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RESEARCH ON ARMENIAN ARCHITECTURE

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Responsible for this issue
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THE POPULATION OF KESAB BETWEEN 1906 AND 2006

by Raffi Kortoshian

At present the district of Kesab, the centre of which is the city of the same name, forms part of Latakia Province and is situated at the north-western extremity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

It consists of 11 Armenian-inhabited villages (Garaturan, Garatash, Sev Aghbyur, Nerkin, Chinar, Chakaljek, Korkyune, Ekizoluk, Tyuzaghaj, Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz and Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz) and occupies an area of about 90 sq. kms.¹

The district borders on the Turkish village of Muselek and the Mediterranean Sea in the north-west (in the west as well); Mounts Cassius and Pallum in the north; the Turkish village of Bezeku in the north-east; the Turkish-inhabited district centre of Ortu in the east; the valley of the Leghejyor in the south (the borderline runs along a gorge extending to Faga-Hasan), and the Turkoman villages of Faga-Hasan, Hyurmetli and Petrusie in the south-west.

The highest peak in the district is Mount Cassius (1,750 metres), which is followed by Mount Pallum (1,250 metres).² Other mountains include Seltran (1,129 metres)³ and Tunak (838 metres). It does not have perennial rivers or streams. The Meghradzor and Tyuzaghaj tributaries are not ever-flowing ones.

All the villages of Kesab, with the exception of Pashort, have fountains which flow throughout the year, that of Chinar being the most abundant of all.

The southern, south-western and south-eastern parts of the district are mostly covered with fir woods, while its northern, north-western and north-eastern lands are mainly planted with oak and laurel trees.

During the period between the early 20th century and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the district of Kesab formed part of Ortu Nahie, which was within the jurisdiction of Jeser-Sheghur Kaza of Aleppo Governorate. The only exception were the villages of Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz and Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz, which were included in Damascus Governorate and belonged to the Mutasarifat of Latakia.⁴

In 1919, under the French rule, Kesab was made part of Antioch Kaza as a separate nahie the jurisdiction of which spread to all the Armenian-inhabited villages of the district, except Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz

and Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz, as well as to the Turkish village of Muselek.⁵

In 1939 the sanjak of Alexandreta, Antioch Kazan, was incorporated into Turkey (Kesab District excluded), as a result of which, part of the estates of the population of the district appeared within Turkish territories, according to the newly-specified borders. Likewise, the most important mountains of the district, the Cassius and the Pallum, shifted into Turkish possession.⁶

In 1955 the villages of Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz and Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz were included in the district centre of Kesab.⁷

Kesab remained a purely Armenian-inhabited district until the mid-19th century. The local inhabitants were followers of different religious denominations: Apostolic, Evangelical (officially recognised in 1853), Catholic (officially recognised in 1857) and Latin (officially recognised in 1890).⁸ In 1946 those adhering to the Latin Church merged into the Catholic community.⁹

The Armenian population of the district considerably diminished after the massacres of 1909, the Genocide of 1915 and the repatriation of 1947. In the 1960s, the Arab Alawis who had been working for the influential Armenians of Kesab for almost a century came to replace them as the inhabitants of the district: taking advantage of the state legislation, they assumed possession of some estates and took up permanent residence there, continuing their peaceful co-existence with the local Armenians.

According to the population census of 1906, the district of Kesab had 1,318 purely Armenian houses, including 678 Apostolic, 531 Evangelical, 66 Catholic and 43 Latin ones. The Apostolic Armenians had 2 schools and the Evangelicals 11. The Catholics and Latins together had 3 schools.

The district centre of Kesab had an Armenian population of 450 Apostolic, 320 Evangelical and 30 Catholic houses. The Apostolics had a single school for boys, and the Evangelicals 2 primary, 1 secondary and 2 unisex higher ones.

1 Չոլաքիանի Յ., Զեւար [H. Cholakian, Kesab], vol. 3 (Aleppo, 2004), 61.

2 Ibid., vol. 1 (Aleppo, 1995), 45.

3 Ibid., vol. 3, 68.

4 Ibid., vol. 1, 49.

5 Ibid., vol. 3, 63.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., vol. 1, 143.

8 Ibid., 51.

9 Ibid., 389.



Kesab



For the villages of the district, the results of this population census were as follows:

Garaturan: 120 Apostolic, 48 Evangelical and 12 Catholic houses, with a school belonging to each of these communities;

Sev Aghbyur: 25 Apostolic, 21 Evangelical and 4 Catholic houses with a single functioning school for the Evangelicals;

Nerkin (Lower): 17 Apostolic, 5 Evangelical and 8 Catholic houses;

Chinar: 28 Apostolic, 10 Evangelical and 12 Catholic houses with a single school for the Catholics and Latins together;

Chakaljek: 20 Apostolic and 45 Evangelical houses with a single school belonging to the Evangelicals;

Korkyune: 10 Apostolic and 28 Evangelical houses with a single school for the Evangelicals;

Ekizoluk: 50 Evangelical houses with a school;

Tyuzaghaj: 6 Apostolic and 9 Evangelical houses;

Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz: 2 Apostolic and 15 Evangelical houses with a single school for the Evangelicals;

Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz: 43 houses of Latins with a school.¹⁰

In April 1909, the Armenian villages of Kesab District were plundered and burnt, with their inhabitants being put to a massacre.¹¹ It is for this reason that the population census of 1911, carried out by Archimandrite Movses Voskerichian, shows their number as decreased by 10.31 %, as compared to the data available for 1906.

This census revealed the following statistical picture of the Armenian population of the district: Kesab City - 543 houses; Pashort - 13, Garaturan - 237, Sev

Aghbyur - 71, Nerkin (Lower) - 33, Chinar - 38, Chakaljeke - 25, Korkyune - 67, Ekizoluk - 59, Tyuzaghaj - 22, Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz - 22,¹² and Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz - supposedly about 52.¹³ To summarise, in 1911 the district of Kesab had a population of 1,182 houses.

As of 1911, the Apostolics of the district had 7, the Evangelicals 8, and the Catholics and Latins together 4 schools. In the district centre of Kesab, the Apostolics had a single unisex school, and the Evangelicals 2 schools one of which was a higher unisex institution and the other a female one. The Catholics and Latins together had a single unisex school.

The picture of schools in different villages was as follows:

Garaturan: 2 for the Apostolics, a unisex one for the Evangelicals and another for the Catholics and Latins together;

Sev Aghbyur: a school for each of the Apostolic and Evangelical communities;

Nerkin: a single school belonging to the Apostolics;

Chinar: a school for the Apostolics and another for the Catholics and Latins together;

Chakaljeke, Korkyune and Ekizoluk: a school for the Evangelicals in each of them;

Tyuzaghaj: a school for the Apostolics;

Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz: a school for the Evangelicals;

Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz: a school for the Latins.¹⁴

