

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KHASHO FAMILY

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This research is based on a questionnaire presented to around 20 elders of the Khasho family and their neighbors. It is based as well on a few memoirs, write-ups and relevant books. The research was enhanced by the existence of a family tree which was drawn up under the supervision of the engineer Nazih Khasho in 2002 in Latakia.

The purpose of this research is to produce a detailed historical book on the Khasho family. The book will have nine main sections based on the nine periods of the family's history. The research is ongoing and is open to new additions. This paper is a draft summary of the research we are still conducting.<sup>1</sup>

## FIRST PERIOD, THE GENESIS OF THE KHASHO FAMILY

I call the first period of the history of the family Genesis as it includes the genuine roots of the Khasho family. This period extends from 1750 to 1860. The established history of the Family starts in the city of Ourfa in 1750, and the main branch of the family starts with Apraham Khachadourian. Information about him is scarce. It is known, however, that he was the father of four boys: the eldest, Garabed Khachadourian, migrated to the USA. The second son, Khasho Khachadourian, is the true father of the Khasho family. The third son, Toros Khachadourian, migrated to Palestine, and the last son migrated to Lebanon. The denomination of the family was Armenian Orthodox.

Khasho Khachadourian fathered four children. He gave three of them the names of his brothers. His eldest son was named Toros, the second Wannus, the third Garabed and the fourth was named Hovsep. The family still was called Khachadourian.

Khasho and his wife died early, and their four children were taken care of by the grandmother, wife of Apraham Khachadourian. The grandmother and the four orphans, along with a number of others from Ourfa left for an unknown place in southern Cilicia and then continued their migration to Al-Ghnemiya village in the Kurdish Mountains, at a distance of 40 Km. from the city of Latakia.

The grandmother died on the road from southern Cilicia to Al-Ghnemiya village. In the meantime, however, the boys had learned the craft of ironsmith. The four youngsters arrived in Al-Ghnemiya village carrying the family name Khachadourian during the 1860s. They talked in Armenian and considered themselves Orthodox Armenians. One of the families that settled

with them in Al-Ghnemiya village was the Kazendji family, probably headed by Theodore Kazendji.

## SECOND PERIOD

I call the second period the period of stability. It includes the details of the family's settlement in the village and the establishment of its structure, its economic basis and conversion to Evangelism. The events of this period happen in Al-Ghnemiya village extend from 1860 to 1914.

Al-Ghnemiya is a mountainous village; it has a rugged nature, and the soil is full of stones. Agriculture and animal husbandry were difficult. The settlers raised goats instead of sheep, as goats were capable of living in rugged mountainous areas.

The Al-Ghnemiya villagers built terraces in order to plant and cultivate the soil, as the mountain areas had steep slopes. The village had an old Armenian Orthodox church, and its inhabitants were orthodox Armenians. Among the native families of the village were the Ereyjan (عريجان) and Hanunig (حنونيك) Families.

The local families welcomed the newcomers including the four sons of Khasho Khachadourian. Being blacksmiths helped them to take root in the village and become famous not only in the village but generally in the Kurdish Mountain too, as this mountainous region lacked blacksmiths, a necessity in a village community. Income from this business enabled the Khasho family to buy and own land and goats.

The four males lived in a single home and opened a shop next to it. They had an extended family system, where they relied on dividing the responsibilities among the family members. Toros was responsible for the coal. He had to provide and prepare it for use in the workshop. Wannus was responsible for the air pump, which kept the coal burning all the time. Garabed was responsible for the finances of the family; thus all the income and expenses were under his supervision. He also worked with Hovsep in the workshop.

The blacksmith profession developed concurrently with the veterinary profession, both dealing with animals and making hoofs for the horses. The family increased its ownership of land. The number of goats owned by the family reached 365. The brothers married local Al-Ghnemiya village Armenian girls.

The family's growth in the village coincided with the arrival of American Evangelical missionaries in coastal Syria in the 1860s. The missionaries gradually expanded their activities to the neighboring coastal mountains and eventually reached Al-Ghnemiya village.

The village families had conflicting views regarding the missionaries. Some totally rejected them (like the families Ereyjan, Hanunig, and Yesayan). Others accepted them (like the Khasho, Kazendji, Hanna, and Jabbour families, and some members of the Sarko family). This triggered conflict in the village. Those who welcomed the missionaries questioned and doubted their ethnic Armenian identity. The other families perceived a strong relationship between Armenian ethnicity and Orthodox Christianity.

This conflict, however, was controlled as the number of families and resources were limited.

The Khasho family opted for Evangelism with great enthusiasm and conviction. They welcomed the American missionaries and helped them stay in the village.

With the entry of the American missionaries, both Evangelism and studying of Arabic penetrated the village, for the purpose of education in general and for reading the Bible in particular as well as the involvement of the family children in education and religion. As the income of the family grew Garabed acquired a belt set with gold coins due to the income of the family. Business was fruitful because the mountain Kurds safeguarded the family as the Kurdish Nuri Hadji Agha relied on the blacksmith skills of the family.

### THIRD PERIOD

This is the migratory period, which extends from 1914 to 1918. It coincides with WWI and the oppressive treatment by the Ottoman state of the Armenian nation.

During this period several Armenian families in Al-Ghnemiya village opted for concealing their Armenian nationality and took different steps in this regard. For instance, they started talking in a mixed language using both Armenian and Arabic words in their daily communication. Besides, they gave non-Armenian names to their children. Furthermore, the four males of the Khachadourian family took the decision to change their family name from Khachadourian to Khasho for two main reasons: the first was to harmonize the family name with the neighboring Kurdish family names, which usually ended with O. Similar decisions were taken by a number of other Al-Ghnemiya families, like Shabbo, Sarko, Khisho, etc. The second reason was the fact that it was usual to call a family by the name of its forefather and the name of their forefather was Khasho.

Notwithstanding the fact that several Al-Ghnemiya families concealed their Armenian ethnicity, some Kurds from neighboring villages whispered to the Ottoman authorities who were looking for Armenian presence in the area so as to attack them. It led to the arrival of Ottoman forces in the village. They

besieged the village and ordered the deportation of the Armenians to Der Zor. Garabed Khasho had learned about the Armenian massacres and killings of Der Zor, so he was aware of the fate of the deportees. Garabed, who was called Babug in the village, suggested to the villagers that they collect money and pay a ransom/bribe to the Ottoman soldiers and ask the latter to deport them to the Allatamna area close to Hama, instead of deporting them to Der Zor. This was a possibility as one of the deportation routes had Hama as its destination.

The villagers agreed to the suggestion and negotiated with the Ottoman soldiers who, in their turn, agreed to deport the Al-Ghnemiya Armenian villagers to Allatamna. This deportation, however, was not void of brutality and atrocities. Toros Khasho was killed on the deportation road, while the women daubed their faces with ashes to disguise themselves as ugly women to the eyes of the Ottoman soldiers. The deportees suffered hunger and pain. It was Garabed Khasho's idea to preserve some of the family gold by swallowing gold coins.

After reaching Allatamna the families lived in unhealthy tents until the end of WWI, when the Ottomans lost the war and, thus, the besiegement and exile of the deportees came to an end.

#### FOURTH PERIOD

In 1918 some of the families returned to Al-Ghnemiya village in small groups. Later on the remaining deportees, including the Khasho family, came back to their homes and lands in a large group. The returnees found out that Muslim Kurdish families had occupied some of their houses and land and settled there. It was time to reclaim ownership and push the Kurds out of their houses, fields and village life. Nuri Hadji Agha supported the Armenian families, which enabled them to repossess most of their belongings. Several Kurdish families left the village, though some like the AlShughari and Osman stayed. These, however, coexisted with the majority Armenians and eventually acquired the language of the villagers, which was mixed Arab-Armenian. They socialized with the Armenians and followed their traditions, went boar hunting together and ate the meat even though religiously it was forbidden.

I call this fourth period which extends from 1918 to 1930 the time of growth and development. It witnessed how the family looking for more stability and consolidation as it strengthened its presence in the village. The main figures of this period are the sons and grandsons of the four brothers, although Babuk Garabed Khasho was still alive and able to run the family affairs wisely.

This is already the fourth and fifth generation of the Khasho family since Apraham Khachadourian.

With the return of the deported families to Al-Ghnemiya village, the American missionaries resumed their activities in the region. The period witnessed some changes due to the increase in the number of boys and girls in the family. Blacksmithing no longer sufficed as the main source of income for the family. It was then that Salim Wannus Khasho and his children shifted to polishing copper utensils and producing straw baskets. As for Garabed Khasho, he administered the general affairs of the family, supervised planting and the agricultural lands. As for Tawfiq Khasho, he administered the blacksmith workshop. Physically he was strong and fit for the requirements of such a harsh job. Some of the family members (like Ishaq Toros Khasho and Boulos Karabet Khasho), shifted to the military particularly after having Christian elements in the state increased in importance during the French Mandate.



AGBU Al-Ghnemiya School children, with their teacher (on the right) and board member (on the left), Nov. 12, 1931. Several children are missing due to sickness.

This new generation had acquired a much better education than the average Syrian individual of the time. This was due to the presence of missionary education in the village before and after the deportation. Ibrahim Hovsep Khasho is singled out as a teacher and preacher in the village.

The family's inclination to Evangelism was at its peak during this period as the new generation was educated on Evangelical principles from childhood. Alongside Ibrahim Khasho the preacher, Rev. Dawud Toros Khasho grew in the field of Evangelical service. Thus, the spiritual and biblical spirit engulfed the whole family. Tawfiq Khasho, for instance, used to sing psalms while working in his blacksmith workshop.

The family maintained its unity and coherence at work. The members of the family cooperated during summer and winter for agricultural work and the preparation of syrups, dried fruits and vegetables, stored grain, etc. to be used in critical and difficult days. They all came together prior to winter time to footstep on the roofs of the houses. On Sundays all would gather together, pay visits and pray. Sunday was their day of rest and leisure, when they did not work, or even cook, the food having been prepared the previous day.

Some of the family members headed for Latakia in order to increase their sources of income. Ishaq Khasho, for instance, settled on Oweiny Street, and Karabet Khasho registered his grandchildren Farid and Wadih Khaso in the Latakia Evangelical School.

Those residing in Latakia started attending the Evangelical church of Latakia naturally. This coincided with the time of the French mandate. The French proposed to the Al-Ghnemiya families that they buy a large plot in Al-Ghnemiya village and turn it into a summer resort similar to that of Slenfé village. The families, headed by Babuk (Karabet Khasho), refused the project since they saw it as a way to increase foreign presence in the village. His statement ‘Kherbet Fatih’ (meaning that making Al-Ghnemiya a summer resort under the Mandate authorities would destroy the village) became famous.

The family members were distinguished by their physical appearance resulting from the harsh nature of their life and the effort they exerted in order to make better use of the limited living conditions and available resources in the village. They went hunting and fishing with the family in the Big Northern River, which was some 4Km. from the village.

An example is when Nuri Hadji Agha was asked to send a representative from the Kurdish Mountain to participate in a wrestling competition between the eastern and western villages. He chose Tawfiq Khasho, as the latter was renowned for his physical stature, adamancy and firmness. Tawfiq won the day. In the final match as he fought against a Hama rival and won, the supporters of the defeated man attacked him with daggers, but Nuri Hadji Agha defended him. Tawfiq returned to the village victorious. He was awarded a precious rosary.

## FIFTH PERIOD

I call the fifth period the stage of formation and orientation. It extends from the 1930s until the 1950s. The landscape of this period swings between Al-Ghnemiya village and the city of Latakia.

The period witnessed high political tension in the country, and the world witnessed WWII. These impacted Syria generally and the city of Latakia and Al-Ghnemiya village particularly. The family had to assert its presence notwithstanding the difficulties in both the village and the city, as several members of the fifth and sixth generation started living mainly in the city, maintaining a link with the village, while others continued living mainly in the village.

Making a statement of presence in a large city with established local and traditional families, alongside the general conditions of the country were among the most difficult struggles for the family. The family united around

Wadih Farah Khasho, who graduated from the Evangelical School and became an English language teacher in Latakia. All the lands of the family were mapped and registered in the name of Wadih, who became a leading representative of the family both in the city and in the village, like other families who united around a leading family figure. Wadih's word became accepted in the family. He guided the new generation, whom he safeguarded and made implement his plans.

There were two families in the village that contested Wadih's position, namely Sarko and Oweyjan. The contest was basically around holding state positions. Wadih held the position of *mukhtar* due to the lands he owned, his competence and the large number of Khaso family members.

But in the city the contest was bigger. The family made friends with a few important *aghās*, like *agha* Muhammad Jaafar, head of this family, as well as with the *agha* of the Sheykh Daher area. But the Khasho family was in disagreement with the large Zeydan family on Oweyni Street. Several arguments between the two families soon led to fighting. Wadih Khasho brought these fights to an end, always trying to get the best result for his family.

The family found itself facing another contest in the city too. This had to do with leading the Evangelical church in Latakia. The contest was between the two main families, Khasho and Awad. The latter was a large traditional family from the villages in the Kurdaha region. Its stability had brought the family fortune and land ownership. Hamed Awad led the family in the villages, and Tawfiq Awad led the family in the city. Tawfiq was a stake holder in the Imperial Company of black tobacco in Latakia and had various connections with American missionaries, the French mandate and the MP Suleiman AlMurshid, as well as with some rich families on the western side of the city. With his brother Farid he owned a merchant ship, which they lost later.

The crisis was at its peak in the church because the reverend holding responsibility was from the Awad family. The Khashos cast doubt on the reverend's honesty and integrity in service. This tension triggered several personal conflicts even though the youngsters had good friendly relations and were close to each other in the church. Sometimes these conflicts turned into physical assault.

It is worth noting that forceful self-assertion was generally the rule in the region and the country during WWII, at the time of the French departure from the country and during the transition period, which was characterized by several military coups, each new administration imposing itself by force.

During this period a new figure started to single himself out as a leader; this was Khalil Salim Khasho, named AlKhawaja. Khalil had a fair fortune due to his business in black tobacco and its exportation. On the other hand, the

family needed further sources of income, and this is why they started growing tobacco in the village. Tobacco agriculture developed quickly and they constructed tobacco production cottages. In addition, the family initiated a silk business, farming silk worms. The family learned about silk production in the village and benefited from its profits in both the city and the village alongside their other businesses.

The family maintained their presence in both the Latakia Evangelical church and the Al-Ghnemiya village church. Visitors from the family attended church regularly and went back to the village during summer time and holidays. The preacher and minister Karim Tawfiq Khasho gained significance, but this was short lived as he left with his Irish wife for Ireland. Another reverend from the family, Dawud Khasho, was on a religious mission in Qamishli and the Jazira area in north-eastern Syria. Wadih and Abdallah Khasho became members of the Latakia city municipal council, while Wadih became the *mukhtar* of the congregation in the city. The family maintained its coherence and closeness to overcome the difficulties and challenges of life.

In 1946 the family discussed repatriation to Soviet Armenia as Amina Farah Khasho had married an Armenian who repatriated with her after the passing away of Babuk, Karabet Khasho. She answered their questions saying that life was great in Armenia but they should not come without Babuk! The family learned that life was very difficult in Armenia and rejected the idea of repatriation.

## SIXTH PERIOD

I call this period the period of leadership. It extends from 1950 to 1970, when family events took place mainly in the city of Latakia. Conditions in the country were generally chaotic. The French mandate was over, and the French forces had newly left the country. These conditions and events had an impact on Latakia city generally and on the family specifically.

The family continued to unite around its leader Wadih Khasho, with the minor difference - the youngsters who had obeyed the leader had grown up and had established their own families. They took different paths in life. Notwithstanding the diversity of the paths, one could discern specific basic fields these fifth and sixth generation youngsters of the Khasho family opted for. Teaching was one of the main professions, particularly teaching English. Indeed the children of the educator Ibrahim Khasho, Adib, Adiba, Labib and Rafiq, became teachers. Others, opted for sports, like the football player Mutih Ishaq Khasho, who was an English language teacher at the same time, and Nadim Ishaq Khasho, who was the leader of the sports supporters. They supported the Qadisiya Club, which was later renamed Teshrin Sportive Club.

Some like Samir, Nabil Farid Khasho and Khalil Salim Khasho became famous in hunting.

This was the time when the concept of parties penetrated the family. Yusef, Salim and Ishaq Khasho became members of the Baath Party and were very active. Others, like Farid Salim Khaso and Nasim Tawfiq Khasho, became famous truck drivers transporting goods in bulk.

The family maintained its strong attachment to the Evangelical church; some of the elderly like Sadiq Salim Khasho held positions in the village church. But most of the family got involved in Latakia Evangelical church life. Reverend Dawud Khasho transferred the location of his mission from the Jazira area to the village of Yazidiya, which was close to Safita. He had excellent relations with the Armenian Evangelical church, because of his Armenian origin and Evangelical convictions.

On the other hand, the contest between the Khasho and Awad families continued in the Evangelical church of Latakia and reached its peak during the period of confiscations by the state, when the Baath Party came to power. It was then that the state decided to buy the public outlets of the Latakia church (which included a hospital, schools and playgrounds) to build the Asad University Hospital, the Ibn Sina School, the bus station square and a building for the Education Directorate.

This coincided with the deportation of Evangelical missionaries, the establishment of the National Evangelical Synod in Syria and Lebanon in 1958, and the affiliation of the Latakia church to this Synod. The sale of the church lands was conducted under the supervision of the Awad family, represented by the lawyer Sheikh George Awad alongside other lawyers who were not from the congregation. Problems multiplied and often accusations were made about the honesty of the transaction. It reached a stage of physical assault and mutual warnings.

Several attempts were made to overcome these divisions and differences as there was love and friendship between the generations of the two rival families.

It is noteworthy that this generation had lost its mother tongue, the Armenian language, which had started weakening during the previous generation. But they maintained friendship, attachment and mutual family visits. Besides this they preserved the tradition of having their summer vacations together in the village, where some of the fathers remained, like Tawfiq Wannus Khasho, or had returned like Ishaq Toros Khasho. During summer a Sunday school was conducted for the family children by Wadiha Farah Khasho. There was a clear intention on the part of Wadih Khasho to educate the children on family coherence as a source of group strength.

During summer the family continued to prepare food like syrup, dried fruits, etc. to be used during winter in the city, where the name of the family had become renowned and its professions had distinguished the family in the neighborhood and at large.

#### EPILOGUE

Research is ongoing various aspects, details and relevant issues of the family, particularly regarding both the seventh period (which extends from 1970 to 1990 and is called the period of cousins) and the eighth period, which I call the period of dismantling or disintegration, which extends from 1990 to 2007. Then comes the period of revival, which starts in 2007 and is open to current and the future developments.

#### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In case of corrections and/or additions kindly do call the researcher on the following mobile number (00963935598958) or email him at: yousef.khasho@gmail.com .

### **Խաշօ Ընտանիքին Համառօտ Պատմութիւնը** (Ամփոփում)

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Խաշօ ընտանիքին, ինչպէս նաեւ հայկական ծագում ունեցող այլ ընտանիքներու (Շահին, Թոքաթ, Խուքազ, Թըրք, Խլաթ, Սիքիաս, Մուրատ, Հանունիկ եւն.) անուններուն կը հանդիպինք Սուրիա-Լիբանանի նախաեղեռնեան հայապատումներու մէջ:

Հեղինակը՝ ծնունդը Խաշօ ընտանիքին, կը պեղէ պատմութիւնը իր ընտանիքին, որուն անունը տարածուած էր արդէն նախաեղեռնեան Սուրիա-Լիբանանի մէջ:

Հիմնուելով ընտանեկան նիւթերու, վկայութիւններու, բնակավայր-գիւղի տուեալներու, ընտանիքի այլ անդամներու թէ ընտանիքի երէց բարեկամներու յիշողութիւններուն վրայ, հեղինակը կ'ընէ կարելի համապարփակ պատումը Խաշօ ընտանիքին: Ան կը բաժնէ ընտանիքին պատմութիւնը հինգ հանգրուաններու՝ սկսելով ընտանիքի ծննդոցէն՝ 1750ականներու Ուրֆայի մէջ, ուրկէ ընտանիքի անդամները պահ մը կ'ուղղուին Կիլիկիա, ապա կ'անցնին Ղնեմիէ, ուրկէ կը տարածուին Լաթաքիա եւ այլուր:

Հեղինակը կը մանրամասնէ ընտանիքին դիմագրաւած Եղեռնի մարտահրաւերները, կը նկարագրէ ընտանիքի տարբեր սերունդներուն ասպարէզային ընդգրկումը, կենսագործունէութիւնը եւ յառաջացուցած փոփոխութիւնը գերդաստանին, անոր ինքնութեան, ընտանեկան պատմութիւնը հասցնելով մինչեւ մեր օրերը: