

RECORDING DEATH AND SURVIVAL: KAREN MARIE PETERSEN, MISSIONARY WITNESS TO GENOCIDE

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INTRODUCTION

The Danish foreign ministry, relief worker, and missionary archives contain a wealth of documentation on the Armenian genocide and related issues. Lately, 80 diplomatic reports, mainly from the Danish envoy in Constantinople, Carl Ellis Wandel, have been published online on www.armenocide.net and translated into English and German alongside similar German and Turkish documentation.¹ There are also several relatively recent or forthcoming publications based to a large extent on such sources.² But still, very many documents that can shed light on various aspects of the fate of the Ottoman Armenians remain to be published. Some of the most interesting of these are found in the archives of the Danish missionary organization *Women Missionary Workers (Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere; KMA)*.³ Three of those documents are published in full here with a thorough introduction and annotations, two of them for the first time.

The best known of the Danish KMA field workers in Anatolia is arguably missionary nurse Maria Jacobsen, whose 1907-1919 diaries from the region of Mamouret-ul-Aziz (Harput/Kharpert) have been published in Armenian and English.⁴ But Jacobsen was but one of four Danish KMA women missionaries in the Harput region during those years. Hansine Marcher, Jenny Jensen, and Karen Marie Petersen also witnessed and, in various ways, described the destruction of the Armenians in and around the ‘twin towns’ of Harput and Mezreh (Mamouret-ul-Aziz; Mezereh; Elazig). Petersen, the main focus of this article, was director of the Danish orphanage *Emaus (Emmaus)* at Mezreh from 1909.

Emaus was established in 1903 as KMA’s own orphanage with 70-75 Armenian girls (the highest pre-WWI number), a number that rose to well over 100 during World War I. The orphanage was located in a house bought at bargain price from the indebted local Persian consul.⁵ It was mainly run by Danes, but Swedish and Norwegian KMA missionaries were also employed there during the initial years to the extent that it was sometimes referred to as a Scandinavian orphanage, and the orphans were in fact sponsored by groups and individuals from all of Scandinavia and Finland. Petersen left the Ottoman Empire in 1919 with Danish KMA colleague Maria Jacobsen as the American ABCFM (*American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*) missionaries returned to Mezreh and Harput to take over protecting and caring for literally thousands of Armenian survivors when the Danes left.

Like most of her colleagues, Karen Marie Petersen was relatively well educated and spoke (besides Danish) German, Armenian, Turkish, and, it appears, English. She was born in 1881 in the provincial Danish town Nykøbing Sjælland. Little is known of her early years, but it is likely that she had a middle class background, as she was daughter of a local inspector of customs (‘toldforvalter’).

And, like Jacobsen and several other missionaries, she adopted an orphaned Armenian survivor during the latter stages of the war, a girl she named Hope. Petersen and Jacobsen, as well as most other Scandinavian missionaries in the region, had planned to return to their posts as soon as they had recovered from the physical and mental strains of the genocide years. But it quickly turned out to be impossible due to the rise of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and his nationalist movement, especially given the radical anti-missionary and anti-Armenian policies which this movement pursued. Instead, Petersen went to work for KMA in Syria and Lebanon for years, at times in direct connection with the prominent U.S. organization *Near East Relief* (NER).

Through world war, genocide, and genocide's aftermath, Petersen wrote letters and postcards to KMA members, and during the war years some of these writings made it past the Ottoman censors to Denmark. She also collected survivor testimonies from 1915 onward, and she herself witnessed death marches and an area littered with the remains of Armenians. No diaries of hers have been found in the archives or are mentioned in the sources, but it seems likely that she did keep a personal journal of sorts. For instance, in a 1932 publication by the Danish KMA, she gave this description of the fate of the Armenians in the Harput region, including the immediate destruction of their culture and religion, a description that appears to have been written down immediately after the events:

October 1915. An excursion at the time of deportation. Today we went for a drive. It was the first time this year we allowed ourselves that pleasure. We drove out of the main road – and were happy about the sunshine and the strong, fresh air. But our joy was soon ruined by the sad sight of skeletons, newly dug graves in the ditches, and scattered bones out in the fields. It took no more than 10 minutes away from town before we saw the first head lie in the ditch, and the further out we got, the more of this we saw. [...] Out in the villages they tear down all the churches. It is difficult to demolish the century-old walls, but they must come down; all signs of Christianity must go. The Armenian language is no more to be heard. Even the stones from the Christian churchyards are being removed and used as doorsteps, and the plows are pulled through the graves.⁶

In an earlier KMA publication from 1920, Petersen had also reported on how the Ottoman authorities in Mezreh put up posters with the message that “Anyone – Muslim or Christian – hiding an Armenian in his home will be hanged in his doorway and the house will be burned to the ground.”⁷ She describes herself as feeling paralyzed in the midst of the horrors of the summer of 1915, a nightmare that she subsequently tries to avoid recollecting where “a whole defenseless people led to slaughter as sheep according to a devilishly concocted and executed plan of extermination.”⁸ This is how she experienced the deportation from Mezreh, a description that confirms and adds to similar descriptions:⁹

The summer morning when we had to bid farewell to our dearest friends in Mezreh who were being driven from their homes that day was so *awful*. Early in the morning I went through the town to say goodbye. Everyone was about to break up and load their clothes on donkeys or carts. Especially in the

town's poor neighborhood there was wild confusion, since many have not wanted to believe that it would become serious and have thus not made any preparations, but are rather chased out as they are. They do not want to go, they cry and throw themselves to the ground: 'Let us die here!' they plead. The gendarmes hit them with their rifle butt or pull them out of the house by the hair, lock the door behind them, and put the key in their pocket. They have no home anymore – and they follow the others.

Out on the road they walk constantly until late in the afternoon: young and old, blind and crippled, women so exhausted from fear and emotion that they are not able to stand up, and old men doddering along with their cane. A father, surrounded by his children, yells when he sees us: 'We have taken up our cross and follow Jesus!' – I have met [German missionaries] Mr. and Mrs. Ehmann, and together we walk part of the way on the road with the caravan. They all want to shake our hands to say goodbye while the tears stream down their faces, and they say: 'We walk to our deaths, *pray for us!*' It is as if our hearts will burst; to watch this misery and not being able to do *anything!* Still the crowd grows; we see ox carts with a sun screen over a group of smiling children's faces, cows loaded with bedding and kitchenware, and finally whole columns of mounted gendarmes armed with rifles, filled cartridge belts, and knives and revolvers by their side – they go out 'to protect,' it sends shivers down our spine to see them!

Already that same evening the missionaries get confirmation that they are right in expecting the worst:

It was then that another mass of people arrived in town – expellees from Erzinjan and Erzerum – who had left their homes about a month ago, just like our friends left their homes today. They were all ragged, half-naked, starved, and exhausted. They made camp at a field right outside of town. They were mostly women and children, some old men and adolescent boys. The strong and powerful men had been killed after one day's journey. They were yelling and screaming for something to eat. At the orphanages we quickly cooked up food in large containers and drove it out on a wagon. They threw themselves at us like wild animals, we were nearly crushed to death. In an instant the food was gone – it was like a drop in the ocean.

Many were lying around with fever begging for milk; their tongues were swollen and they had not been able to eat for days. Their arms were burnt by the sun, their skin was torn, and their feet were swollen so that they could hardly walk. The air was filled with stench; most had dysentery – dying people were scattered around, but death was greeted with joy, as a liberator! This was the first time I came into close contact with the expelled, but it would not be the last. No, the whole summer it was repeated; one crowd after the other marched through town which now acquired the name 'The Great Slaughterhouse' – because the horrible thing was that once they had reached *our* town all men were killed a few hours from there after having left again.¹⁰

To Petersen, it was therefore of vital importance to bear witness to the horrors around her that destroyed everything she and her colleagues cared for and worked for. As she wrote in a letter to the Danish KMA's Armenia Committee, 22 September 1917: "When peace comes, I will – God willing – return and tell everything." In that same letter which was written in German, one of the languages approved by the Ottoman censors, she also directs a measure of sarcasm at those very censors – "I don't want to bore the most honored censors by writing long letters" – and more explicitly promises to return to tell her colleagues what actually happened to the Armenian orphans from the *Emaus* orphanage in her care.¹¹ Missionaries in Petersen's situation would, for their own safety and the safety of surviving Armenians, most often use Bible quotes or euphemisms in similar open communication subject to censorship. So such a thinly veiled promise or threat to return and speak up about the Armenian genocide must be considered very bold and unusual indeed.¹²

It is no surprise, then, that what had happened to the *Emaus* orphans and, subsequently, to the handfuls of Armenian survivors who one by one found their way to the orphanage from late 1915 on after having escaped from death marches or forced assimilation in Muslim households, became the main focus for Petersen in her efforts to tell the world about the fate of the Armenians. Thus, in the archives of the Danish KMA there is a handwritten exercise book as well as several hand-written and type-written texts that contain detailed survivor accounts or testimonies, all written down by Petersen during or after WWI. The accounts are usually not signed or dated, but the handwriting clearly matches that of signed letters and postcards by Petersen. Furthermore, some of the accounts are likely to have been written down relatively shortly after the events described therein – there is, e.g., an often somewhat 'messy' use of past and present tense, abbreviations, and the occasional abrupt ending. Perhaps for the same reason, the accounts also contain a number of typos, inconsistencies, etc., so the translations below have been silently and carefully edited for spelling and style.

While a thorough, comprehensive regional study is still lacking and very much needed, the specific execution and consequences of the Armenian genocide in the Mamouret-ul-Aziz province have hardly been ignored in the literature, nor is there an overall lack of survivor testimonies.¹³ But to approach a fuller understanding of these events in general, and of the experiences of Armenians, missionaries like Petersen, and people the region in particular, as well as to continue making relevant Danish archival documents accessible to a wider audience, three of the accounts are translated in full from Danish into English with notes and comments. The first two appear to have been dictated by Armenian survivors to Petersen, and the third quite clearly is an account of Petersen's own experiences when trying to rescue an Armenian friend from a prominent Muslim Kurdish household ('Harem').

1: "A MISERABLE ARMENIAN FAMILY."¹⁴

This first survivor account is on the ordeals of a large Armenian family driven from Bitlis (Baghesh) in Eastern Anatolia into the Syrian desert and beyond, at first by the Young Turk (*Committee of Union and Progress*; CUP) regime and then

by the Kemalists. It was dictated by an Armenian woman to Petersen in 1927 and contains no biographical data. The caption, “A miserable Armenian family,” is the one used by Petersen, perhaps contemplating publishing the story in a book, pamphlet, newspaper, or journal, as was often the case with survivor testimonies, etc., collected by KMA:

“12 years ago I was with my whole family, which then consisted of my husband, myself, our 5 boys and 3 girls.¹⁵ We were from Bitlis, a large town in Armenia; my husband was killed there before the Emigrations [sic] started and we went away; then I was left alone with my children when the Turks forced us to leave our town. We had to walk for 5 weeks before we came to Mardin, and it was a very arduous journey as our foodstuffs ran out and we had nothing to eat or drink, so since we were very hungry we had to eat grass; furthermore, the paths were very bad and we often had to climb over rocks instead of sticking to the good road.

On that journey 3 of my boys and one of the girls were taken by the Turks, and I still do not know if they are alive or dead. After 5 weeks we came to Mardin, and after we had stayed there for a week we were sent to Ras-el-Ain (Ras-el-Ayn; Ras-ul-Ain – M.B.), and when we left they killed all the men and every single boy with sticks and guns, and they took many young girls away from their mothers, even if they did not want to go but cried and screamed; it did not help anything, the Turks took them by force. So after a long journey we came to Ras-el-Ain, and there we saw hundreds of people who had come from Intilly (Intilli; Intily; Entilli – M.B.) and other places. Here, our troubles began in earnest, as they killed many of those who were with us, and many other died of starvation. My little girl Loucy, who was 6 years old, died of starvation and lice since we could not wash and clean ourselves,¹⁶ so now I only had 3 of my children left.

At that time we were so weak that we could hardly walk, but the gendarmes forced us forward to Hama and Homs. There we had to work for the Turks as servants from early morning to late in the evening, without us getting more than a piece of bread for our work, but we did it anyway as we would otherwise have had nothing to eat. After some time they sent us to Aleppo; that journey was terrible, I lost one of my children and they hit us with sticks because we could not walk. When we came to Aleppo two of my children died of typhus and starvation as we had nothing to eat except from what we found in the garbage piles.¹⁷

Later the local government opened some weaving mills, and there they paid us a quarter of an ocha (c. 320 g – 1 oka/oke/okka equals c. 1,28 kg – M.B.) of bread, and we were very happy since we thought that we had found rest. After we had worked there for some time the English soldiers came to Aleppo [in 1918], and while the place was under British rule we were alright in every way. After 8-9 months the local government sent us to D.yol (Dortyol; Chork Marzban – M.B.), and there we stayed and could provide for ourselves. We worked on the roads with carrying rocks and dirt,¹⁸ and we suffered no harm, but after 2 years the Turks began to attack us. We now lived in great fear, and as everyone from D.yol had to move to the rescue station Alexanttre (Alexandrette; Iskenderun; Hatay – M.B.) they started to tear down the houses in order to bring the boards to Alexanttre to

build new houses there. It was in the autumn¹⁹ and it rained a lot, so all the property got wet and a lot of people got sick.

When we came to Alexanttre 8 days later we had no houses to live in and nothing to eat, and it rained so much that all the blankets that we used as beds got completely wet; we had a very hard time there. 6 months later the French brought us to Damascus where one of my children died; I grieved so much that I became completely confused, and I was seeking here and there to find something, but in Damascus there was no help for us, we had to try to find work by washing and scrubbing the houses of the rich. That way 2½ years passed; then, suddenly, the Turks started to attack us once more. One Sunday morning they suddenly fell over us and killed the women and children they met; there I once more lost one of my children.”²⁰

2: ”SEVART MIKAELIAN”²¹

In contrast to the Armenian woman survivor above, slightly more is known about Sevart (Zevart; Sirvart?) Mikaelian, including, obviously, her name. According to the 1919-1920 KMA Armenia Committee protocol containing brief information on the surviving *Emaus* orphans and their Danish ‘foster parents’ (‘sponsors’ that could be either individuals, couples, or groups), Sevart Mihaelian (sic), number 32 on the *Emaus* list, “Lost mother and sister and was taken by a Turkish official. Came to Emaus in 1918. 1919: [she is] approximately 16 [years old].”²² It was quite common for abducted Armenian children to be ignorant or uncertain of their age or even their name, but Sevart was at most a teenager when she was given to a Turkish official and brought to Mezreh, where she was released or escaped to the Danish orphanage in 1918. Petersen tells the story of Sevart Mikaelian in the third person, of her departure from Erzerum, her ordeals on the prolonged death march, her arrival in Mosul, Iraq, and her return to Anatolia:

“Her father [was a] shoemaker in Erzeroum (Erzeroum; Erzurum - M.B.) and died 1 year before. She, her mother, and 3 sisters broke up from E. when they were exiled. When they came to Kemach (Kemagh; Kamakh; Gamagh; Kemakh-Boghaz – M.B.) all the young men were separated from the others, and they heard shortly after that everyone had been killed.²³ It was also here that an order was received that they were not allowed to take their belongings with them, and their foodstuffs, bedding, carriages, and cows were taken from them by the local T (Turks)- M.B.) They also wanted to kill the men, but through bribes it was made possible to keep some alive. Her brother-in-law was hidden under the bedding in a carriage that they had been allowed to keep; other men were disguised as women. Some men were also killed when they came to the river, while they by paying managed to get the brother-in-law across the river.

They had given the money to the poor to carry for them, as they themselves were often searched. When they came to the river they once more threw (one illegible word – M.B.) in the water. When they came to Djisere they had to cross the water once more. The hired gendarmes that accompanied them constantly said, ‘you will all be killed,’ and everywhere corpses were in

fact left behind. They walked from early morning until evening; when they camped in the evening they could buy bread from the Kurds. For 2 months they constantly wandered around in the mountains and saw no other people; when they came to Mosul only 50 were left. They died of heat and thirst. When they passed the villages the Turks came on horses and took the girls they wanted. Severt and her sister cut off their hair and put on ragged clothing to avoid being noticed.

When a girl resisted, the Turks took her by the hair and dragged her up on the horse. Arusiag Tarafian resisted when a gendarme wanted her. They said to her father, 'if you give her [to us] we will let you live,' but he refused, whereupon they shot him, then the mother, and finally the girl before everybody's eyes. This happened by the river and many suffered a similar fate. They killed a man sitting on a donkey which dragged him further along; an old man was called on to give away his money and when he said, 'I'm poor,' they said, 'turn your back,' and shot him. They constantly wandered among corpses; when they saw that people were shot or robbed, the rest of them ran along in a frightened state.

When they came to a small stream Severt's aunt, whose 4 children had all been killed, said, 'I can't stand it any longer,' and threw herself into the water; with all their efforts they still could not keep her from doing it, and she drowned. Many threw their small children into the bushes and continued walking, or the gendarmes killed them. Or they threw the children in the water before jumping in themselves. When they came to Dohag (Dehok/Dohuk in today's northwestern Iraq? - M.B.) there were still a couple of young men left, among those were Severt's brother-in-law. An Armenian, Simon Talan, betrayed him to the gendarmes, telling them that 'the woman with a scarf covering the nose is a man.' Until now he had had money with him all the time to give to the gendarme if he should find out who he was. When he gave the money without speaking the gendarme said 'speak or I'll kill you.' His sister then joined in and promised to give him a watch if they would spare him, but the brother-in-law said, 'no matter how much I give, I will still be killed, I want to at least kill one,' and he hit the gendarme on the arm so that the weapon fell out of his hand, picked it up and shot the gendarme, whereupon he himself was killed. The man who had betrayed him was killed himself 2 hours from there.

Now only 3 men were left, they were lined up and shot after having had their clothes removed. At one place a woman argued with a gendarme and he took his rifle and thrust the pointed end into her ear and twisted it so that the whole head was crushed. This woman had been accompanying Severt's mother the whole time, and the mother and [Severt's] little sister had stayed behind with her when this happened. They now also became mad at her and wanted to kill her, but another gendarme came and said, 'I feel sorry for the child,' and she was released. They were on such a narrow road that a horse or a donkey could hardly walk there. It happened that people who had rented donkeys and who had only little strength left fell, with donkey and everything,

into the deep where the river ran and perished there. Twice everyone was searched and their money was taken from them.

Once they came to a mountainous place, 'Devebayun,' and there the gendarmes had been ordered to walk in the front while only a few stayed behind. They then started to shoot between the mountains and it was said: 'the Kurds have come to attack you. They demand such and such an amount of ransom'; they now collected a whole pile of jewelry which the gendarmes took themselves and several were killed on this occasion. Now they came to Sacho (Zakho/Zaxo in northern Iraq – M.B.) where there was a friendly Kaimakhan (Kaymakam; sub-governor – M.B.), he sent them food and let the sick be brought to Mosul on horses, 4 hours travel from there, and thereafter they were not plundered anymore. They were supposed to have continued further on to Baghdad, but the Kaimakhan (Circassian) made sure that they stayed in Mosul, he said that they were devastated and could not take anymore.

In Mosul they were taken to a big house and local Armenians brought them food. Here they stayed for 2 months, and then it was said that 'those with money can take care of themselves, the others are to be sent into Sevkiat,' and one part was sent back to Dovok [sic]. Sevart and her mother rented part of a house. One of her sisters (the married one) took a Turk. The mother, who mostly thought of the past and always cried, became ill and died within 3 days, and Sevart and her little sister then came to the married sister; the second-youngest of the sisters had died before that (she had become fearful when they wanted to kill the mother and did not recover since).

She was there for a month and the Turkish brother-in-law then gave Sevart to an official who was travelling to Mezereh, despite the fact that the sister cried and did not want to let her go. First they let her travel with a Turkish woman (some 15 days of travel) to Mezereh. He had travelled ahead of her and was then lying sick at the hospital, and she then stayed in his house. When he got out from the hospital she was with another young Armenian girl at his place, she was treated like his daughter and was helping with everything in the house."

3: "DIGIN VERSJIN"²⁴

Besides the best known and most high-placed members of the Armenian elite, like bishops, politicians, and artists, it is rare to find more than one – if any – source to the fate on the vast majority of Armenian individuals during the Armenian genocide, especially when these individuals happen to be women or children.²⁵ One exception is Digin Versjin from Harput. The Armenian word 'Digin' translates into 'Mrs.,' or, more broadly, 'the female head of the household,' at times apparently roughly connoting something like 'Lady.' Digin Versjin was in fact a member of the local Armenian 'elite' in the Mamouret-ul-Aziz region. In the sources familiar to me not many other Armenian women are referred to as 'Digin' by European and American missionaries (let alone by Kurds or Turks), so she must have been perceived to be something out of the ordinary. Digin Versjin, a.k.a. Vergene, was originally from Adana, Cilicia, as mentioned by

U.S. missionary Atkinson in her published Harput diaries from before and during the Armenian genocide. The following diary entry is dated 20 July 1916; it is basically a brief summary of Digin Versjin's life and fate up until that date:

I have been to call on Digin Vergene this morning. Her husband was a man of some wealth. Twenty five years ago he went to America and became a citizen, then he went to Liverpool ten years ago and married this girl from Adana. He retained his American citizenship but just before the war he with his wife and children returned here, and he took again his Turkish citizenship in order to regain some property here. Then the war came on and he lost his right of American protection. Last July he was sent in the 'Sevkiat' (deportation – M.B.) with his wife and children. He was delivered into the hands of a powerful Kurd whose men were sent to do the killing. This man was taken from the araba (a horse- or oxen driven carriage – M.B.) and killed before the eyes of his wife and children.

The Kurd saw the wife who is a pretty woman. He took her to his home and wanted to marry her, but his own wife made such a fuss that he soon decided not to marry her. She also refused to marry him, but she was in his power and was not allowed to go out. She soon became pregnant. In May he offended the Vali (Sabit Bey - M.B.) and was put in prison. Then her baby was born, she begs him to let her go as she will not marry him, but he refuses, says he loves her. When her baby was born he sent her money from the prison but it never reached her. She was almost starving. Now his brother has come and given her money for food. She wants to run away as he comes out of prison in ten days. She seems a beautiful Christian. She has her English Bible and hymn book. She has well to do relatives in America who would help her if they knew. Her body has suffered every shame but her soul is untouched.²⁶

It is no coincidence that Petersen, like Atkinson, would take a particular interest in a woman like Digin Versjin and the fate she met. A well-educated, Protestant Armenian woman could not help but attract the attention and sympathy of Western missionaries, especially in a rather small, provincial town such as Mezreh. Petersen, though, records her encounters with Versjin in much more detail than does Atkinson. Petersen quite clearly takes a special interest in Versjin, in fact she risks her own life to save her. From a scholarly point of view, it is notable that this written account does not contradict that of her American missionary colleague. Rather, it supports it and adds depth, nuances, as well as context to it. It is, in this author's opinion, an important early account of, for instance, life as an Armenian woman in captivity in what was commonly referred to at the time as a Muslim Harem; of missionary encounters with and perceptions of 'the Other,' as academic lingo critical of the Orientalist persuasion will have it; and of center-periphery dynamics, more precisely about Hadji Raja, an important local genocide perpetrator, his role in the extermination of the Armenians, and how he would fall in and out favor with Ottoman regional and central authorities (see also the lengthy discussion in endnote 29). In Petersen's words:

“Digin Versjin. One of the most pleasant women! A Madonna-like beauty; a quiet, modest woman and a true Christian believer. For seven years she and her husband had lived in Liverpool, and they had now come to the husband’s home in Mezereh. The home [had] a certain European character, they were rich and she had many pieces of jewelry and even a piano. There was a little 7-year old girl [named Mary]. The husband and his family were Catholics, while she, who as a young girl had attended the college in Adana,²⁷ was a Protestant.

1 July 1915, they had to watch the destruction of this home and the scattering of their belongings in all directions, and they themselves became refugees. They were, together with the Catholic congregation, the first group that left Mezereh. They had been promised special protection by the Vali.²⁸ When the convoy of carriages left Sevang [sic] the next day, the Kurds fell over them, separated the men, and chopped them down. Her husband ran to the carriage and sat down next to her, probably hoping to be in hiding, but the Kurdish chief, Hadji Raja,²⁹ came and dragged him out of the carriage and killed him right before her eyes. Then he took Digin Versjin and all her belongings back to Sevang and demanded that she should become his. The other women were plundered too, even the novices, and they were stripped and abducted.

This man, then, took her and the little girl to a house in the town. I heard about this, found the house, and tried to get to speak to her (on August 1 [1915]). I had to knock on the door in vain for a long time; finally she came and opened the door herself. It turned out that we could not enter and that she was only allowed to speak a few words with us. This was because the Kurd was home, [he] had been on a trip to Istoli [sic: Isoli] (naturally to direct the killings there.)³⁰ He has his home in Istoli, has [a] wife and children, and now this lovely young woman has to live as his wife. She has told him that she will not abandon her faith, and she has her Bible which she reads and takes comfort in. She also has the little girl; when the Kurd calls at her – the child says, ‘I will not come to you, you have killed my father.’ Can anyone understand how it has been for such a sensitive lady to be a prisoner in the house of such a man?

During the winter he brought his Kurdish wife and children from Isoli and this was the greatest humiliation, having to live together with this woman who naturally disliked her. She had to see all her jewelry in the possession of this wife, but one day, when [the Kurdish wife] took out the jewelry, something must have touched her heart, and she gave the little girl two sparkling gems to use as earrings! But the Kurdish family travelled back to Isoli and the husband persuaded Digin Versjin to travel with them to that home, something she adamantly refused.

At the end of May [1916], she gave birth to a little girl. The husband was in prison at the time as he had slandered the Vali to Enver Pasha. He was imprisoned here (‘here’ most likely meaning Mezreh – M.B.) for several months, but during this time he had gotten his 2 brothers to watch Digin Versjin so that she would not run away. But he did not give her enough to eat – she sold as many as possible of her clothes to buy more food, but she did not have milk for the child who cried because of that. She had an elderly Armenian woman to help her doing the housework, and she stuck to her with a touching devotion. She came to me in tears

and told about Digin Versjin's unhappy condition. I then visited [Versjin] and gave her money for milk and nutritious items, but I could sense that it was difficult for her, who had been rich and (one illegible word – M.B.), to receive them. It was wonderful to see that despite her hard fate she had not lost her faith in God's love, but was reading the Bible and praying all day long. She hoped that God would give her an opportunity to escape, but she had no friends who could hide her. We read and prayed together that God would show a way.

By the end of September, I was once again very worried about her condition. The Kurd had got out of jail, and because of a hostile relationship with the government,³¹ he was in a difficult position. (Note in original text: '*The government demands some money he owes because he had controlled the ferry service and the mail service.' – M.B.). His family in Isoli tried to persuade him to get rid of Digin Versjin and take care of them instead. Digin V. herself has no greater wish than to be free, but even though he, too, has reasons to wish to be free, he cannot let go of her. He does not want her to fall into the hands of another Turk [sic] or maybe to suffer want. Whether these are just empty words, or whether he really means it, I do not know. I could imagine that she by her quiet and mild ways has influenced him in a good way, and that true devotion and love has found a place in his evil and cruel heart. As a solution she proposed to travel to Aleppo where she has an aunt; at first he rejected it, but afterward he accepted this with such an eagerness that she became suspicious and began to believe that he was thereby planning something: namely to have her attacked and killed on the road. This way she would not later be able to call him to account for his evil deeds toward her, or for her money and jewelry that he had acquired.

We were leaning toward believing that he would have her done away with, and thought it to be the right thing to do if she escaped from him. We managed to find a woman in Harput, poor and insignificant, who would hide her, and, as Digin V. was not familiar with the road up there, she was to be disguised, and I should escort her. It had been planned where I should meet her, and the date had been decided upon (9 September [1916]), and I was tensely awaiting her at the appointed time, but she did not come. She had not dared to escape after all, not because she feared for herself, as no price could be too high for her to pay to get out of his hands, but she feared for the person who was willing to hide her.

It turned out that she had told the Turk [sic] that she would walk out herself, he did not have to worry about her anymore – but then he had said – 'Do not think about leaving or hiding. I will find you even if I have to burn down the whole town – and pity the person in whose house I find you.' After this threat Digin V. would rather wait and see if she could make him let her go voluntarily. But this period of waiting was hard and nerve wrecking. One evening in early October the Kurd gets home late and the male servants who slept on the ground floor were asleep and did not open for him. The old woman walks down and opens the door, but, furious about having to wait, he takes the old woman, puts her outside, and locks the door. She knocks on the neighbor's door, and the neighbor lets her in. Digin Versjin was beside herself, fearing that something should happen to the woman, and the husband then says that she had to go down there herself and let her in, but she feared that someone would stand outside to kill her.

The next day she is beside herself, the child is troubled and uncared for, and the Kurd regrets to have thrown the old woman out and tells her to come back. She is scared, too, but finally complies for the sake of her Lady. But she [Versjin] is so shocked that she starts at the slightest sound, thinks she is being followed – sees men come who want to tie her up and take her away. The old woman comes and asks me to come and help. I went there, and as long as I stayed there she was calm, but she looked very pale and had a frightened look in her eyes. I understood that things would go wrong if her surroundings did not change and suggested to her (albeit with a pounding heart) that I should talk to the Kurd to see if he would not allow her to come and visit me for a while. I then waited for some time while she filled his big leather belt with cartridges, as he was about to travel to Isoli. She was not to be alone in the house, though, as his 2 brothers were coming to watch her so that she could not escape. He did not come and I had to go home.

The next day, 6 October, around noon, I went there once more. Digin Versjin had neither eaten nor slept, but had spent the whole night by the window: ‘to make sure that no one would come to kill her.’ I sent a message to Hadji Raja asking for a conversation with him. And he answered ‘yes, if I would excuse him that he was not dressed.’ I answered that this meant nothing and went in with an Armenian woman as interpreter.³² I had expected to see an old, bearded man with a wild and sinister look, and that I would have to salute in a Turkish manner (bending the hand toward the chest and the forehead). I am very surprised to see a youthful man with a sturdy figure, beautiful facial features, and well-dressed, who jumps up from the divan and politely shakes my hand and asks me in the kindest way to take a seat. I then explained to him that I had a request which I hoped he would not decline, and told him that I had been there yesterday and had seen how bad a condition that Digin V. was in. She must have become afraid of something and had quite clearly lost her mind, something he himself had witnessed. As I cared about her a lot, and as it saddened me to see her in such a condition, I wanted to ask if she could stay at my place for a while. It was necessary that she had a ‘change of air.’

But he did not think that there was any reason for being anxious about her condition; he had, though, been willing to call a doctor, something she did not want. It was a pleasure for him to hear my offer, but he could not oblige me as their laws forbade them to let their wives visit a stranger’s house. Think of what his friends would say, think of what people would say if they heard that his wife had gone to another house.³³ Unfortunately, it was completely impossible. I discussed this with him at length and he finally said that she was allowed to walk around as much as she wanted to and to visit me every day, but she had to come home at night. I said that I could not believe this, I knew that she had been locked up completely until now and that was not enough anyway, she was very ill and had to get away completely. ‘Yes, but what would people say?’ It was shameful for such a great man when people talked about his wife! I said, ‘let people say what they want.’ It must be done for her sake, and I promised to take good care of her. Finally he said that he would have to think about it and give me an answer tomorrow, but if he was to say yes it was only for my sake.³⁴ (A favor granted to me). I thanked him and politely bid him farewell.

When I went in to Digin V. and also met our Bible woman there, I said: 'Now is the time to pray that he is moved to take this step which is so difficult for him.' I was already convinced, though, that the answer would be favorable. But still I had not expected it to come that soon.³⁵ Shortly after I had gotten home, Digin Versjin arrived with Mary (Versjin's oldest daughter, born in Liverpool, Great Britain - M.B.) and the little girl. He had said, 'you can go today and stay for 14 days. Hurry up before I regret it.' And now the wonder had actually happened; she, who had up until now been held as a slave and jealously guarded, was in our house now, free from the surroundings that were so dreadful to her. The Lord had worked this wonder in front of our eyes.

Already within the first days the 'change of air' turned out to be beneficial. Digin V. slept at night and started to eat. Unfortunately, I could not refuse to receive the Kurd's visits, but [I] stayed in the room while he talked to her. He said that he regretted having sent her here, because now she probably would not come back anymore. He had to travel to Isoli as his wife was lying ill there. (6 months ago she had a son and he had not been there yet. The wife and her brothers were of course angry about this insult and the brothers threatened to kill him). On the other hand he could not live without Digin Versjin. He explained to me that he had to have a wife where he was, one in Mezreh and one in Isoli!³⁶ He was very agitated and his mind was divided, making him say the most contradictory things: If you want to stay, then stay and at the next moment 'I regret not having killed you, you have gotten me into a real mess,' and that all the people in the village would say that it was great shame for him that his wife had run from him. I said that I thought that he should go to Isoli and stay there with his real wife and children who probably needed him, and when I was called out for a moment he said to D. Versjin: 'She probably wants me to leave so that she can take you to Dersim (Tunceli - M.B.).' (Over the border to a Kurdish tribe and from there to Russia).

Finally, on 16 October [1916], he left for the village and we were breathing more freely. Here, he got into a mighty fight with the family. The 5 brothers could not agree on matters of their property and their part of the looted goods, but they were mainly angry with him because he had not divorced [or: 'gotten rid of'] Digin V.³⁷ Already after 5 days he returned to sell his belongings and dissolve the household in Mezreh. He sent for Digin Versjin and set her free completely and allowed her to take whatever she wanted of the kitchen utensils. And she took a couple of boilers. It was a joyful day for all of us and I now felt that I had been released from my promise to look after her and hoped that getting her to Dersim would be successful. 'The Lord releases the bound and sets the prisoners free.' Times of tribulation returned, though. Not more than 14 days later the Kurd returned from Isoli and wanted her back, claiming that he had never set her free. It so happened that the Kurd had found out that before the departure (i.e., the July 1915 'deportation' - M.B.), Digin V.'s husband had deposited a large sum in the bank, and the Kurd had not yet gotten hold of this sum. As he wanted to have it paid out to him, and the government heard that Digin V. was no longer with him, they refused to give it to him. Now it was important for him to prove that she had only been away on a visit."

This is where the document ends. Digin Versjin would appear to be but one of the tens of thousands of Armenian women and children ‘absorbed’ into Muslim households during the Armenian genocide.³⁸ But in 1920 a rather obscure 12-page booklet was published by the Swedish KMA. It was written by Petersen, one of many examples of how the independent Scandinavian KMA branches cooperated, exchanged information, and published translated books, pamphlets, and even original material collected or written by colleagues from other national branches.³⁹ The booklet is titled *Digin Virginie: en Armenisk Kvinns Lidanden* (Digin Virginie: the sufferings of an Armenian woman), and it is by and large based on the original document written by Petersen translated in full above. The only significant difference is that there is a brief introduction by Petersen, as well as what amounts to a conclusion to the tale of Digin Versjin that basically takes off where the original document ends. It will also serve as a conclusion for the purpose of this paper, a fitting note of hope, sadness, and despair, but not of indifference or forgetting. Karen Marie Petersen kept her promise to herself, her organization, and the Ottoman authorities: she did return to tell everything:

The small child died. Having gone insane, she tried to take her own life. Slowly she began to regain her senses after she returned to us. The orphanage [*Emaus*] was the only place where she felt safe and happy. In the spring of 1917 she attempted to escape to Dersim, but she was caught and had to spend a month in the Turkish women’s prison among hardened female prisoners, breathing the unhealthiest air, and living under the cruelest conditions. The last time I saw her and Mary was when we Danish missionaries [Karen Marie Petersen and Maria Jacobsen] left Mezreh by automobile in the American car convoy to return to Denmark [in September 1919]. She was in our group of travel companions, but less than an hour after we left the town the car she drove in had serious engine problems – she had to stay behind and return... It was the last car convoy of the year – the last chance to get out. I have not since heard if she managed to get out of the country and if she reached America, something she deeply desired.⁴⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ See also http://www.armenews.com/article.php3?id_article=71408 ;

<http://www.armenianweekly.com/2010/09/13/new-phase-in-documentation-of-the-armenian-genocide/> .

