian and 10 Armanian homes, and a few Kurds.

Kohnashahr

In 1900, there were 800 Azery, 127 Armenian, and 50 Jewish homes. The number of Armenians in the village was 868. There was a school, two teachers, a library (with 600 books). The village was a center for missionaries, which later moved to Haftvan. The village uses the river Derik's water, has a kahriz (pure drinking) water. There are chapels in Kohnashahr: St. Hovanes and St. Varvar. Catholicos has a church Mar Yaghub (father Hakop). People with diabolism are taken there for cure.