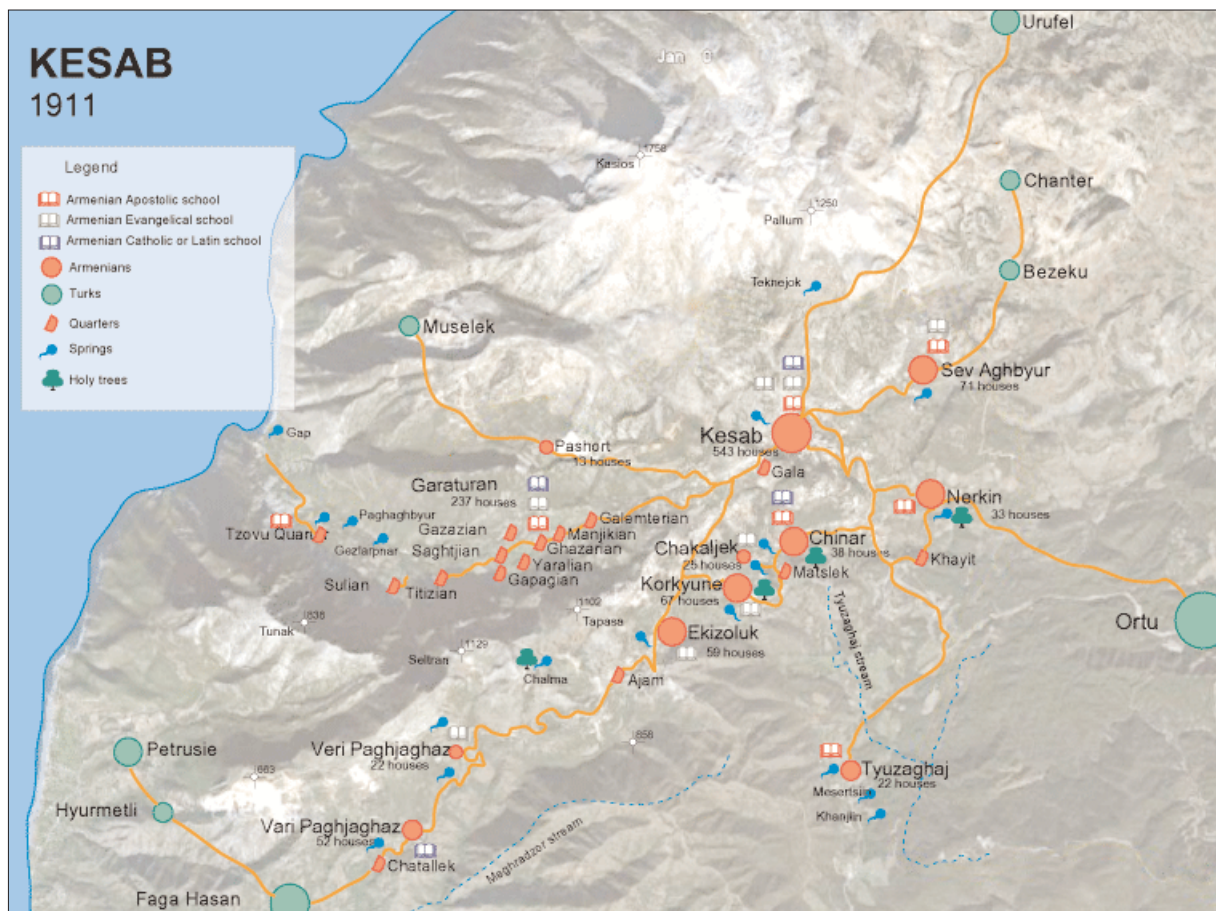
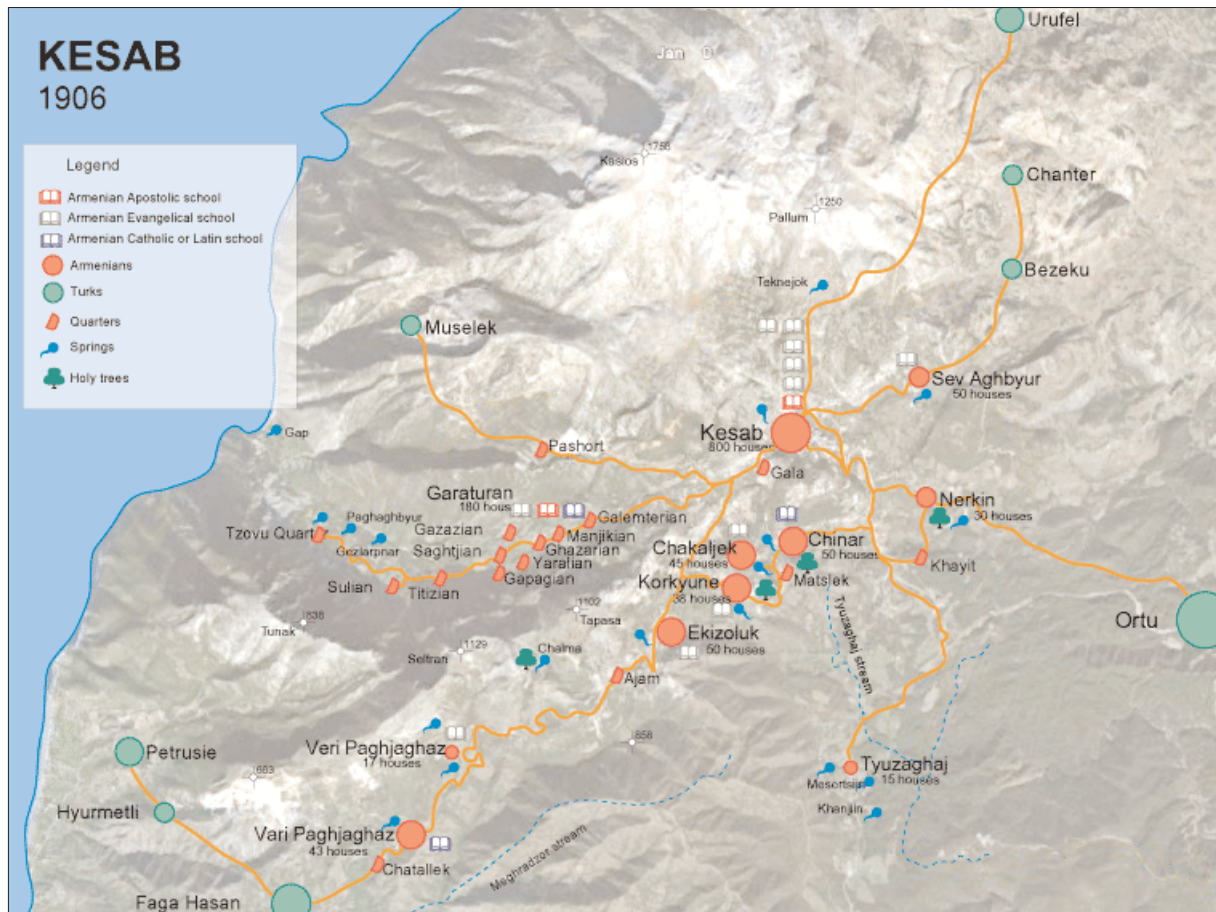
¹² Ibid., 351, 422, 436, 440, 442, 444-445, 449, 454-455.

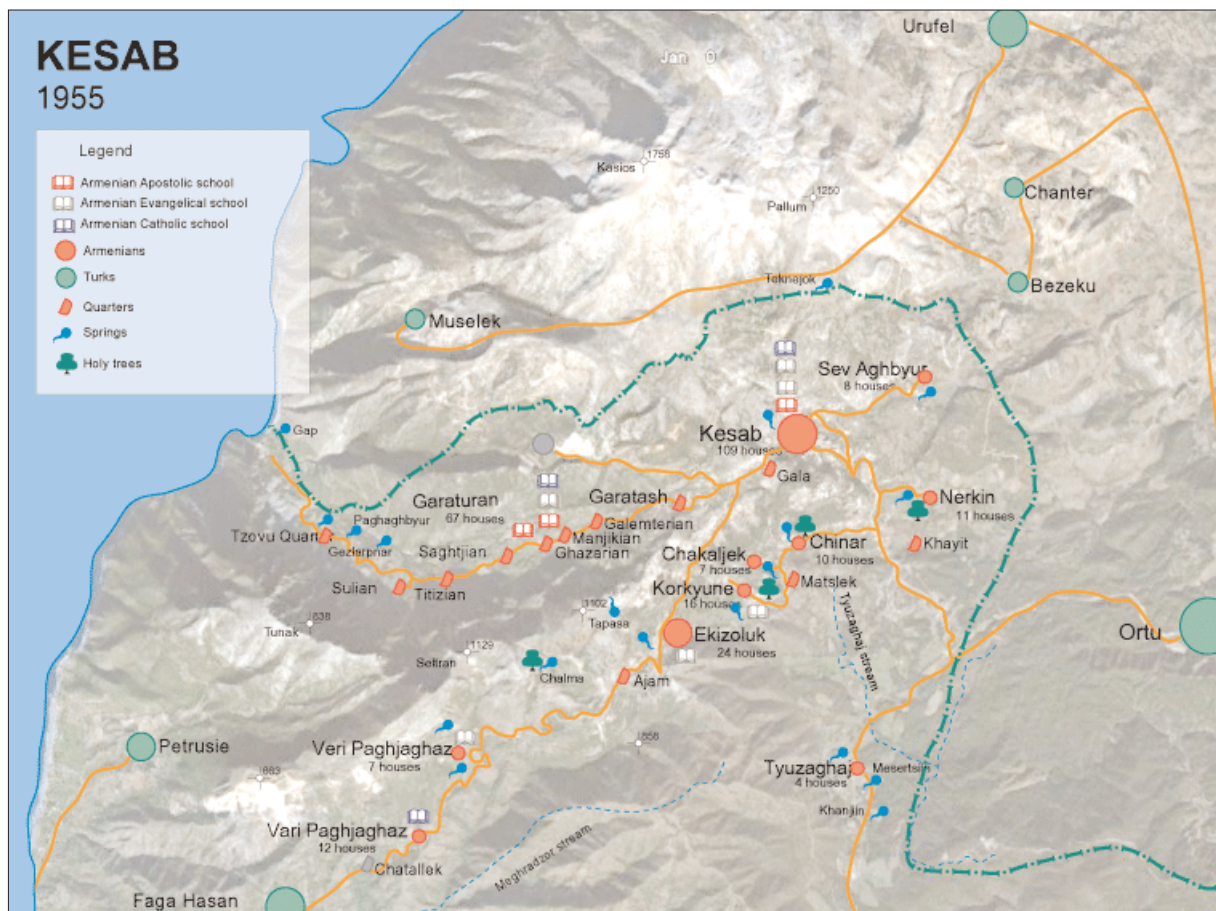
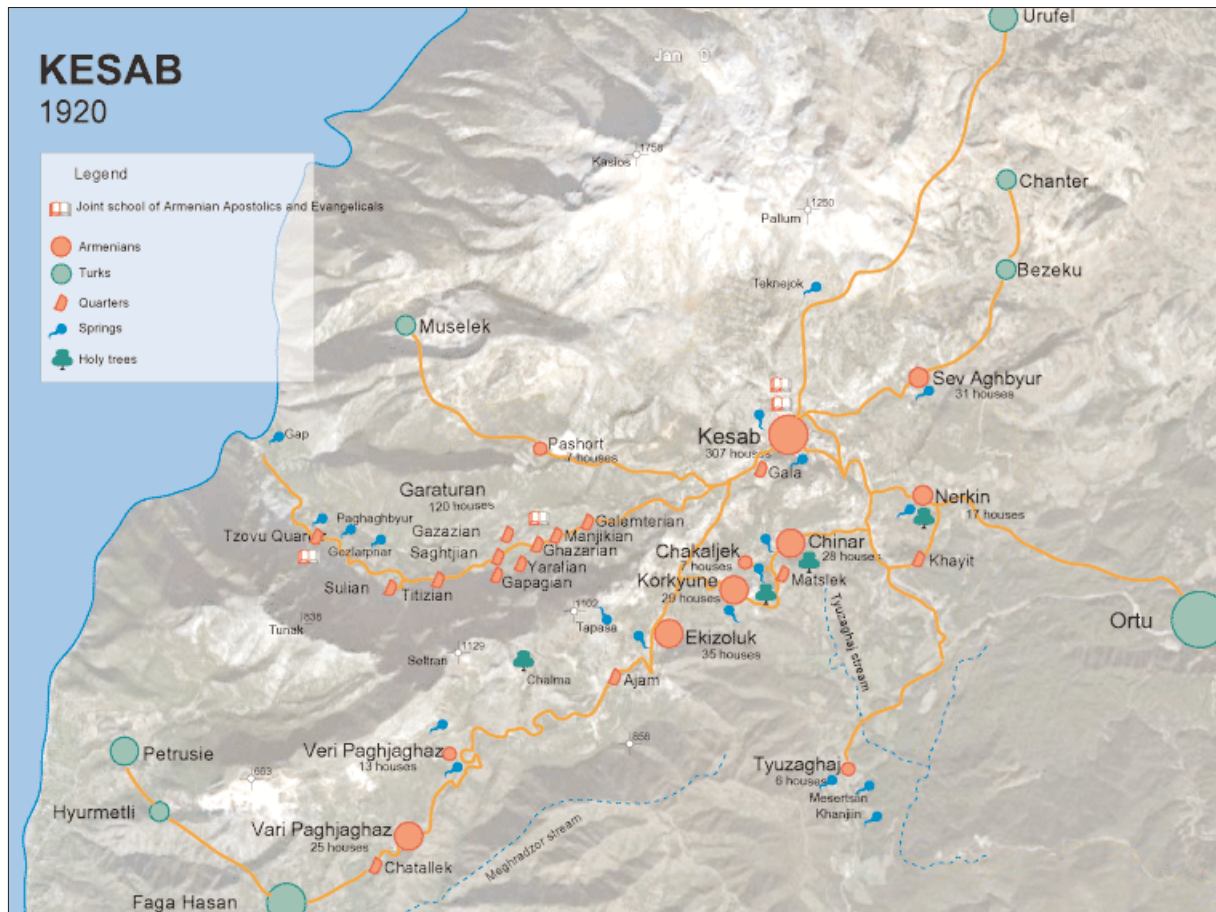
¹³ Archimandrite Movses Voskerichian shows the number of the population of Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz as merged in that of Faga-Hasan (**Cholakian**, vol. 1, 392) so that there are no exact data regarding their number. We have provided the number of the village population for 1911 taking into account the process of the growth of the inhabitants of Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz in 1906 and 1911.

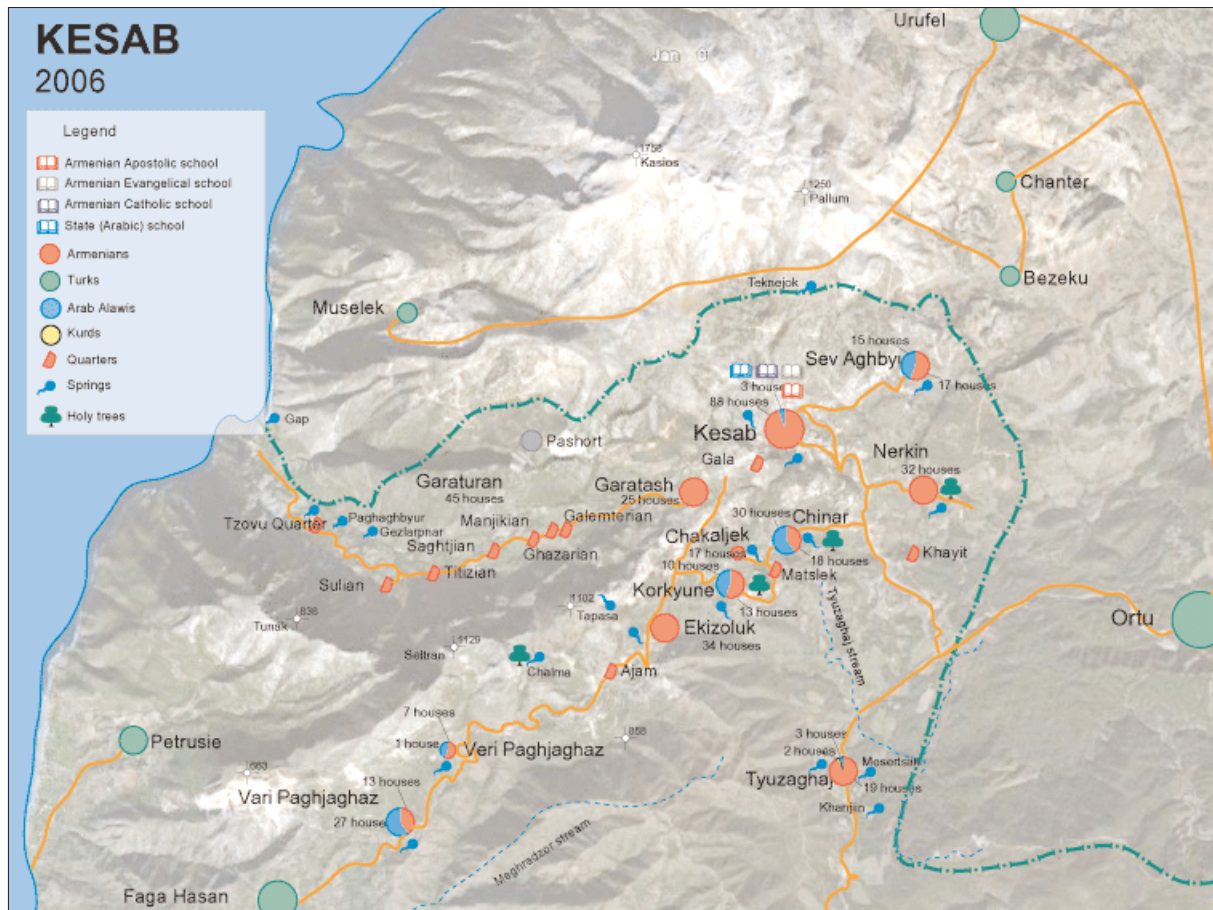
¹⁴ **Cholakian**, *ibid.*, 242, 249, 253, 316, 318, 320-321, 335, 343, 347-348, 351, 361, 370, 378, 382, 391.

¹⁰ «Արևելեկան մամուլ» [*Arevelian Mamul*], no. 50 (1906), 1228-1231.

¹¹ **Cholakian**, vol. 1, 91-94.







The comparison of the data available for 1906 and 1911 shows that school building activity became especially wide-spread among the Apostolic Armenians of the district after the disaster of 1909.

In 1915 the population of Kesab was subjected to a deportation and a slaughter. After 1918 those who had had a miraculous escape from the massacres started returning to their native villages. The population census carried out by Simon Ayanian in 1920 clearly showed that the number of the inhabitants of the district had decreased by 47.1 %, as compared with that of 1911.

According to this census data,¹⁵ the district centre of Kesab had a population of 307 houses; Sev Aghbyur 31, Nerkin 17, Chinar 28, Chakaljeke 7, Korkyune 29, Ekizoluk 35, Tyuzaghaj 6, Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz 13, Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz 25,¹⁶ Garaturan approximately 120, and Pashort 7 ones.¹⁷ On the whole, in 1920 Kesab District had a population of 625 houses.

In 1920 the Evangelicals and Apostolics of the district had 4 schools together: a male and a female one in the district centre and 2 in Garaturan.¹⁸

In 1921 the Catholics started building schools. After 1924 the collaboration of the Apostolics and Evangelicals in the sphere of education came to an end, and each of these communities continued its activity independently.

In 1947 around two thirds of the district population repatriated to Soviet Armenia as a result of which, the village of Pashort was left totally uninhabited,¹⁹ and the schools which had reopened during 1920 to 1946 began closing one after another.

The population census of 1955²⁰ showed that the number of the inhabitants of the district had diminished by 56 %, as compared to the data for 1920.

According to its results, the district centre of Kesab had 109²¹ houses, Garaturan 67, Sev Aghbyur 8,

¹⁵ Simon Ayanian presents the number of all the inhabitants of Kesab who lived in the district and outside it as of 1920, but we have given that of only those inhabitants who lived in Kesab in the same year.

¹⁶ Cholakian, vol. 3, 237-291.

¹⁷ The results of the population census of 1920 carried out by Simon Ayanian do not include data for the villages of Garaturan and Pashort: we think that the document containing this information has not come down to us or no census was conducted there for some reason or another (ibid., 233-234). We do not have trustworthy information regarding these places and have offered the statistical evidence for 1920 by comparing the decrease of the population in the other villages of the district in 1911.

¹⁸ Cholakian, vol. 1, 245, 318-319.

¹⁹ Ibid., 138.

²⁰ During the population census of 1955, the inhabitants of the district were registered by the number of souls. As the previous censuses represent that of houses, we have divided the number of souls registered in 1955 by 6, thus getting that of houses in each village.

²¹ Cholakian, vol. 1, 138. We have got the number of the population of Kesab District Centre by extracting that of the inhabitants of all the villages from the total of the district population.

Nerkin 11, Chinar 10, Chakaljek 7, Korkyune 16, Ekizoluk 24, Tyuzaghaj 4, Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz 7, and Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz 12 ones.²² On the whole, in 1955 the district had a population of 275 houses.

In the same year, the Apostolic Armenians of Kesab District had 3, the Evangelicals 6, and the Catholics 3 schools.

The district centre had 2 schools belonging to the Evangelicals, and one for each of the Apostolic and Catholic communities.

The Apostolics of Garaturan had 2 schools, each of the local Evangelical and Catholic communities having one.

The Evangelicals had a single school in each of the villages of Korkyune, Ekizoluk and Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz, and the Latins had one in Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz.²³

In the 1960s, part of the population of the district emigrated to Lebanon, thence to the USA and later to the United Arab Emirates. As already stated above, during the same period, the Arab Alawis took possession of the Armenians' estates and assumed permanent residence in Kesab.

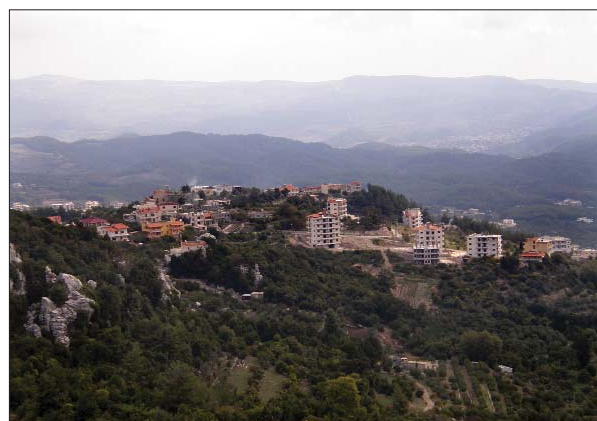
Fortunately, the scale of emigration decreased in the 1970s thanks to the fact that Kesab had become a tourism centre and a place of summer residence for the Armenians of Aleppo.

Between 1990 and 2000, the district grew into one of the high-class tourism centres in Syria, thanks to which, the local population manifested numerical increase for the first time in the 20th century.

During our visit to Kesab in 2006, the population of its villages represented the following picture:

	<i>Armenians</i>	<i>Alawis</i>	<i>Kurds</i>
Kesab District Centre	88	3	
Garaturan	45		
Garatash	25		
Ekizoluk	34		
Nerkin (Lower) Village	32		
Chinar	18	30	
Chakaljek	17		
Sev Aghbyur	17	15	
Vari (Lower) Paghjaghaz	13	27	
Veri (Upper) Paghjaghaz	7	1	
Tyuzaghaj	19	3	2
Korkyune	13	10	
<i>Total</i>	<i>328</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>2</i>

In the same year (2006), the Armenians of the district represented the following statistical picture from the standpoint of religious identity: Apostolics - 212 houses, Catholics - 71, and Evangelicals - 45.



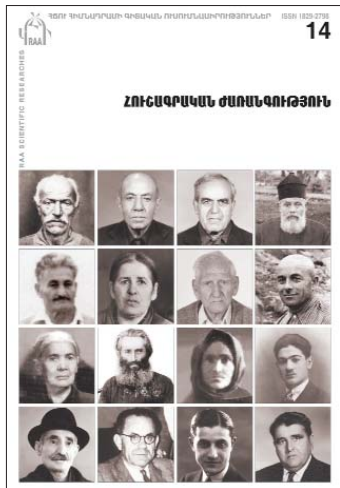
The villages of Ekizoluk, Garaturan and Korkyune

The district centre had a single school belonging to the Apostolics with 250 Armenian and 20 Alawi pupils. The Evangelicals had a school with 45 Armenian and 15 Alawi pupils, and the Catholics a state school and another with 40 Armenian and 20 Alawi pupils.²⁴

22 Cholakian, vol. 1, 281, 334, 340, 347, 351, 358, 366, 377, 381, 390.

23 Ibid., 239, 247, 252, 255, 315, 319-320, 322, 361, 372, 383, 391.

24 We owe the statistical data for 2006 to the late Abraham Ashagian from Ekizoluk and his wife Khatun Ashagian, who knew the inhabitants of all the villages name by name.



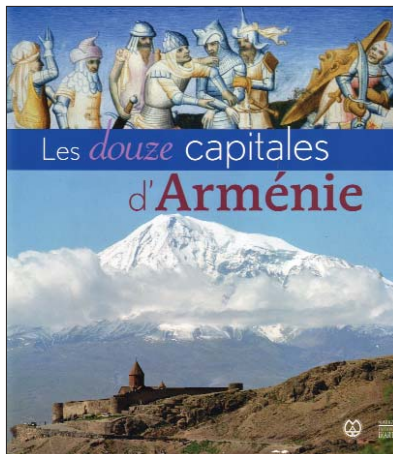
NEW RAA PUBLICATION

Collected Memoirs—this is the 14th volume of the RAA Scientific Research Series published early in 2011 under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia.

It presents the heretofore unpublished memoirs of 19 survivors of the 1915 Genocide who were mostly natives of Western Armenia. The book provides ample information on different events marking the recent period of the history of the Armenian Homeland and the Armenian nation.

CONGRATULATIONS

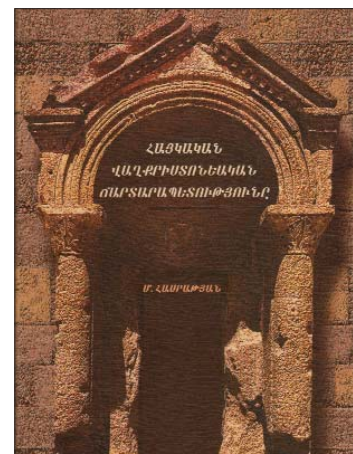
Armen Kyurkchian and Hrayr-Baze Khacherian have published their joint research entitled *Armenian Ornamental Art*. Particularly remarkable for the unusually rich and coordinated information it contains, it is a serious contribution to further studies of Armenian art and culture.



Armen Mutafian and Patrick Tonapetian have published their joint work devoted to the 12 capitals of Armenia, *Les douze capitales d'Arménie* (Paris, 2010).

We extend our gratitude to the Committee of the Armenian Cultural Centre of Marseilles in the person of Gerard Shaljian for providing the RAA library with a copy of this book.

Doctor of Architecture Murad Hasratian, Head of the Department of Architecture of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, has published his three-language work entitled *Early Christian Architecture of Armenia* (Moscow, 2010). Abounding in measurements and photographs, it is a major contribution to the study of the history and theoretical aspect of Armenian architecture.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RAA Foundation expresses its gratitude to the Ohanians for their donation of over 200 books on Armenian Studies and art history to the RAA library.

Apart from its great value and usefulness in our everyday work, that collection is also of special significance to us as it will keep our senior friend and great patriot Aram Ohanian's (Karmir Aram) memory ever living in our hearts.

Our thanks are also due to artist Arthur Khachatrian, who made another donation of over thirty books on Armenian art and culture history to the RAA library.

The members of RAA extend their cordial thanks to linguist Artem Sargissian, the editor-in-chief of the Dictionary of the Dialects of the Armenian Language (in Armenian), for presenting our library with its first 6 volumes.

We are very grateful to Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and particularly, the Head of its Armenian Department, Dr. Zaven Yegavian, for sponsoring the publication of the present issue of the Vardzk periodical.



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