² See, e.g., Matthias Bjørnlund’s chapter in Tessa Hofmann, Matthias Bjørnlund, Vasileios Meichanetsidis (eds.), *The Genocide of the Ottoman Greeks: Studies on the State-Sponsored Campaign of Extermination of the Christians of Asia Minor (1912-1922) and Its Aftermath: History, Law, Memory*, New Rochelle, New York, Caratzas Publishing Co. 2011 (<http://caratzas.com/index.cfm?category=17>); Matthias Bjørnlund, “Adana and Beyond: Revolution and Massacre in the Ottoman Empire Seen through Danish Eyes, 1908/9,” *Haigazian Armenological Review*, Vol. 30, 2010, pp. 125-156 (available for download on www.armenske-folkedrab.dk); idem, “‘A Fate Worse than Dying’: Sexual Violence during the Armenian Genocide,” in Dagmar Herzog (ed.), *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe’s Twentieth Century*, Palgrave Macmillan 2009, pp. 16-58 (<http://www.palgrave.com/products/title.aspx?PID=283305> , click ‘Download sample

- chapter’); idem, “The 1914 Cleansing of Aegean Greeks as a Case of Violent Turkification,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 41-57, published as a book chapter in Dominik J. Schaller & Jürgen Zimmerer (eds.), *Late Ottoman Genocides: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and Young Turkish Population and Extermination Policies*, London & New York, Routledge 2009, pp. 34-50 (<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a790756230&fulltext=713240928>); idem, “Karen Jeppe, Aage Meyer Benedictsén, and the Ottoman Armenians: National Survival in Imperial and Colonial Settings,” *Haigazian Armenological Review*, Vol. 28, 2008, pp. 9-43, (available for download at <http://www.ermenisoykirimi.net/dansk.htm>); idem, “Scandinavia and the Armenian Genocide,” *Armenian Weekly*, 24 April 2008 special issue, pp. 19-22; idem, “‘When the Cannons Talk, the Diplomats Must be Silent’ – A Danish Diplomat in Constantinople during the Armenian Genocide,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Fall 2006, pp. 197-223; Helle Schøler Kjær, *1915: Danske Vidner til det Armenske folkemord*, Vandkunsten 2009.
- ³ On this organization, see Bjørnlund, “Scandinavia and the Armenian Genocide,” 2008, pp. 19-22.
- ⁴ Maria Jacobsen, *Maria Jacobsen’s Diary 1907-1919, Kharpout – Turkey*, Antelias, Lebanon, Armenian Catholicosate 1979 (a facsimile of the original, handwritten Danish-language diaries is included in this volume). For an English translation of the diaries, see Maria Jacobsen, *Diaries of a Danish Missionary – Harpoot, 1907-1919*, Princeton & London, Gomidas Institute Books 2001 (ed. by Ara Sarafian, translated by Kirsten Vind).
- ⁵ *KMA*, 10.360, pk. 40, “Protokol for Armenien. K.M.A. Komite for Armenien, Maj 1900-Dec. 1902,” meetings 10, 17, 24/4 1902; Lange, 1920, p. 11.
- ⁶ Elise Bockelund, *En Tjenergerning blandt Martyrfolket. Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere 1900–1930*, Copenhagen 1932, p. 47.
- ⁷ Amalie Lange, *Et Blad af Armeniens Historie. K.M.A. 1910-1920*, KMA 1920, p. 51.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- ⁹ See, e.g., Bjørnlund, “A fate...,” 2009, passim; Jacobsen, 1979, p. 270; Bockelund, 1932, pp. 36–37; Tacy Atkinson, “*The German, the Turk and the Devil Made a Triple Alliance*”: *Harpoot Diaries, 1908-1917*, Princeton, NJ, Gomidas Institute 2000, pp. 40, 53; Henry H. Riggs, *Days of Tragedy in Armenia: Personal Experiences in Harpoot, 1915–1917*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Gomidas Institute 1997, pp. 146–147; James L. Barton, comp., “*Turkish Atrocities*”: *Statements of American Missionaries on the Destruction of Christian Communities in Ottoman Turkey, 1915-1917*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Gomidas Institute 1998, p. 68.
- ¹⁰ Lange, 1920, pp. 47-49. Italics in original text.
- ¹¹ *KMA*, Arkivnr. 10.360, Pk. Nr. 13, “Armenier-Missionen. Breve fra Frk. Marie Petersen. 1909-1918”. Letter from Danish *KMA* missionary Karen Marie Petersen at Mezreh to Danish *KMA*’s Armenia Committee, 22 September 1917.
- ¹² For an example of the use of code through euphemism or fable by Petersen when communicating with *KMA* – describing the destruction of the Armenians by way of a fable-like anecdote of how once a storm had torn more and more of the pears from the pear tree in her father’s garden each day, with the rest of the pears waiting anxiously for their turn until all were gone one morning – see Lange, 1920, pp. 34-35.
- ¹³ Besides from the already mentioned publications, there are, for instance, the relevant chapters in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Tsopk/Kharpert*, Costa Mesa, California., Mazda Publishers 2002; Hampartzoum Mardiros Chitjian, *A Hair’s Breadth from Death*, London & Reading, Taderon Press 2003; Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province: An American Diplomat’s Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917*, New Rochelle, New York, Aristide D. Caratzas 1989; Abraham D. Krikorian

& Eugene L. Taylor, "Finding a Photograph for a Caption: Dr. Ruth A. Parmelee's Comments on some Euphrates (Yeprad) College Professors and their Fate during the Armenian Genocide," June 2011, <http://groong.usc.edu/orig/ak-20110627.html> ; idem, "Filling in the Picture: Postscript to a Description of the Well-Known 1915 Photograph of Armenian Men of Kharpert Being Led Away under Armed Guard," June 2011, <http://groong.usc.edu/orig/ak-20110613.html> . For a study of CUP rule in the Diyarbekir province, see Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011. For a study on the Smyrna/Izmir region, see Matthias Bjørnlund, "The Persecution of Greeks and Armenians in Smyrna, 1914-16: A Special Case in the Course of the Late Ottoman Genocides," in George N. Shirinian, ed., *The Great Catastrophe: Essays on the Greeks of Asia Minor and Pontos, 1913-1922*, forthcoming (2011/2012).

¹⁴ Danish National Archives, Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere, Arkivnr. 10.360, Pk. Nr. 15, "Arminier-Missionen, Diverse skildringer vedr. Arminierne, 1906-1927." Type-written account in Danish. The translations of the accounts have been silently edited re. spelling and style. All comments in parentheses, (), are found in the original text, while all comments in square brackets, [], are by the present author.

¹⁵ Judging from the construction of the original Danish sentence it cannot be ruled out that it should read something like "12 years ago I was [deported/exiled] with my whole family..." More importantly, it is indirectly stated here that the account was related (and almost certainly also recorded) in 1927. This might also be the case with some of the other type-written accounts in the KMA archives, like the one by Khosrov Krikorian: <http://www.armenske-folkedrab.dk/KhosrovKrikorian.pdf> .

¹⁶ The words "and clean" have been added to the type-written text by pen.

¹⁷ There might be some confusion in the account, as, according to the narrator, all her eight children are dead or abducted at this point, while it is stated below that some have survived. But since 3-4 years pass from the narrator's Aleppo-experiences to her later Alexandrette- and Damascus experiences, she could have remarried and had one or more additional children.

¹⁸ The word "gravel" has been crossed out, and the word "dirt/earth" has been added by pen.

¹⁹ The word "afternoon" has been crossed out and the word "autumn" has been added by pen. In Danish, the word for "afternoon" is "eftermiddag," and the word for "autumn" is "efterår".

²⁰ The narrator and her family could either have returned to Turkey around 1925 to find work, or, more likely, she could be referring to the 1925 Druze uprising against the French mandatory power in Syria which sparked a backlash against Armenian refugees in Damascus and elsewhere, even to the extent that part of a refugee camp was burned down. I thank the editor, Dr. Antranig Dakessian, for this last observation.

²¹ *Rigsarkivet, Private Institutioner: Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere*, Arkivnr. 10.360, Pk. Nr. 15, "Arminier-Missionen [sic], Diverse skildringer vedr. Arminierne [sic]. 1906-1927." ["The Mission to the Armenians, various descriptions concerning the Armenians." The person writing this misspelled 'Armenians' twice.] Undated, unsigned testimony handwritten with a pencil, almost certainly by KMA missionary Petersen between 1918, when Mikaelian was received at *Emaus*, and when she left the orphanage. My personal opinion is that the testimony is both so detailed and so 'messy' that it (or an earlier original version of it) was probably written down, if not immediately, then relatively shortly after Mikaelian's arrival at *Emaus*.

²² *Rigsarkivet, Private Institutioner: Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere*, Arkivnr. 10.360, Pk. Nr. 113, "Fortegnelse over plejebørn –forældre og udbetalinger, 1919-20."

- ²³ On the massacres at the Kemakh Gorge, south of Erzinjan on the Euphrates, see also, e.g., Wolfgang Gust (ed.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern 1915/16: Dokumente aus dem Politischen Archiv des Deutschen Auswärtigen Amtes*, zu Klampen 2005, p. 260; Simon Payaslian, "The Death of Armenian Karin/Erzerum," in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Karin/Erzerum*, Costa Mesa, Ca., Mazda Publishers 2003, pp. 353-55; Ioannis K. Hassiotis, "The Armenian Genocide and the Greeks: Response and Records (1915-23)," in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*, Palgrave Macmillan 1992, pp. 146-47; "Tell of Horrors Done in Armenia," *New York Times*, 4 October 1915; http://www.gomidas.org/NOTES_AND_STUDIES/CAA_Report.pdf ; Tessa Hofmann (ed.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern vor Gericht: Der Prozess Talaat Pascha*, Göttingen, Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker/Reihe Pogrom 1980, p. 130; James Bryce & Arnold Toynbee, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*, uncensored ed. by Ara Sarafian, Princeton, New Jersey: Gomidas Institute 2000, pp. 256, 263, 265, 269, 271, 277, 278, 279, 281, 346. In Lange, 1920, pp. 69ff, Jacobsen tells the story of the girl Ashken Soghomon Tolsian, 11 years old in 1915. Tolsian, originally from Erzingjan/Erzindjan, was a starving child who had escaped from life as a slave in the home of a Turkish family, one of the many children Jacobsen picked up on the streets of Harput from 1917 onward. Tolsian was sent on a 1 month-long death march to Diyarbekir through Mezreh. Her father was a rich merchant; the family, 5 adults and 10 children, were deported on a Wednesday morning by whip-wielding police. The Tolsians were deported with some 2000 other families; they had a couple of days to make preparations. When they reached Kemagh Gorge many were robbed and killed by gendarmes/soldiers. Some managed to flee, but were chased by Turks and Kurds from Erzingjan who wielded knives and guns and killed many men, women, and children. Survivors were driven across the river and further on to Mezreh where they camped for 3 days by the Mizag creek under horrible conditions. As usual, the whole journey was filled with killings, death, suicide, abuse, insanity, and starvation, with the remaining men systematically being taken out and killed.
- ²⁴ An early, commented version of this testimony was published at <http://www.armenieninfo.net/matthias-bjoernlund/957-eyewitness-accounts-of-the-armenian-genocide-from-the-danish-archives-digin-versjin.html?showall=1>
- ²⁵ Most Armenian genocide survivor mémoires are written by men, but they do of course often contain valuable information on the fate of women and children. See, e.g., Vahram Dadrian, *To the Desert: Pages from My Diary*, Princeton & London: Gomidas Institute 2003. Many survivor accounts by women and children can be found in Verjiné Svazlian, *The Armenian Genocide and Historical Memory*, Yerevan: Gitutiun 2004; Donald E. Miller & Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors: An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1993.
- ²⁶ Atkinson, 2000, p. 72.
- ²⁷ Petersen is probably referring to the ABCFM girl's school/college there. See, e.g., Edwin Munsell Bliss (ed.), *The Encyclopædia of Missions. Descriptive, Historical, Biographical, Statistical*, New York, Funk & Wagnalls 1891, p. 5; Barton, comp., 1998, pp. 159ff.
- ²⁸ It does not seem to be entirely clear whether the actual deportation referred to took place on 1 July. According to US consul at Harput, Leslie A. Davis, "[the] latter part of July [1915], after most of the Armenians had been deported from Mamouret-ul-Aziz and Harput, a party of about forty persons left with a special safe-conduct given by the Vali. They were people whom he knew and in whom he pretended to be interested. [...]."

Among them was [sic, MB] the Armenian Catholic Archbishop, Monseigneur Israelian, and his associates.” Report at

http://www.gomidas.org/gida/index_and_%20documents/867.4016_index_and_document_s/docs/4016.392.pdf . This may very well be another, later ‘deportation party’ than the one referred to by Petersen, though.

²⁹ Hadji Raja may be identical to a certain Deli Hadji who is referred to once by KMA missionary nurse Jacobsen, pp. 142-143, in an 18 April 1916 diary entry: “The evil spirit in Harpoot, Deli Hadji, has returned from Constantinople, and he cannot bear to see the few poor women and children who remain. He says, ‘There are too many Armenians here, there must be another massacre.’” For the diaries in *Armenian and Danish: Jacobsen, 1979*.

See also Amalia Lange, *Blandt Armeniske Flygtninge. Kvindelige Missions Arbejdere 1920-1925* [Among Armenian refugees. Women missionary workers 1920-1925], Copenhagen, KMA 1925, pp. 12-13, on a certain Hadji Khaja in Mezreh who seems likely to be identical with Hadji Raja: “In the spring of 1922, several of the missionaries who had been expelled by the Turks also arrived in *Beirut*, and among these were Miss [Maria] Jacobsen’s dear friends and former co-workers in Harpoot, Miss [Isabel/Isabelle] *Harley* and Dr. *Parmaly* [Ruth A. Parmelee], and medical missionary Dr. [Mark] *Ward*. Meeting them again was a great joy for our sisters, but the news they brought about the situation in Inner Armenia was sad and outrageous. Five Kurdish Chiefs were now ruling there, and the most important of them were *Hadji Khaja* in *Mezreh*, a man who had been the instrument that was used to kill thousands of Armenians. [...]” Italics in original text. As it happens, none other than Atatürk, in his 1927 ‘Great Speech,’ mentions ‘adventurers’ such as a Deli Hadji ‘fostering unrest’ in Anatolia around 1920.

Raymond Kévorkian mentions a Hacı Bedri Agha, Kurdish chief from the Reşvan (Rashvand; Rashwand; Reshven) tribe and a leader of the *Special Organization*, (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) as one of the organizers of a large-scale massacre near Malatia (Malatya), Mamouret-ul-Aziz region, of Armenian deportees from Erzerum, July 1915:

<http://www.massviolence.org/fr/The-Extermination-of-Ottoman-Armenians-by-the-Young-Turk-Regime> .

According to Mehrdad R. Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, Washington, Philadelphia, London, Crane Russak/Taylor & Francis International Publishers 1992, p. 83, the Rashwand/Reshven tribe came (originally?) from south-east of Erzurum/Erzerum. For a photo of an unnamed Kurdish tribal chief (Agha) “with a benign, kindly, innocent face,” described as being responsible for the death of thousands of Armenians at Malatia, see

http://dcollections.oberlin.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/relief&CISOPTR=88&CISOBX=1&REC=1 . I thank Abraham D. Krikorian and Eugene L. Taylor for this interesting piece of information, as well as for comments and suggestions in general about the section on Digin Versjin.

³⁰ On the separation of Armenian men from women and children at Isoli and a subsequent massacre of deportees near Malatia as reported by German missionary Klara Pfeiffer, Mezreh, see:

[http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf/\\$\\$AllDocs-en/1916-05-10-DE-002?OpenDocument](http://www.armenocide.de/armenocide/armgende.nsf/$$AllDocs-en/1916-05-10-DE-002?OpenDocument) .

³¹ Missionaries would often use the term ‘government’ as a broad term denoting local and/or state administration; in this case it seems likely that ‘government’ denotes both, as Hadji appears to have alienated the local Vali, Sabit Bey, as well as the state/national authorities through the alleged embezzlement.

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- ³² As Petersen did speak Armenian and Turkish, Hadji Raja was probably speaking Kurdish at the meeting.
- ³³ Underlining in original text.
- ³⁴ Underlining in original text.
- ³⁵ Underlining in original text.
- ³⁶ Underlining in original text.
- ³⁷ It is possible, perhaps even probable, that considering the context, the proper translation of the Danish phrase “skilt sig fra” from the original text is not ‘divorced’ but rather ‘gotten rid of’ or ‘disposed of,’ i.e., killed.
- ³⁸ See, e.g., Bjørnlund, “‘A fate...,” 2009, pp. 16-58.
- ³⁹ Karen-Marie Pedersen [sic], *Digin Virginie: En Armenisk Kvinnas Lidanden*, Stockholm, Kvinnliga Missions Arbetare, 1920. I thank Göran Gunner, Stockholm, Sweden, for sharing a pdf copy of this rare pamphlet.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

ՅԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹԵԱՆ ՄԱՀՆ ՈՒ ՎԵՐԱՊՐՈՒՄԸ ԳՐԱՌՈՂ ԱԿԱՆԱՏԵՍ ՄԻՍԻՈՆԱՐԸ՝ ՔԱՐԷՆ ՄԱՐԻ ՓԵԹԵՐՍԸՆ (Ամփոփում)

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Դանիական միախոնարական, նպաստամատուցի եւ Արտաքին Գործոց Նախարարութեան արխիւները հարուստ են Հայկական Յեղասպանութեան նիւթերով: Այս նիւթերուն մէկ մասը արդէն հրապարակուած է գիրքերով կամ կայքէջերով: Սակայն կան տակաւին բազմաթիւ այլ փաստաթուղթեր եւ նիւթեր, որոնք կրնան լոյս սփռել Յեղասպանութեան բազմաչերտ եւ բազմատարր գործընթացին զանազան մանրամասնութեանց վրայ: Այս յօդուածով հեղինակը կը հրատարակէ այդ նիւթերէն երեքը, որոնք կը պատկանին Քարէն Փեթերսընի գրիչին: Ծերջինս, հանրածանօթ դանիացի այլ միախոնար Մարիա Շաքոպսընի եւ երկու այլ միախոնարներու՝ ձենի ձենսընի եւ Հանսին Մարչըրի կողքին, գործած է Մեզրէի եւ Պարբերդի շրջանին մէջ:

Փեթերսըն տնօրէնուհին եղած է 1909ին Մեզրէի մէջ հիմնուած Էմմաուս որբանոցին եւ կարեկրութիւնն ունեցած է վերապրողներէ վկայութիւններ հաւաքելու:

Այստեղ ներկայացուած վկայութիւններէն երկուքը, կը թուին վերապրողներու կողմէ Փեթերսընի պատմուած պատումներ ըլլալ, իսկ երրորդին մէջ պատմուող դէպքերուն ինք անձամբ ակնատես ու մասնակից դարձած է: Այս վկայութիւնները կը ծառայեն նաեւ Յեղասպանութեան ընթացքին առեւանգուած հայուհիներու եւ հայ ընտանիքներու դիմագրուած դժուարութիւններուն հաւաքական պատումները յառաջացնելու գործին:

Վկայութիւններէն առաջինը Փեթերսընի պատմուած է հայ կնոջ մը կողմէ 1927ին. անիկա Պիթլիս-Բաղէշէն բռնազաղթուած բազմանդամ ընտանիքի մը պատումն է եւ այդ ընտանիքին տասանորդու՝ տեղահանութեան, բռնազաղթի ու անապատային անկարելի պայմաններուն բերումով:

Ի տարբերութիւն առաջին պատումին կենսագրական տուեալներու գրեթէ չգոյութեան, երկրորդ վկայութիւնը ունի կենսագրական տուեալներ: Ան վկայութիւնն է էրզրումցի Սուարը (Միրվա՞րդ, Զուա՞րթ) Միքայէլեանին, որ 15 տարեկան էր 1918ին, երբ բերուած էր Էմմաուս որբանոց՝ մայրն ու քոյրը կորսնցնելէ ու թուրք պաշտօնատարի մը կողմէ շրջան մը առեւանգուած մնալէ ետք: Միքայէլեան կը պատմէ իր գողգոթան՝ էրզրումէն մինչեւ Մուսուլ եւ փրկութիւնը՝ Էմմաուս: Երրորդ վկայութիւնը «Տիկին Վերթին»ի տառապալից, բռնաբարեալ կեանքին մասին է: «Տիկին Վերթին» կը պատկանէր Պարբերդի բարեկեցիկ ընտանիքներու խաւին: Անոր ամուսինը շրջան մը ապրած էր Մ. Նահանգներ, ապա Լիվըրփուլ, ապա եկած Կիլիկիա, պսակուած Ատանա ծնած «Տիկին Վերթին»ի հետ, ու հաստատուած Պարբերդ: Ան վերականգնած ըլլալով իր օսմանեան հպատակութիւնը, գրկուած էր Միքայէլ Նահանգներու պետական պաշտպանութեան: Յեղասպանութեան ատեն, ան սպաննուած էր քիւրտի մը կողմէ որ տիրացած էր թէ՛ անոր կալուածներուն եւ թէ՛ կնոջ՝ «Տիկին Վերթին»ին: Պատումը կը մանրամասնէ այդ կնոջ արգելափակեալ կեանքին տառապանքը Պարբերդի իր ամուսնական տան մէջ, որ վերածուած էր իր ամուսինը սպաննող քիւրտին քաղաքային բնակարանին: Փեթերսըն կը մանրամասնէ նաեւ իր անդուլ ճիգերը տարհամոզելու քիւրտը՝ յանուն «Տիկին Վերթին»ի ազատումին: