

The Fading Village:
An Archive of Exile and Errantry

by
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

Institutional archives—our hegemonic repositories of cultural memory—are in the midst of an identity crisis. They are no longer seen as neutral sites of knowledge retrieval, but rather as instruments of knowledge production. These archives, which are as reliant on their built environs as the matter they safeguard, are currently being critiqued, dismantled, and reimagined.

Within this work, I offer my own contribution to the growing body of *living-* and *counter-archival* projects which resist the fantasy of a comprehensive History of the world and critically question the dominant narratives present in our epistemological canon.

Ironically, I have undertaken this work during a sedentary time of institutional closures, social distancing, and travel restrictions. So, rather than looking for answers elsewhere abroad, I have chosen to look more closely at the things that have accumulated next to me: viewing domestic, diasporic space as an archive in itself—one that is alive, growing, and errant.

In the process, I have traced the invisible networks that rearrange a hostland's environment and tether a diaspora to their homeland—through the things they leave behind, those they bring with them, and others they find (or make) along the way. These everyday objects preserve the narratives of communities displaced—whether by economic, political, or environmental crises—and they reveal the spatial consequences of translation.

This work begins and ends in a house—in the home of my grandparents—who were born in an Armenian diaspora community in the mountains of northern Syria; migrated to Beirut, Lebanon, to raise a family; and then fled as refugees, after almost 15 years of civil war, to permanently settle in Canada. It is here, in the Kessabtsi community of Cambridge, Ontario, that I draw relations between history, identity, and the land.

In the end, my thesis is an assemblage of writings on the subtle moments of inheritance—when knowledge about a distant place is unearthed—during long car rides or over coffee in the garden. As I collect, catalogue, and document the artifacts of a place I have never been, I explore a familiar question: What constitutes an archive?



1. Unknown Author
Shepherd's Home in Chalma
 1959 (74×104mm).

One of the first photographs I found during my counter-archival research. It was a misfit in a messy stack; the first clear picture of a traditional home in the Armenian mountain villages of northwestern Syria.

It would be months before I uncovered more images from the set, helping me date and place the photograph. My grandfather was unable to remember who took the picture and while we were able to translate the poem on the back, we could not decipher the author's signature. The poem reads: *"Childhood days come and go like a dream and they're not coming back. Those beautiful childhood days were capable only of joy."*

This photograph, for me, represents the fading village—fading from the memory of an aging population of diaspora; fading literally, as waves of internal tourism and modern development build over traditional homes; and fading from history, as the few photographs that still exist approach the end of their material lifespan.

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And to those who took the time to help with my research: archival staff near and far; house guests who offered memories of a place I have never been; and newfound friends at the University of Waterloo and Canadian Centre for Architecture.

To my parents:

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And, finally, to my grandparents:

Marie and Zaven Titizian, for teaching me about yourselves and, in the process, about myself; for teaching me how to listen in another language: to your stories, to the plants in your garden, and to the artifacts in your home; and for teaching me that travelling isn't the only way to become intimate with a far-off place. This work is dedicated to you both.

—Thank you all.



2. Unknown Author Picnic in Karadouran 1959 (74×104mm).

My grandfather, Zaven Titizian, sharing a glass of *arak*—an anise-based liquor popular in the Levant—with Moses “Maybouz” Manjikian during a picnic on the mountainside in their home village of Karadouran.



3. Unknown Author Reading in Ekizoulukh 1963 (104×74mm).

My grandmother, Marie Inejikian, spent summers with her cousin, Sona Ashikian, while teaching part-time in the village of Ekizoulukh.

Her education was sponsored by the Philibosian Foundation and she was given room and board in Aleppo for two years. Her studies were cut short, though, due to a lack of funding from the organization.

After which, she continued to teach in Ekizoulukh until she joined my grandfather in Beirut in 1966 where they were married.

LAND STORIES AND LAND TREATIES

I write this note to you from a folding chair under the shade of a cherry tree on a summer day in Cambridge, Ontario. Three small coffee cups are overturned in their saucers on an upside-down recycling bin and my grandparents are flipping through grocery fliers. I have been living here for the past two years—planting seeds and growing. It was time spent thinking about epistemological methods and discovering the entanglements between posterity, filiation, and land.

My relationship with this garden, this home, this city, is hard to put into words. I remember spending weekends here as a child; holidays and birthdays as an adolescent; and semesters as a student of architecture. Over the last 30 years, it has also been a home for a family of Armenian refugees, from an agricultural village on the Syrian coast. When my grandparents left Kessab for Cambridge, they brought with them their ways of living on and with the land—a practice that continues today.

More than that still, this land is the traditional territory of the Neutral Confederacy, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee and is situated within Block One of the *Haldimand Tract*.¹ The privilege I have been afforded in these past years to inherit the land practices and cultural heritage of my family has been at the expense of those who were violently forced to forget their own ways of knowing. In this way, settler-colonials and settler-immigrants alike are complicit in the ongoing theft of Indigenous lands that contribute to the cultural genocide of its caretakers.

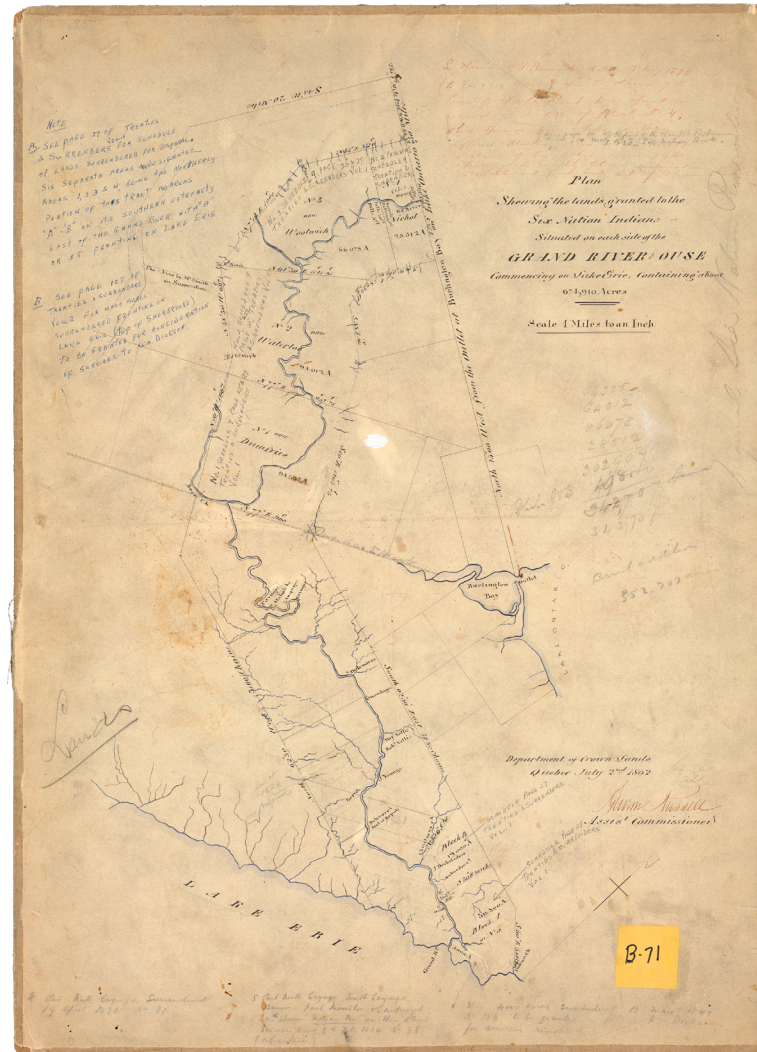
This land was claimed by an illiberal government through coerced consignment; a process which transformed Indigenous land into property by drawing it in treaties, surveys, surrenders, and other territorial agreements. These physical documents, housed in the National Archives of Canada, have legitimized unethical, unequal, and unfulfilled promises that demand material restitution—not to mention the repatriation of stolen cultural artifacts.²

Here, on the Grand River, the fight for decolonization is still ongoing.^{3,4} With a significant land claims case appearing before courts in 2022, I ask my readers to follow these efforts closely as we move into the new year and support, share, and donate to the Six Nations' cause.⁵

The Haldimand Tract is land promised to the Six Nations for their alliance with the British during the American Revolution and includes 10km “from each Side of the [Grand] River beginning at Lake Erie & extending in the Proportion to the Head of the said River, which them and their Posterity are to enjoy for ever.”

[1] Charles M. Johnston, *The Valley of the Six Nations: A Collection of Documents on the Indian Lands of the Grand River* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 50–51.

[2] Candice Hopkins, *Repatriation Otherwise: How Protocols of Belonging are Shifting the Museological Frame*, Constellations: Indigenous Contemporary Art from the Americas (Mexico City: Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, 2020).



4. Department of Crown Lands Plan showing the lands granted to the Six Nation[s]... 1862 (640x460mm).

The map above is a facsimile of the Ridout Survey and is an annotated legend of “lands surrendered [by the Six Nations] for disposal.” It represents the tract of land promised to the Haudenosaunee (also known as the Six Nations or Iroquois) by Sir Frederick Haldimand on October 25, 1784 in the Haldimand Proclamation.⁶

A survey was first drawn by Augustus Jones in 1791, at which point the treaty was interpreted into a series of polygonal “blocks”,

rather than the sinuous line that the agreed upon “10km on either side of the Grand River,” might otherwise suggest. Jones’ survey has since been lost, but another was made in 1821 by then Surveyor General of Canada Thomas Ridout.

Source: Library and Archives Canada / Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development fonds. © Government of Canada

[3] Luke Ottenhof, “Standoff at 1492 Land Back Lane,” *Walrus*, February 8, 2021, <https://thewalrus.ca/standoff-at-1492-land-back-lane/>; Desmond Brown and Samantha Craggs, “Year-Long Six Nations Protest Forces Cancellation of Major Development in Caledonia, Ont.,” *CBC News*, July 2, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/caledonia-1.6088150>.

[4] Brett Forester, “Haudenosaunee Chiefs Declare Development Moratorium Across Entire Haldimand Tract,” *APTN National News*, April 20, 2021, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/haudenosaunee-chiefs-declare-development-moratorium-across-entire-haldimand-tract/>.

[5] Brett Forester, “Elected Chief of Six Nations Tries to Unify Sides Ahead of Land Claim Fight,” *APTN National News*, April 26, 2021, <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/six-nations-elected-council-haudenosaunee-confederacy-ontario/>.

[6] *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Haldimand Proclamation,” by Michelle Filice, last modified November 10, 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/haldimand-proclamation>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

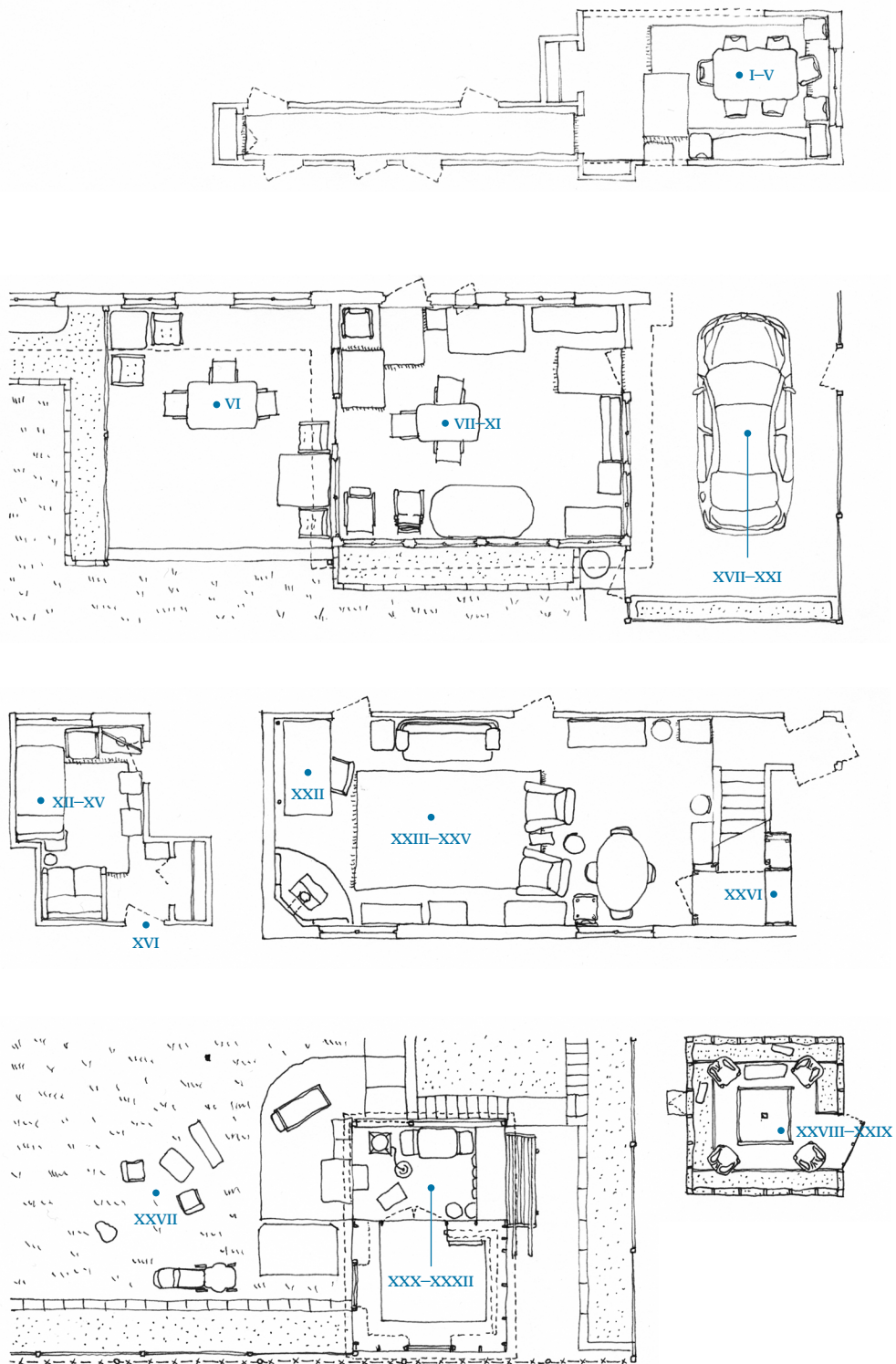
METHODS, INTENTIONS & ARCHIVES

Archives & Fevers	01	Listening in Another Language	09
On Errantry	03	Food, Weather, and Plesantries	11
On Exile	05	What Matter Matters?	13
Researching In & Afar	07	Where Are You <i>Really</i> From?	15

AN ERRANT ARCHIVE

<i>Dining Room</i>		<i>Toyota Camry</i>	
<i>I</i> <i>Jebel Agra</i>	21	<i>XVII</i> <i>Store Owner</i>	73
<i>II</i> <i>Cassembella</i>	23	<i>XVIII</i> <i>Taxi Driver</i>	77
<i>III</i> <i>Karadouran</i>	25	<i>XIX</i> <i>Cbauffeur</i>	79
<i>IV</i> <i>Ttzlek</i>	27	<i>XX</i> <i>Foundry Labourer</i>	81
<i>V</i> <i>Soullek (House 1)</i>	29	<i>XXI</i> <i>Factory Worker (House Two)</i>	83
<i>EX. 1</i> <i>Finding/Founding Kessab</i>	31	<i>EX. 4</i> <i>Labour, Commerce & Favours</i>	85
<i>Solarium</i>		<i>Basement</i>	
<i>VI</i> <i>Hazzi & Sapuna</i>	35	<i>XXII</i> <i>Two Books</i>	89
<i>VII</i> <i>Kasios</i>	37	<i>XXIII</i> <i>Two More Books</i>	91
<i>VIII</i> <i>Zaphon & Parlier</i>	39	<i>XXIV</i> <i>Cardboard Box</i>	93
<i>IX</i> <i>Casius</i>	41	<i>XXV</i> <i>Family Photographs</i>	95
<i>X</i> <i>Akra</i>	45	<i>XXVI</i> <i>Directory</i>	97
<i>XI</i> <i>Keldağ & Kılıç</i>	49	<i>EX. 5</i> <i>Translating Matter</i>	99
<i>EX. 2</i> <i>On the Mountain, They Grew</i>	51		
<i>TV Room</i>		<i>Garden</i>	
<i>XII</i> <i>De'ab Da'iab</i>	55	<i>XXVII</i> <i>Coffee</i>	103
<i>XIII</i> <i>Hen-Hekeik</i>	57	<i>XXVIII</i> <i>Heirloom Tomatoes</i>	105
<i>XIV</i> <i>1909</i>	59	<i>XXIX</i> <i>Figs</i>	107
<i>XV</i> <i>2014</i>	63	<i>XXX</i> <i>Janerik</i>	109
<i>XVI</i> <i>1915</i>	65	<i>XXXI</i> <i>Sarma</i>	111
<i>EX. 3</i> <i>Diasporic Networks</i>	69	<i>XXXII</i> <i>Errob & Perpor</i>	113
		<i>EX. 6</i> <i>Kessab in Cambridge</i>	117

BIBLIOGRAPHY	119
APPENDIX A	123
GLOSSARY	139



5. Domestic, Diasporic Space as a Table of Contents (1:125). ①

STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

The term *living archive* was used by Stuart Hall in his essay *Constituting an Archive*. He considers the idea of a “living archive of the diaspora,” as it relates to the inception of the African and Asian Visual Artists’ Archive in 2001. He states that “the very idea of a living archive contradicts this fantasy of completeness. As work is produced, one is, as it were, contributing to and extending the limits of that to which one is contributing.”

[7] Stuart Hall, “Constituting an Archive,” *Third Text* 15, no. 54 (Spring 2001): 89–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528820108576903>.

In *Crafting History: Archiving and the Quest for Architectural Legacy*, Alben Yaneva uses the term *ethnographic sketch* when considering the writing style of her own archival experience. She describes the term as something that “permits broader strokes to be made with fragments of the distinctive archiving moves operating at various speeds, unfolding with different length and breadth of detail as they recreate the rhythm of the work of an archivist”

[8] Alben Yaneva, *Crafting History: Archiving and the Quest for Architectural Legacy* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2020), 20–21.

[9] Huda Tayob, “Subaltern Architectures: Can Drawing ‘Tell’ a Different Story?” *Architecture and Culture* 6, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 203–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2017.1417071>.

The first section of this thesis considers archives: their relationship to domestic, diasporic space and to architectural research methodologies. It is the preamble to the second section, my own speculative archive project, in which I offer an interpretation of a *living archive*⁷—a postcolonial project made to reject the Archive’s claim as a comprehensive, neutral space of knowledge retrieval.

The project is an assemblage of counter-narratives uncovered during my research—often prompted by an artifact or event. These writings document the inheritance of generational knowledge and the unearthing of new lines of inquiry about life in diaspora that are altogether absent from institutional narratives.

As a book, it collates seemingly disparate stories: from geological, architectural, and family histories, to personal reflections and recipes. These constantly shifting frames are meant to animate ordinary, everyday objects and reveal their entangled relationships to the extra-ordinary.

I have chosen to represent the phenomenological qualities of my archive through the *ethnographic sketch*⁸—a writing style which captures the complex layering of information in archival space through alternating levels of detail and resolution. The writings are short and fragmented—emphasizing the space between things in an effort to reject a tightly crafted, linear narrative.

Each page of text is complimented by imagery from both formal and informal sources: from state documents, maps, and artifacts, to local ephemera, video stills, and photography. By curating these media alongside one another, I present diasporic matter with the same privileged status as those canonized by the Archive.

I have also used drawing (and re-drawing) to document diasporic space and inform new understandings of spatial relationships.⁹ By using drawing as a tool for documentation, rather than design, I have sought to subvert a visual, orthographic language that implies objective, unchanging metrics.

In imaging a new kind of archive I have laid its contents out, face-up with space in between, so that one might inhabit the liminal space and trace their own lines of relation between its pages.



6. Sergei Parajanov *The Color of Pomegranates* 1969 (00:09:19), film still.

The Color of Pomegranates is a film by the Soviet-Armenian director Sergei Parajanov which documents the story of the 18th century troubadour Sayat-Nova—one of the most prolific Armenian poets and musicians to this day.

Parajanov tells the poet's story through fragmented, iconographic compositions

rather than traditional narrative. It also departs from the realism that defined the Soviet cinema of its era. The still above shows the moments after a storm soaked a church's archive. Sayat-Nova, as a child, rests on the roof of the church after laying the manuscripts out to dry.

Source: Janus Films via Criterion

Methods, Intentions & Archives

Archives keep secrets of the state; novels keep the secrets of culture, and the secret of those secrets... Narrative in general, the novel in particular, may be the way in which the statement's status as escapee is preserved, the Counter-Archive for the ephemeral and wayward.

—Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*

ARCHIVES & FEVERS

In 1996 the English translation of Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* was published, it has since become a seminal text in archival discourse. The concept of *archive fever* refers to the obsessive compulsion to combat the fear of death, destruction, and forgetfulness by keeping, storing, and categorizing. However, the contradiction of *archive fever*, Derrida notes, is that when a thing is removed from the world and placed in an archive, it is rendered inert, that is to say, essentially dead.

[10] Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Dialectics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 9–63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/465144>.

[11] Kieran Long and Mark Wigley, "The Appeal of Tedious Folders," in *The Museum is Not Enough*, ed. Giovanna Borasi (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2019), 96–101.

[12] Hall, "Constituting an Archive," 89–92.

The *archival turn* relates to the "increasing use of archival sources and the need to conceptualize them." It is considered by many scholars to have happened in the mid-1990's. Although some historians, such as Ann Stoler, have argued that it has had a much "wider arc and a longer durée."

[13] Derrida "Archive Fever," 9.

[14] Achille Mbembe, "The Power and Limits of the Archive," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 19–26.

Archive fever has taken on new meaning in the last two years.¹⁰

It has, in fact, been the very fear of fever that has kept archives' doors closed and its contents inaccessible. I have kept my distance, unable to experience a place so often sensationalized by scholars.¹¹ Instead, my time has been spent in the virtual ether of digitized collections. It is a space of limited scans, strained eyes, and email correspondence. "I'm sorry, this document has not been digitized," and "We won't have access to our physical site until lockdown restrictions are lifted." In my search for an authentic archival experience, I couldn't help but return to a familiar question: what constitutes an archive?¹²

The Archive has always been bound to the project of architecture. Its meaning "comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of... those who commanded."¹³ An archive, simply put, was a domestic space transformed into a political machine, granting status and power to specific matter while discarding others. The archive's primary operation, then, is discrimination; its clear racial and religious biases are defined by the colonial powers who historically controlled their vaults.¹⁴ And, over the past four decades, we have seen this material selectively divided once more: between what is worth an institution's resources to digitize and what is not.¹⁵

To be clear, these prejudices do not render the archive obsolete or insignificant. Since the *archival turn*, anthropologists—especially those within the field of postcolonial studies—have discovered new ways of reading the Archive.¹⁶ Ann Stoler, for instance, argues that the archive should no longer be viewed as a site of knowledge retrieval, but re-examined as a colonial tool of knowledge production.¹⁷ Some institutions, including the Canadian Centre for Architecture, are in the midst of interrogating their own archival practices and have recently been critical of how archival discourse might permeate architectural research.¹⁸

In questioning an archive's constitution I have directed myself back at domestic space, viewing the diasporic home as a *living archive* in itself. By viewing these spaces as archives, we open ourselves to the counter-narratives of those displaced by colonialism and imperialism—reclaiming the power of historical narrative for those who have been silenced by the Archive.¹⁹



[15] Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *Libraries and Academy* 4, no. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 9–25, <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/35687>.

[16] Yaneva, *Crafting History*, 25, 32–35.

[17] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 44–46.

[18] ed. Giovanna Borasi et al., "And I Keep Revisiting Archives," in *The Museum is Not Enough* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2019), 64–101.

[19] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 99.



7. Stefano Graziani (top) *The Museum Is Not Enough: View of Storage Space*; (bottom) *The Museum Is Not Enough: View of a CCA Vault* 2018 (345×265mm), digital print.

Photographs commissioned by the Canadian Centre for Architecture for their retrospective magazine entitled *The Museum is Not Enough*, considering the role of cultural institutions and the issues they face today.

Chapter four of the publication is dedicated to their archive and features

photography by Stefano Graziani, an interview between Mark Wigley and Kieran Long, and reflections—told from the personified perspective of the CCA itself—on the significance of its archive.

Source: Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal. © Stefano Graziani.

ON ERRANTRY

It's easy to lose track of time while researching. Weeks can go by without any feeling of progress. There are times, sitting at my desk, following the tangled lines of citations in authors' endnotes, where I feel as if I am actively resisting the resolution of a thesis—that elusive body of work which will eventually be laid out, clearly and concisely, for others to judge.²⁰ Its potential expands as my bibliography grows, each new encounter pointing me in the direction of two more and so on. I am in constant search of an academic space left unsurveyed—a 'void' from which I can position myself and my researched declarations. As I search, I feel both confidently surefooted and helplessly lost.

[20] Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesis*, trans. Caterina Mongiat Farina and Geoff Farina (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 1–4.

Dwelling in this aporia, I move past ideas which, weeks before, I had so tightly held on to. However, I have also kept track of these tangential paths and have made note of where they diverge and intersect. At times I have retraced my steps, reminding myself of what was left behind; sometimes I stray, following the clues of those who don't recognize the path's direction; and, other times, I stop completely—taking the time to listen to the world(view) around me. This mostly productive *non-method* has led to new ways of conducting research in relation.²¹ I have allowed myself to be errant; avoiding the center and exploring the messy, tangled edges as I wander outward.

Dr. Annabella Pollen uses the portmanteau *procrastivation* to describe her equally distracted form of research in her article *Methodical Methodology*.

[21] Annebella Pollen, "Classifying the Déclassé: A Non-Methodical Methodology," *CARTHA* 5, no. 1 (2020): 4, <https://www.carthamagazine.com/issue/5-1/>.

This word, 'errant', has come to serve a critical role for me and this body of work. Its definition is to "err or stray from the proper course or standards," and, in its contemporary use, has undertones of being devious or disobedient. I was first introduced to the term in Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*. In Glissant's writings on identity, rootedness, and diaspora, he imagines a postcolonial way of navigating the world—a different kind of wandering that he calls *errantry*—which is not exploitative, violent, or careless.²²

It is translated from the original French *errance* by Betsy Wing and, in her words, is used as a "word out of the past... retrieved for the use of people weakened and oppressed as much by imposed cultural interpretations as anything else."

[22] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997), xvi.

Errantry, for me, has become both the validation of a non-methodical methodology and a framework for imagining a different kind of archive. It is a *living, counter-archive* in constant, disruptive motion. It makes visible the otherwise invisible researcher (archivist), the object of research (archival matter), *and* the place one researches *from* (archive), all at once. The constant shift between these three subjects is what I refer to as an *errant archive*; it is protean and always in translation.



8. Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville Mésopotamie et Syrie entre Tyr, Adana, Malatia, Hamadan, Ispahan, le Chatt-el-Aral et Palmyre [17..] (440×690mm), pencil and ink.

A map of the Levant and Mesopotamia with Mount Casius (Jebel Aqra) shown at the far left, amongst Seleucus Nicator's Syrian Tetrapolis.

D'Anville's cartographic works are characterized by the void space used in regions that were uncertain. This was an uncommon practise for cartographers during the European Enlightenment who would typically

rely on blind-copies of older maps or decorative fills.

While he never travelled to the places he represented, the precision of his maps are the result of a vast collection of archival material alongside correspondence with travellers, philosophers, poets, and historians.²³

Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

[23] Matthew H. Edney and Mary Sponberg Pedley, *The History of Cartography*, vol. 4, *Cartography in the European Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 111–13.

ON EXILE

I have approached this epistemic journey with caution, too. By committing myself to the research of a diasporic community, I have entered into a space which has historically misused the lives of oppressed peoples for academic valour. I have been careful in my conjectures when re-telling the stories told to me because—as Glissant reminds us—“the experiences of exiles are incommunicable.”²⁴ I have listened closely and returned to conversation when I questioned the clarity of my own understanding, reminding myself constantly of my intentions and limitations.

[24] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 20.

The term *Orientalism* and its modern usage is attributed to the works of Edward Said who describes it as “the corporate institution of dealing with the Orient by... making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short... a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”

[25] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 3.

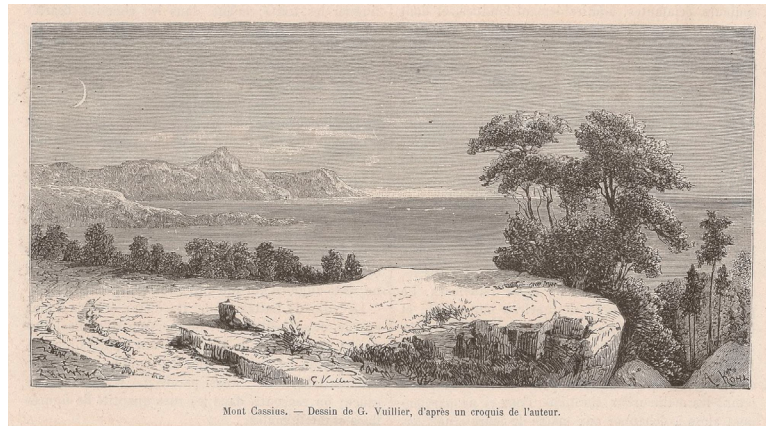
There is a history of *Orientalism*, especially in the Near East, that has propagated destructive ways of rendering the Other.²⁵ Any use of archival matter from the 19th and 20th century is not a declaration of historical accuracy but rather a prop to direct my counter-narratives toward. This tendency for the West to always be looking down-at or at-a-distance-from other peoples has perpetuated a colonial worldview and engendered white supremacy in popular culture. Many of the ideas I present here have been shaped by conversations I have had with people who currently live, have lived, or have visited Kessab—needless to say, my work is indebted to them.

It should also be stated that institutionalized ethnography—while often cited as an answer to ethical research—has its own shortcomings. Despite laudable intentions, a practice of *damage-centered* research has historically co-opted the lived experiences of disenfranchised communities to hold those in power accountable, while inadvertently compounding our perception of these communities as one-dimensional and depleted.²⁶ Instead of directing my research only to the aspects of loss in this diasporic community, I have sought to resist their oversimplification through stories which speak to the complexity and contradiction within their everyday lives.

The term *damage-centered* was coined by Eve Tuck in *Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities*. She uses the term to describe a “pathologizing approach [of academic research] in which... oppression singularly defines a community.”

[26] Eve Tuck, “Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities,” *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 409–28, <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.3.n0016675661t3n15>.

I should be clear about my own stake in all of this as well. While I grew up with a constant (though at times naively resistant) relationship to this specific diaspora community, I do not identify-as or speak-for the Kessabtsi diaspora in Cambridge or elsewhere. My intentions, from before my graduate studies began, were to use this time to build a deeper connection to my paternal ancestry; to learn more about my family and, in the process, about myself.



9. Gaston Vuillier (top) Mont Cassius; (bottom) Mon Cabinet de Travail [1850–1890], wood engravings on newsprint.

The two images above were found next to one another in a scrapbook collection of illustrations from periodicals and newspapers of the 19th century.

The collector of these clippings, Jaquet Desbenoit, organized them by illustrator, keeping only the titles for context; the images likely came from *Le Tour du monde* or *Le Monde illustré* of which Vuillier was employed for many years.

The top image shows Mount Casius (Jebel Aqra)—the mountain on which Kessab was founded. We often see images of the

mountain from the north as many Western explorers would have sailed into the bay of Antioch, though very rarely do we see any documentation of the peoples or villages that have populated it for centuries.

The bottom image shows a portrait of an (unknown) author of the accompanying article, in his “office.” The typical Orientalist illustration captures the privilege of the travelling European explorer and researcher, committed to “civilizing the uncivilized.”

Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

RESEARCHING IN & AFAR

[27] "In the Postcolony: Everyday Infrastructures of Design," CCA Master's Students Program, Canadian Centre for Architecture, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/41087/cca-masters-students-program>.

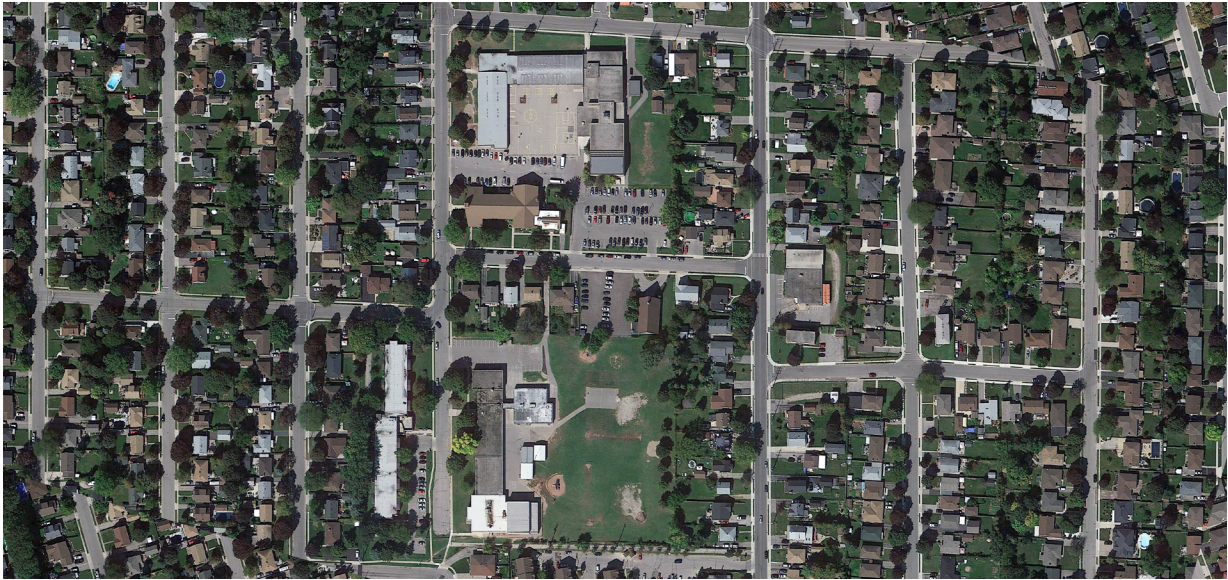
I have now spent almost two years of learning, practicing, and interrogating forms of architectural research. A year and a half of which amidst a pandemic, physically distant from institutional facilities, my peers, and community. Three months were spent in virtual fellowship at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, contending with methods of site research from afar.²⁷ It was here that I began to think about institutional archives in a new way: their limits, capabilities, and politics. And all of which took place in my grandparent's home, in their basement, garden, and kitchen, getting distracted by the happenings around me.

I have used this sedentary time to think about the spaces we research *from*, to consider the importance of the things that have ended up next to me, and ask how and why. In so doing, I have traced the informal networks that diaspora communities construct—those ephemeral infrastructures that translate labour, plants, tools, remittance, memory, and information. My grandparent's house, where I am living and working, has become the archive through which these networks are revealed to me. I have approached it slowly and repetitively, returning at different times and different seasons to certain things, stories, and places.

As the research unfolded, two primary sites appeared: the city of Cambridge in Ontario, Canada, and the sub-district of Kessab in Syria's Latakia Governorate—with a particular focus on the communities of Galt and Karadouran* respectively. While the latter of these sites would remain physically inaccessible to me throughout this research, the former is my home and a place I have spent a considerable amount of my life. My work has inadvertently followed the lines that exist between these two sites; lines which connect a diaspora to their homeland.

* There are few reliable sources for official spelling in English. Transliterations have appeared in sources as *Kaladouran* or *Kara Durane*. 'Karadouran' is the preferred spelling for this work. This is based on the etymology of the name, explained to me by my grandfather, from the words *kara*, meaning 'black', and *douran*, meaning 'valley'. The name was based on the dense forests that historically populated the valley.

From the outset of this work, I assumed the answers to my questions could only be dug up in some distant archive or transcribed after an on-site ethnographic interview. That beyond anything, the ability to travel—to physically experience one's site—was the key to successful (and ethical) architectural research. While I still believe in the importance of travel, I have come to realize that many of the answers I was searching for were next to me; in the closets, drawers, and cardboard boxes of this home; in the stories told to me on long car rides or over coffee in the garden.



10. Site #1: Galt Suburb in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada 2014 (1:5000).

Cambridge has been the destination for Armenian diaspora since the 1920's. However, the first family from Kessab arrived in 1962. A number of other families did the same in the following decades, choosing Cambridge over other cities due to its growing economy,

construction industry, and factory work.²⁸ My grandfather arrived in 1986 as a visitor, three years ahead of the rest of the family to coordinate paperwork for immigration as Convention Refugees.²⁹

Source: Google Earth.

[28] *A Brief History of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Cambridge - Ontario* (Cambridge, ON: Armenian Evangelical Church of Cambridge, 1994).

[29] *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Arab Canadians," by Baha Abu-laban, last modified December 16, 2013, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/arabs>.

11. Site #2: Sululek Quarter in Karadouran, Latakia, Syria 2009 (1:5000).

My grandfather was born in Karadouran and my grandmother in the town of Kessab close by. They started a family in Beirut in the late 1960's to avoid the mandatory military

service in Syria but would migrate back to Kessab each summer before they fled to Canada.

Source: Google Earth.

LISTENING IN ANOTHER LANGUAGE

It's a strange process, having a conversation with someone who speaks a different language. The awkward pauses and informal miming; the half-smile and nod that signals defeat after multiple attempts at repeating a word; and the accidental subject change when one thinks the other has said something they did not. There is a mutual understanding that intentions will never fully be received nor meaning fully pronounced. But I've come to appreciate the coffee-talk I share with my grandparents each day—listening to their stories and learning about a culture I had always kept at arm's length.

Like many elderly migrants, my grandparents have gotten by with minimal English and I, like many new generations born to parents who spoke English at home, avoided learning their dialect—a creole of Armenian, Arabic, and Turkish called 'Kessaberen'.³⁰ While we have gotten much better at communicating during my time here, the small misunderstandings remain a staple of our conversations. Sometimes ideas connect and we laugh together, other times words fall flat into comfortable, content silence.

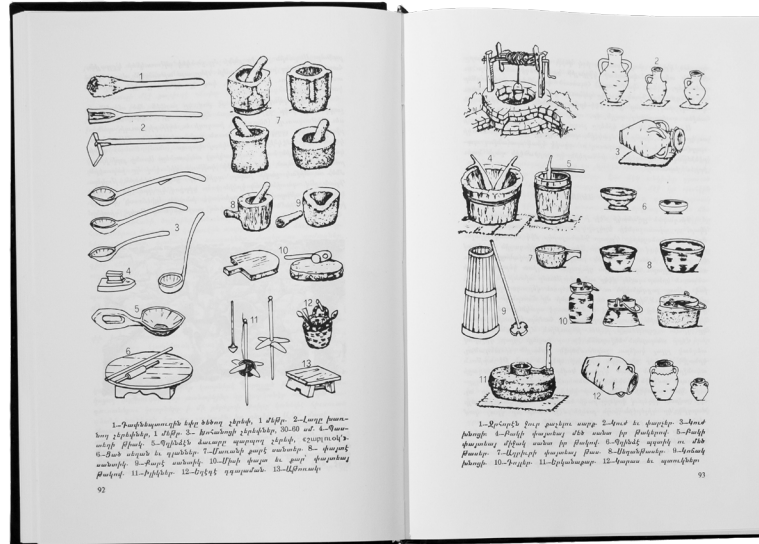
Communicating in this way, I found, involves a different kind of listening. It requires stretching the meaning of words beyond their proper definition; context, countenance, gestures, and props become a part of the act. By necessity, our mutual vocabulary expands to incorporate a physical and spatial experience. Things—pictures in a book, the size of a room, a scrap piece of paper and pen, or one's own body—help. It takes time, too. Stories come in pieces, fragments of memory sparked by unplanned moments. Like finding a box of old photographs under the stairs, the taste of ripe figs brought in a basket made from the figs' leaves, or the thick, pungent smell of homemade *surquig*.

I have chosen to share these vignettes in the way I have experienced them: as a patchwork of short interactions, told in simple terms with an exaggerated gesture. At times it may seem repetitive or opaque. I have come to accept these traits as essential limitations on my work. There is a nostalgia in repetition and a certain humility in the inability to dissect something's opacity.³¹ In other words, I have learned that the best stories are the ones that get retold—and that something vital is lost when you try to figure out why it's a little different each time.

[30] Hrair Atikian, "My Kessab," in *Kessabtsis in United States, Canada, and Australia: Yearbook/Directory*, ed. Haig Chelebian, 53rd ed. (Reseda, CA: Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles, 2012), 96.

Surquig is a traditional spiced cheese unique to Kessab. It is set out to dry in the sun for days during the maturation process and the smell will quickly fill a room.

[31] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 111–20.



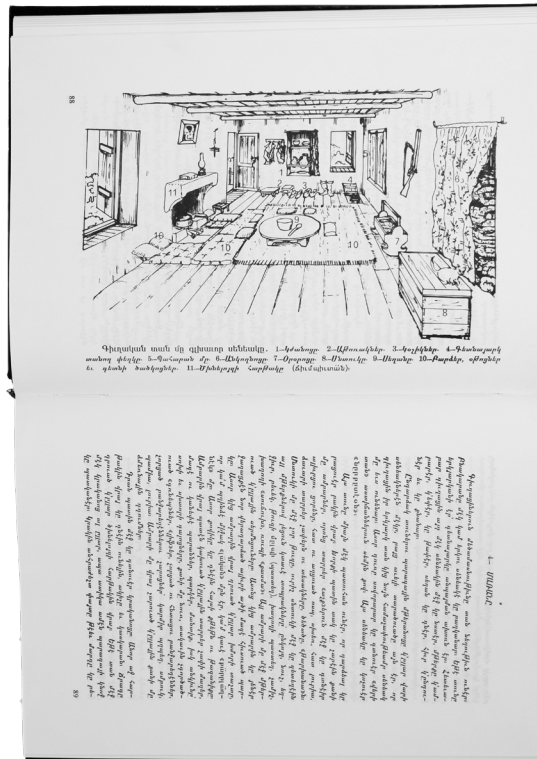
12. Hagop Cholakian
ՔԵՍԱԿ [Kessab] 1998.

The discovery of this book marked a milestone in my research. It is a three-volume history of Kessab and its villages—with a focus on Karadouran.

Cholakian, who was born in Kessab, holds a PhD in History and is a renowned Armenian linguist, writer, and professor.

While this work is written entirely in the Armenian language, there are many detailed illustrations of traditional housing typologies and an index of housewares, tools, and other objects.

With the help of my father, I worked to transliterate the illustrations' legends into English though most of the books' contents remain unknown to me.



FOOD, WEATHER, AND PLEASANTRIES

Each morning, as I wait for water to boil, my grandfather wanders into the kitchen to warm a mug of milk in the microwave.

“Good morning Zaven, how are you?” he asks me; his words are animated by drawn-out, Levantine vowels and rolled *r*'s.

“I'm good, *Baboug*,” I say, “How are you?”

“Very good,” he says with a smile.

Baboug is an endearing term in Kessaberen and the word for grandfather.

These words are a well practiced ritual to our morning. Even though not a lot is being said, I look forward to these morning pleasantries. Our verbal understanding of one another departs from here as we go on to talk about the weather or our plans for the day. I talk mostly in English, while he talks mostly in Kessaberen

My grandmother's English is much better than my grandfather's thanks to years of factory work here in Cambridge. When our conversations inevitably shift into their language I listen closely, piecing together familiar words to follow the conversation as closely as I can. When they finish talking, I look over at my grandmother and she helps translate, though there is still a clear limit to her vocabulary beyond the practiced day-to-day.

My thesis research has been particularly hard to explain. An esoteric critique of archives and epistemological methodologies through the assemblage of counter-narratives discovered within domestic, diasporic space doesn't necessarily fit neatly into a lexicon of food, weather, and pleasantries—the architectural profession has been hard enough to explain. My father once described my research to them as “a school project about Kessab,” and I explained that I wanted to write about their lives in Kessab, Beirut, and Cambridge. I can tell they're still confused why this school project has lasted for over a year, but they tell me that they are happy to share their stories with me.

My relationship with this research has undoubtedly been shaped by language, cultural, and generational barriers, but it has also benefited immensely from the familial closeness I have to it. I am in a unique position, somewhere in the middle of the “objective” researcher and the autodocumentarian; neither completely an outsider nor an insider. This has led to the re-telling of oral histories which alternate between a journalistic lens and the introspective, piecemeal workings of a curious grandson.



13. The Diasporic Home as an Archive 2020.

A photograph of a corridor in the home I was living during this research. It was taken at the time when I first saw the diasporic home as an archive in itself.

The ephemera, traces, and artifacts that have accumulated in these spaces hold narratives of a culture displaced: its corridors, rooms and shelves hold collections of kitsch cultural memorabilia and the gypsum walls display a curated selection of this material.

These objects would become the subjects of my archival investigations and I would excavate these rooms to discover a remote place made inaccessible to me.

WHAT MATTER MATTERS?

Few records exist today which document Kessab before the 20th century. This is, in part, due to its remoteness as an agricultural community of diaspora. But it is also a result of the widespread destruction of Armenian cultural material during, leading up to, and proceeding the 1915 genocide—especially in and around what is now Turkey. What material I have found is typically authored by Orientalist explorers, religious missionaries, or Western relief workers in the Near East.³² Given that Syria was a mandatory state under France from 1923 to 1943, most archival records come from this period and are not in English.

[32] Vahé Tachjian and Nigol Bezjian, “The Near East Foundation’s Collection of Photographs of Armenian Farming Settlements in Syria,” May 31, 2021, Arab Image Foundation, online lecture.

I have, as a result, looked for other ways of researching a site remotely. I have discovered that I can learn more about Kessab in a morning of gardening with my grandfather or an afternoon in the kitchen with my grandmother than if I spend the entire day searching online. At home, I come in contact with things that have been brought to Canada from Kessab; artifacts that would never end up in an official archive; ephemera that only exist on the dusty bookshelves in the basements of a diaspora. These worn tools, kitsch decorations, homemade furniture, and forgotten mementos have sparked conversations that trace them across roads, oceans, and continents. These domestic artifacts illuminate the lines which connect here to elsewhere.

Upon investigation, stories are revealed about traditional ways of interacting with the world. They uncover largely invisible networks of vibrant, diasporic matter that circulate the globe and rearrange our environment through the translation of plants, tools, and other cultural material.³³ Yet, I am hesitant and unsure how to cite their credentials within our typical modes of academic reference. These everyday objects do not seem to possess the same authority as archival matter and I can’t help but ask myself if it matters what matter matters?

[33] Giovanna Borasi, “Note from the Editor,” in *Journeys: How Travelling Fruit Ideas and Buildings Rearrange Our Environment*, ed. Giovanna Borasi (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2010), 300.

My answer is yes, it does matter. It is through the things that are “worth conserving,” that we define our understanding of what is and what is not a serious object of research.³⁴ In this way the archive is unavoidably a question of politics. And so, in this thesis, I also consider the epistemic potential of everyday objects found in diasporic space. I reflect on how they might lead to new understandings of remote places and tell the stories of migration.

[34] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 99.

14. Diasporic Matter Project 2020.

The earliest iteration in my project of archiving started with the documentation of diasporic matter. I removed these objects from their context and photographed them in a pseudo-archival space for study.

While this allowed me to consider more closely the material composition of these objects, it became clear that I was engaging in a primarily aesthetic exercise—it seemed to bury more information than it revealed.

There was, however, one unintended discovery. For each new object I photographed, my grandparents saw my interest in them and told me their stories: where the object came from, its importance, and how it ended up here in this home.

The re-telling of an object's story as a way of exploring diasporic narratives served as the basis for further iterations of the project. Shown here is an abbreviated version, before the project shifted to focus more closely on the narratives that were being told to me.



14.1 Grain Baskets

Handmade by my grandmother's neighbours in Karadouran and gifted to her before she left for Canada. They are traditionally used for carrying grains, nuts, and seeds.



14.2 Aluminum Trays

Wide, shallow trays used by my grandmother for food preparation. Often, they are filled with fresh herbs or olives and left in the sun to dry. Sent to her from Beirut.



14.3 *Kernieb* [Dipper Gourd]

Grown in Armenia, hollowed-out, dried, and brought to Cambridge by a friend of my grandparents. The dipper gourd is used specifically during *massara*, the annual practise of making grape syrup. My grandparents once tried to grow the gourds here in Cambridge, but were unsuccessful due to the cold climate.



14.4 Stool

When my grandparents first moved into this home, they had no furniture. My grandfather made a number of small stools for sitting, in the same style as those from Kessab.



14.5 Brass Bird

My grandfather's first job in Cambridge was pouring brass for bridle hardware. He also made a number of decorative figurines of local fauna, still on display around the house.



14.6 Adze

A versatile, axe-like tool used regularly by my grandfather in the garden, brought from Beirut. This ancient style of axe is common in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It can be used for chopping or shaping wood, breaking soil, as well as hammering and removing nails.



14.7 Dried *Gasli* [Bay Laurel] Leaves

My grandmother keeps a small container filled with dry *gasli* leaves for special occasions. They were brought here by her sister and are used in a number of traditional recipes.



14.8 "Kessab" Cap

A baseball cap worn by my grandfather while working in the garden. The word 'Kessab' is embroidered on it. He was given the hat at one of the annual Kessabtsi picnics in Galt.

WHERE ARE YOU *REALLY* FROM?

* Entire books have been dedicated to the dissection of this question by far more relevant writers than myself. Still, it is a question I continue to be asked and one that I wish I could answer clearly and confidently. My intention here is to introduce the complexities of identity in the Armenian diaspora and my family's relationship to it. It is also a chance to reflect on that one thing that has always conflicted with my passing Whiteness: my name.

[35] Susan Pattie, "New Homeland for an Old Diaspora," in *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places*, ed. Andre Levy and Alex Weingrod (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005) 49–67.

† Armenian surnames are often made of a suffix (like *-ian*, *-yan*, or *-jan*) and a root. The suffix is an artifact from an older patronymic system of naming and means "the child of." The root can be telling of a geographic origin, vernacular, or historical milieu. In many cases it is the epithet or profession of a distant patriarch.

[36] *Armeniopedia: A Wiki Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Dictionary of Armenian Surnames: T," by C. K. Garabed, last modified February 29, 2020, http://www.armeniopedia.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_Armenian_Surnames_T.

"That's an interesting name, where are you from?"

"Here," I respond—it's the real answer but it usually isn't enough.

"No, but like, where are you *really* from*—like your family?"

"It's an Armenian name," I have learned to say.

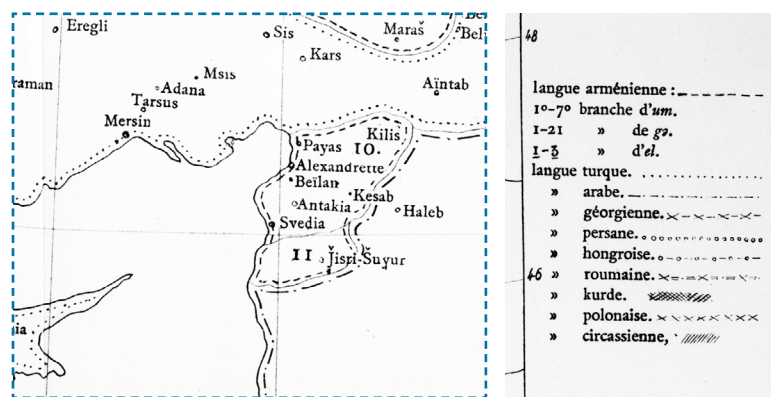
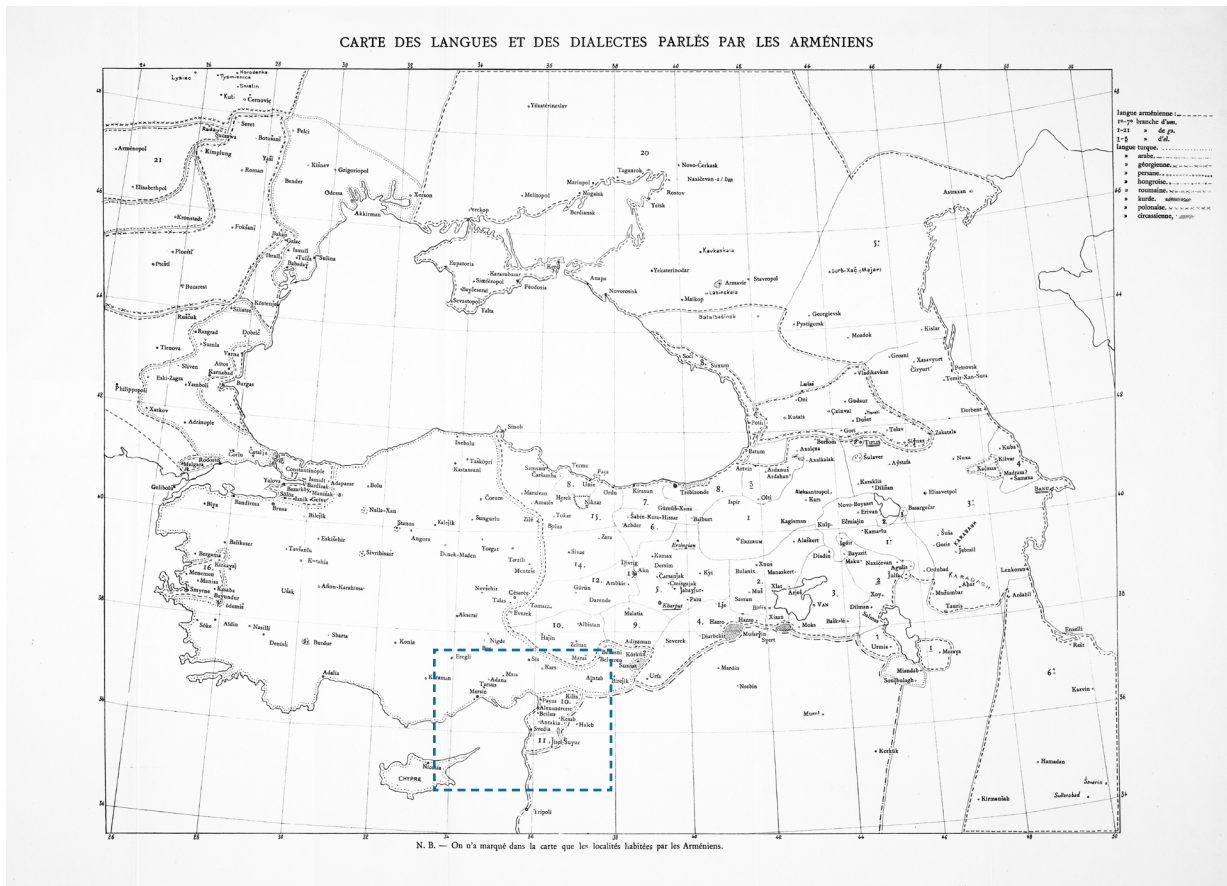
My answer has changed over the years but I have found that this one works well. It's enough to satisfy my interrogator, implying some distant homeland they can assign me to. It also avoids the long-winded explanation about a complex genealogy which I have (embarrassingly) struggled to answer.

Still, my answer can feel dishonest. My paternal family has always referred to themselves first as Armenians, but when they talk about their "home" they are talking about diasporic land in present-day Syria, the last remaining vestige of an medieval Armenian vassal state known as Cilicia.³⁵ This is the land that their families have lived on for hundreds of years—their homeland. They speak a different dialect of the Armenian language, they share different cultural practices, and they have distinctly different histories.

Now, if I were to explore my "interesting name" literally, I would start by saying that it comes from my grandfather; that is, we share the same name. It honours a tradition of naming a family's first born son after his father's father. Our first name is a traditional Armenian name, though it is uncommon in Kessab. My grandfather recalls being one of only two in the entire region.

As for my surname, some are able to point out that it's Armenian—the *-ian* ending is an easy tell.[†] However it is less obvious that the name is unique to Kessab; one of the neighbourhoods of Karadouran is even named after the Titizian family. And its root, '*titiz*', is actually a Turkish word—not an Armenian one. It translates to "Meticulous, sour, peevish, fastidious, exact, hard to please."³⁶ (Some of which are qualities I will admit to have inherited.)

My name, then, belongs to two disparate identities that I have trouble reconciling in my distance from them. My first name represents an imaginary homeland and a unified cultural origin. While my last name speaks to centuries of transcultural life for a diasporic minority in the borderlands—unrooted wayfarers, exiled and in errantry.



Adjarian, considered the father of Armenian linguistics, was a distinguished lexicographer, etymologist, and philologist.

The map above is the first ever comprehensive study of Armenian dialects. It shows the geographic distribution of dialects prior to the genocide and mass displacement of

1915 as well as other major languages around what was, at the time, the Vilayet of Aleppo.

Kesab [*sici*] (shown here northeast of where it is today) is within a dialectic island surrounded by Arabic and Turkish speaking populations.³⁷

Source: University of Toronto.

[37] Hagop Adjarian, "Classification des dialectes Arméniens," *Bibliothèque de l'École des hautes études* 173, no. 1 (1909): 64.

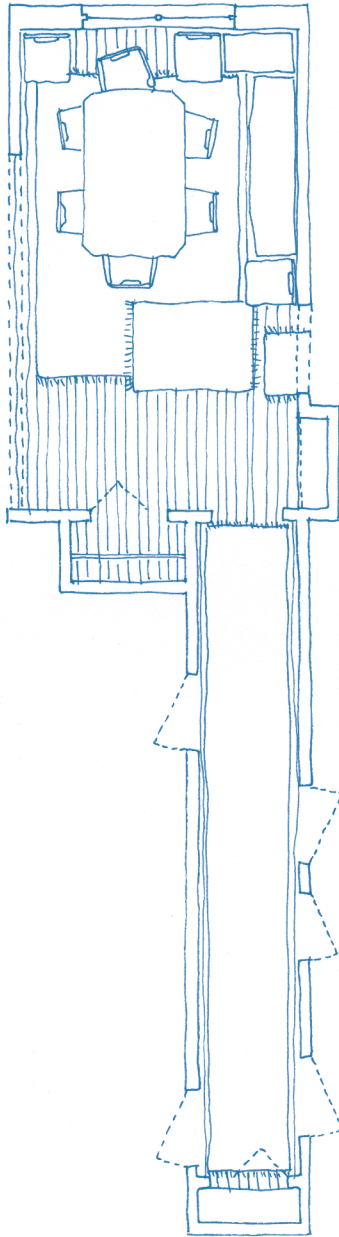
An Errant Archive

Even in their guardianship or their hermeneutic tradition, the archives could neither do without substrate nor without residence. It is thus, in this *domiciliation*, in this house arrest, that archives take place. The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public, which does not always mean from the secret to the nonsecret.

—Jacques Derrida , *Archive Fever*

PART ONE

Dining Room



16. Plan of Dining Room (Including Hallway) 1:75.





17. Interior of Dining Room

JEBEL AQRA

“*Jebel* is Arabic for mountain. And *Agra*,” my grandfather said, patting the top of his head and smiling, “means bald.” My grandmother and I laughed. We were sitting together at the dining room table chatting over tea—an evening ritual since the cold weather pushed us inside. Something had reminded him of his home village at the base of that bald mountain. It may have been the freshly shelled walnuts or the dried dates on the table, or perhaps the smell of *errob* wafting upwards from our cheap ceramic mugs. Either way, he was in the mood to reminisce. He turned to me and continued: “My village is Karadouran, in Kessab.”

Errob is a grape molasses made during the traditional practise of *massara*. Its preparation takes place over multiple days, where the community gathers to celebrate the end of the growing season and mark the transition into winter.

...

Karadouran *in* Kessab? Their homeland had always been a blurry image to me. Each time I heard the name Kessab it seemed a little different. Sometimes it was a town on the Syrian–Turkish border; other times it was a village—used instead of specifying Karadouran, for instance. It was on the slopes of *Jebel Agra* and the coast of the Mediterranean. In some cases it described an entire region, including the eponymous town and its ten villages, and in others, it accounted for an even larger historical territory that was ceded to Turkey by France in 1939.

...

He slipped into his own language, directing the conversation at my grandmother. They exchanged words that sounded like banter and I smiled. He was poking fun at her, saying she is not *Kessab'asli* because her family is from the town and not a village like his—further confusing my understanding of Kessab. (I have since accepted that the name belongs to an accordion of distinctions and contradictions, separating a diaspora from the nation states, religions, and ethnicities that exist around them.)

The phrase *Kessab 'asli* translates to a ‘native’ or ‘real’ person of Kessab.

...

I looked at him without speaking, I was still confused but I wasn’t about to interrupt his story to interrogate the point. In an attempt to clarify he turned to me and held out his arm, slightly bent. “*Jebel Agra* is here,” he said, using his right hand to caress the shape of a mountain in the space his left arm bent around. “Kessab is my shoulder. And my hand is the Mediterranean.” He made eye contact as he spoke to make sure I was following. “This is Karadouran,” he said, tracing the length of his arm between Kessab and the sea. “And my house is here,” he said finally, pointing to the inside of his elbow. “My home is the highest in Karadouran. You can see *Jebel Agra*, the Mediterranean, and Kessab all at once.”



18. Photo Album

My father gave me his personal photo album during my search for photographs of Kessab. I had never seen these photos before.

We looked through the pages together and he described his memories. He explained who people were, where they were, and what lay just outside the frame of the photograph.

The photographs shown in the bottom image are taken around their home in Karadouran; looking left (west) to the Mediterranean Sea and right (east) to the town of Kessab, partway up Jebel Aqra.



CASSEMBELLA

[38] Antranig Chalabian, “The History of Kessab,” in *Kessabitis in USA, Canada, and Australia: Yearbook/Directory*, ed. Haig Chelebian, 47th ed. (Reseda, CA: Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles, 2007), 196–203.

When I asked my grandparents how old Kessab was, they had trouble agreeing.³⁸ “Eight or nine hundred years,” my grandmother replied. “No,” my grandfather said to her in Armenian, “more than a thousand!” He looked up at me from behind his hand of playing cards and said: “A very long time.” Their game of belote resumed and they took turns recounting their family histories to me. My grandfather explained that one of the quarters in Karadouran was named after his family, so presumably they were one of the first to settle, but he only knew for certain that his great-grandparents were born there. My grandmother nodded in agreement and said the same was true for her family, but in the town instead of a village.

...

[39] Hagop Cholakian, *Քեսաբի [Kessab]*, 3 vols. (Aleppo: Arevelk Press, 1995–2004).

I heard one story that Kessab was first discovered by an errant goat. Sometime between the 9th–12th centuries, many Armenians inhabited the coastal plains of northern Syria following massive internal displacement.³⁹ One day, a shepherd took his flock to graze near the forests on Jebel Aqra and, that evening, one of his goats returned with a wet beard. Knowing there must be water, the villagers followed the goat into the forest the next day. The goat led them to a hidden spring on the mountainside and it was there—so the story goes—that Kessab was founded. The first families left what is now the village of Eskouran* and, over time, others joined the new settlement from Aintab (now Gaziantep) and Marash (now Kahramanmaraş). When asked if she remembered when this happened, Zahrig, the woman telling the story, responded with “No, it was long ago.”⁴⁰

...

* Eskouran’s name, my grandfather explained, comes from the words ‘old’ (*eski*) and ‘city/settlement’ (*ouran*).

[40] *Kessab, Voice of the Land*, produced by Haroutioun Sarkissian (Paris: l’Organisation Terre et Culture, 1986), VHS.

The first time Kessab’s name actually appears in written records has become a widely circulated story of its early history. It is said to be mentioned in a chronicle of the Crusades, though I have been unable to find the original source. Supposedly, the town of Kessab was given to the family of Peter the Hermit as war booty during the First Crusade. (While the French monk played a notably minor role east of Constantinople, he continued to be an active figurehead in the march to Jerusalem.) After the Siege of Antioch, the Armenians of Cilicia—whom had joined the siege—were given the land to settle as an Armenian vassal state.⁴¹ Today, the name Kessab is thought to be a derivative of the original Latin name it was given at this time: *Cassembella*, or *Casa Bella*, meaning ‘beautiful house.’

[41] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911), s.v. “Cilicia.”



19. Playing Cards

Every night, my grandparents play two or three games of belote before going to bed and it dominates the evening during family gatherings.

It is a French game, invented in the 1920's, that has also become popular in certain Eastern European and transcontinental countries, including Armenia.

It is played by many Armenians in diaspora and can be played with two or four people. My grandparents explained that they did not play it at all in Beirut or Syria, but were taught by friends here in Canada when they arrived.

KARADOURAN

It must have been obvious that I was having trouble following. My grandfather stood up and walked to his bedroom, returning shortly with something in his hand. It was a small desktop calendar that he kept on his bedside table. Its triangular cardstock frame was dusty and stained; white plastic coils looped through square perforations. It must have been near a window too, because its laminated pages were warped and ink bled through the edges. It clearly wasn't made to last as long as it had. I studied the calendar when he handed it to me: it was mid-January but the page was turned to July and there were no notes or marked dates.

...

My grandfather sat down next to me and turned the calendar around in my hands. On the back of each page was a colour image. This, I soon realized, was the real reason he kept it close. He pointed to the syllables as he spoke the Armenian title out loud: "Kah-rah-dou-rah-n Ler. Dou-nag." The image was a low-resolution digital photograph; all I was able to make out was a forested valley and a dotting of small, flat-roofed homes cradled between two mountains. "See these rocks back here," his finger traced a prominent line of scree on the further range, "at the bottom of these rocks is my home." There was a small greyish blob that his finger covered when he pointed, so I nodded.

...

I flipped through the other months. There was a mix of landscapes, community events, buildings, and local flora. At the top of each page was the organization's name, Education Union of Kessabtsis Residing in Lebanon, and at the bottom were advertisements from companies who helped fund the desktop calendar. The diversity of business locations reminded me that this was a diasporic project: Kessab Steel in Sharjah, Hotel Kessabella in Yerevan, and many others in Beirut—none of the businesses, I noticed, were actually in Kessab.

...

The frontispiece was the organization's name, translated into Armenian, Arabic, and English, encircling their logo: a feathered pen, a torch, and a timepiece composed over a shield. Below was a note printed in English: "Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year, 2011." That means this calendar is almost ten years old, I thought to myself. When I asked my grandfather why he kept it on his bedside table all this time, he told me it is the only photograph he has of Karadouran's valley and of his home.



20. Desktop Calendar

Produced by the Education Union of Kessabtsis Residing in Lebanon, these desktop calendars are distributed each year throughout the diaspora. They feature images taken in Kessab and the diasporic business adverts of those who funded the calendar project.

The image shown here is of the valley of Karadouran, with the foot of Jebel Aqra on the right and the mountain range known locally as 'Dounag' on the left.

The Armenian title below this specific image translates to "Karadouran's mountain (Dounag)."

TTZLEK

Karadouran began, I am told, as an outcrop of simple, stone shelters in the narrow valley south of Jebel Aqra; they were seasonal homes for the Armenian farmers and shepherds who lived in Kessab. However, when the settlement later became a destination for other Armenians fleeing persecution north of the mountain, the first inhabitants left the crowding town to live year-round in their summer homes. This peripheral patchwork of familial farmlands would grow into Kessab's eleven villages,* of which Karadouran is the largest.

* Now, only ten villages surround Kessab. The eleventh village of Bashord was on the western slopes of Jebel Aqra and was lost during the demarcation of a new state boundary in 1939.

...

I set my laptop down on the table and turned the screen to my grandparents. Google Earth showed a red waypoint labelled “Kesab [*sic*].” They seemed a little confused at first, but were quickly oriented when I zoomed out to show them Jebel Aqra and the Karadouran's valley, connecting the town to the sea. They had never seen Kessab like this and were excited to give me a tour.

...

We left the town travelling southwest, making a right at a fork in the road which led us down into the crescent-shaped valley. As we wandered through Karadouran, I saved markers on the map of places they remembered: the village's churches, the homes of their friends, and the cemetery where their families were buried. They noted each time we crossed through the imaginary boundaries that separated Karadouran's nine *leks*, or neighbourhoods.

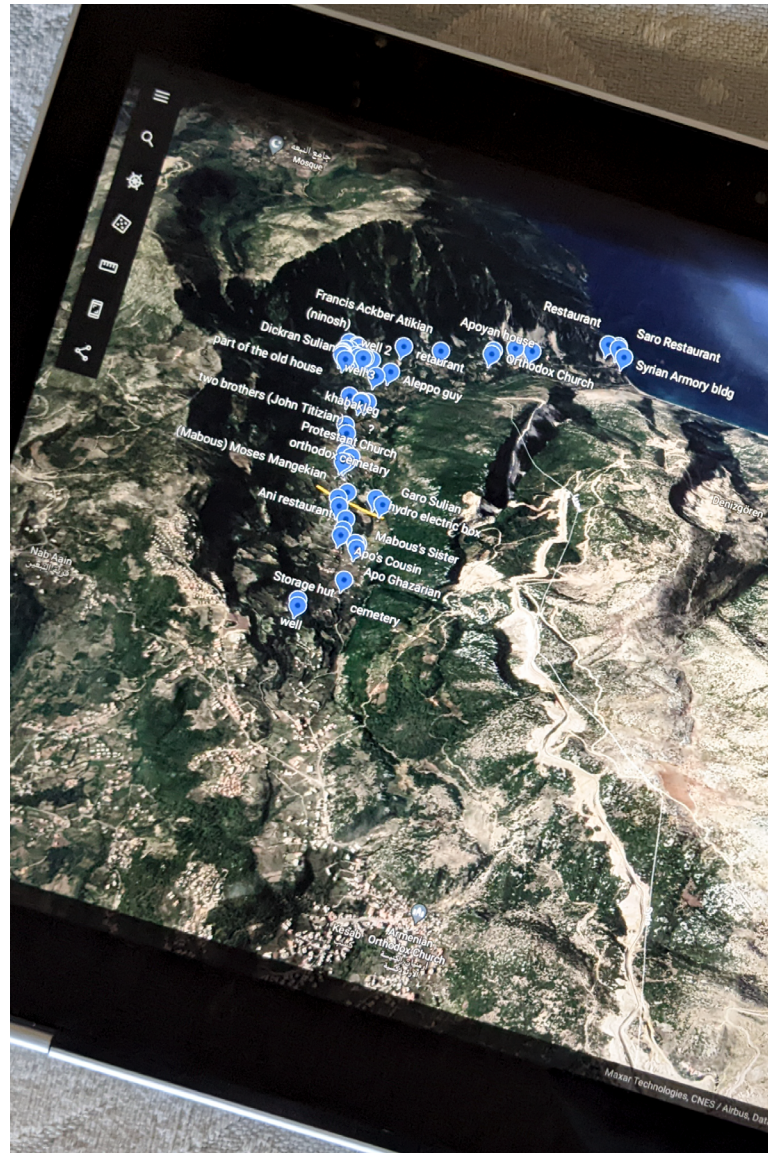
An Arabic suffix that assigns possession, similar to a neighbourhood or town quarter. Manjeklek, for example, belonged to the Manjekian family and Ttzlek to the Titizian family. While these names are still used by locals and diaspora, I noticed they do not appear on modern maps. They are instead labelled with Arabic names, seemingly asynchronous with how the region is organized by its locals.

...

I asked if we could find their home, but they were having trouble—their memories weren't aligning with the new developments. I started to realize the place they were drawing for me had been transformed by a tourist economy. Hotels, restaurants, and even a new strip of road—which accounted for the wide turning radius of a tour bus—now populated the route to the beach.

...

My grandfather picked up the desktop calendar again and said: “It's here, at the bottom of these rocks.” I zoomed out and panned along the mountainside until we found the matching pattern of loose rubble. We followed the rocks until they met a thin switchback road. At the end of which, surrounded by large, stepping farmland, was a small grey rectangular roof that they recognized as their home. They told me stories of the summers they spent here; of the collective renovations that were made with neighbours and friends; and of the many families that had since left.



21. Remembered Places Archive Project

A list of remembered places that I noted while my grandparents gave me a virtual tour of Karadouran's valley. They focused primarily on the homes of their neighbours, the churches, and landmarks like the location of water wells.

They noted an old neighbourhood, partway through the valley, that had been vacated due to constant landslides, likely as a result of the deforestation that occurred in the 19th century.

They also drew the boundaries around each of the nine *leks* in Karadouran: Manjeklek, Kelemderlek, Ghezellek, Lndonk, Sagh-djlek, Soullek, Yarallek, Zahterlek, and Ttzlek.

SOULLEK (HOUSE 1)

“My father came back to Karadouran five years after the genocide,” my grandfather told me, when I asked about the house they lived in, “that’s when he built our home—with my uncle.” The brothers built two conjoined homes at the top of Soullek. I asked why the house was built in Soullek, instead of our family’s traditional land in Ttzlek, but he wasn’t sure. The two brothers’ homes were symmetrical along a load-bearing wall that held a shared roof. It was built in the traditional style, with limestone blocks, timber posts, and a flat, gravel roof, he explained to me.

...

Less than half of Karadouran’s population would return after the genocide.⁴² The buildings were destroyed and the fields were burned. The process of rebuilding was slow but homes would eventually be remade in the image of the ones that were lost—built from the material found in the ruins, newly excavated from Jebel Aqra, or taken from houses whose owners had not returned.

[42] Cholakian, Քեսապ [Kessab].

...

The population in Karadouran would continue to fade following the genocide. A border was established in 1939 that displaced the Armenians who lived on Jebel Aqra’s western slope. Many would gradually resettle in Armenia through a Soviet-era repatriation program;⁴³ others, like my grandfather, would eventually migrate to Lebanon for economic opportunity.

[43] Cholakian, Քեսապ [Kessab].

...

As the village’s population dwindled, the dwellings in Karadouran fell into disrepair. “No one was taking care of our house—no one was living there,” my grandfather said. “Part of the roof collapsed and our neighbours took the lumber for their own home.”

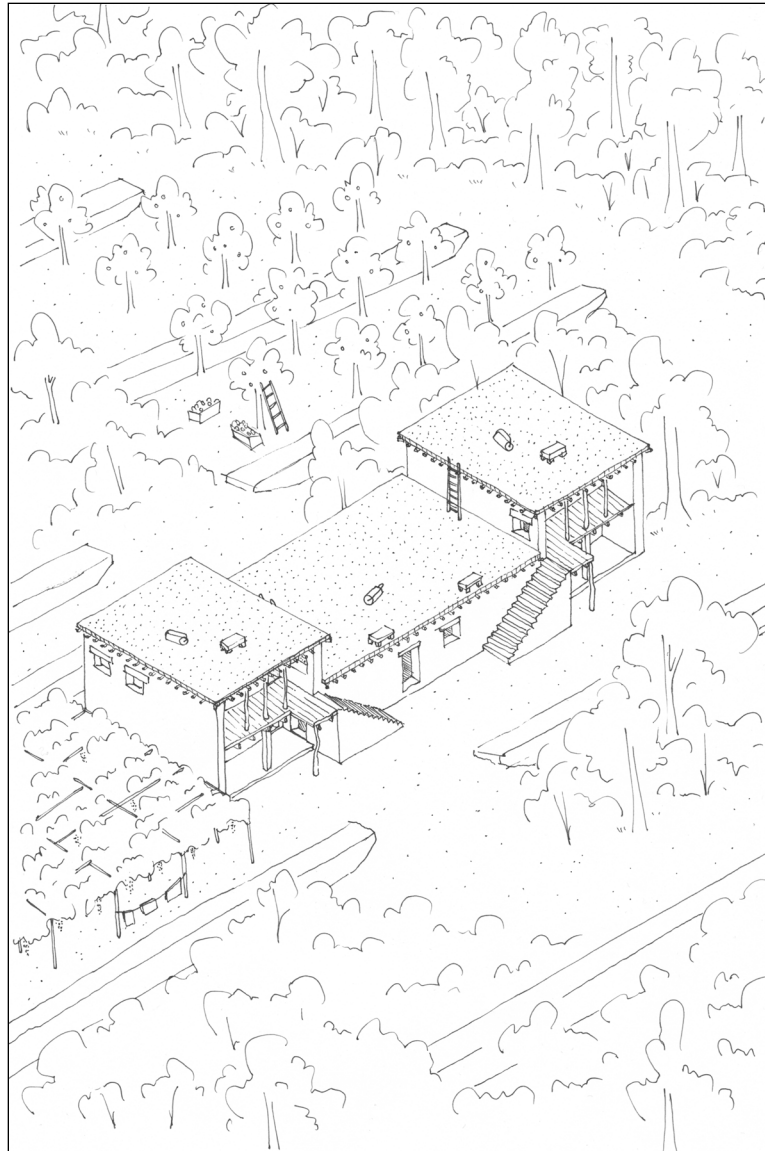
...

In the last quarter of the 20th century, the village dwellings would become summer homes once again—financed by wealth accumulated in Lebanon and elsewhere abroad. Kessab became a popular destination for internal tourism and hotels started to replace the stone shelters.⁴⁴ “I rebuilt our home in 1980 out of concrete,” he told me, “we would spend each summer there until we sold everything to come to Canada.”

[44] Chahbazian, “I am Chahbazian,” in *Kessabtsis in USA, Canada, Australia, and United Arab Emirates: Yearbook/Directory*, ed. Missak Apelian, 42nd ed. (Reseda, CA: Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles, 2002), 196.

...

We finished our tea and my grandmother cleaned the playing cards from the table. My grandfather walked the desktop calendar back to his room and I took the mugs to the kitchen sink, washed them out, and said goodnight.



22. Karadouran House 1921
(1:400).

An axonometric sketch of the house built by my great-grandfather and his brother when they returned to Karadouran after the First World War—based on conversations and drawing sessions with my grandparents and father.

It was built in the traditional style: limestone blocks mortared together with burnt lime; oak was used for support columns, joists, and upper-story planks; and roofs were an aggregate layering of timber planks, loose rubble, gravel, and a blueish mineral called *kouryak*. Together, these materials create a waterproof membrane.

Large stone rollers are left on the rooftops and are used for maintenance, compressing the roof materials that may loosen over time.

This house no longer exists, it was eventually demolished and a new, concrete house was built in the footprint of my great-grandfather's half of the building.

Finding/ Founding Kessab

The archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable. It emerges in fragments, regions, and levels, more fully, no doubt, and with greater sharpness, the greater the time that separates us from it... The analysis of the archive, then, involves a privileged region: at once close to us, and different from our present existence... it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us.

—Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

STORIES OF KESSAB, I find, always seem to start with Jebel Aqra. The mountain is entangled with those who grew beneath it and emerges over and over again in the oral histories passed down through generations. And when language isn't enough, its ineffability is communicated through the silent gestures of the diasporic body. The mountain was a monument on the periphery where an exiled minority found safety in its remoteness and a home on its rocky substrate. Its forested descents kept their presence unknown and their origins unclear. However, the mountain would eventually be transformed: from a beacon for refugees into a target for genocide. Its villages would be destroyed and its inhabitants displaced. Some would return and rebuild, while others would remain errant. Yet no matter how far they strayed from the mountain, it remained next to them. It would be found, over again, on bedside tables in Yerevan, Sharjah, Beirut, and Cambridge—among many others. Jebel Aqra—that bald mountain—would become an archive of histories, inherited and rebuilt by generations who may never set foot on it.

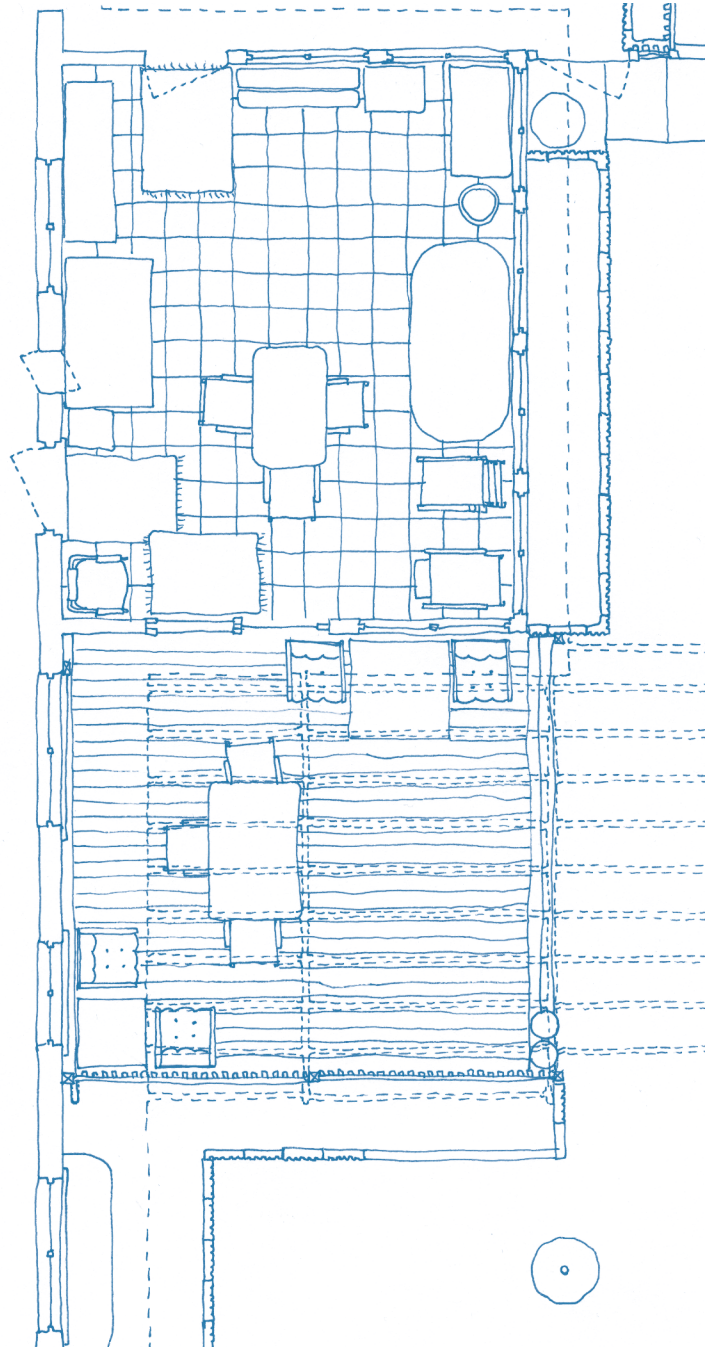
23. Rev. Stephen Trowbridge Valley of Kaladouran 1909. ►

During my research, I found only two archival collections that held images of Kessab from the early 20th century. The first, an archive in Paris, was not able to scan any images for me. The second, sourced here, included a photograph of the Karadouran valley before the genocide.
Source: Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Douglas Crary.



PART TWO

Solarium



24. Plan of Solarium and Deck 1:75. ↻



25. Grapevine Trellis and Interior of Solarium

HAZZI & SAPUNA

Dinner was interrupted by the sound of raindrops in the grapevine leaves above us. The skies had been clear until now. My grandmother was the first to jump up, stacking dishes in her arms and running them inside. I did the same and my grandfather followed behind, mostly unbothered. There was a clap of thunder and heavy rain fell through the leaves. I ferried the rest of the dishes to my grandmother who was already resetting the table in the solarium. Once everything was in, I looked back to see hailstones collecting on the deck. My grandmother handed me a towel and I asked: “Is Kessab like this?”

...

I had read that for most of the year Jebel Aqra’s peak is veiled behind cloud cover. The mountain attracts the highest volume of rainfall on the entire Syrian coast and its storms have inspired ancient myths which go back millennia into the pre-Greek past; its summit has been the home of more than one storm god in that time. Even into late antiquity, sailors and locals would refer to its neighbouring peak as the ‘Throne’.⁴⁵

...

The mountain has had many names before it was Jebel Aqra. It was Mount Hazzi to the Hurrians—some of the earliest inhabitants in the plains north of the mountain—and was the seat of their chief deity Teshub, who wielded a thunderbolt and controlled the sky, thunder, and storms. Later, when Hittite rulers took over the land, they assimilated Teshub into their pantheon and would sing of his triumph over the sea for centuries.⁴⁶

...

At the same time, the Canaanite people who lived in the ancient city of Ugarit, just south of Jebel Aqra, called the mountain Sapuna. It was the home of their great god Ba’al, the first to commission a house atop the mountain.⁴⁷ According to the cuneiform texts recovered in Ugarit’s acropolis, the young Ba’al had a palace built on Jebel Aqra’s summit in anticipation for his kingship in heaven. His last request for Hayin—the craftsman god—was to open windows in the gold-plated residence, from which he called out with his thunderous voice and sent rain to the lands below.

...

“The weather in Kessab, is it like this?” I repeated, after a confused look from my grandmother. “Of course not!” she replied. “It will rain for weeks in the winter and not at all in the summer. The weather in Cambridge is crazier than Kessab!”

[45] Robin Lane Fox, *Travelling Heroes: In the Epic Age of Homer* (New York: Random House, 2010), 244.

[46] Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 245.

[47] Umberto Cassuto, “The Palace of Baal,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 61, no. 1 (March 1942): 51–56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3262266>.



26. Ba'al with Thunderbolt 15th c. BCE (1440×575mm), sandstone stela.

The ancient city of Ugarit, now Ras Shamra, lies a short distance south of Jebel Aqra and was rediscovered in 1928. Upon excavating the acropolis, a significant depository of cuneiform texts and 23 stelae were found—one of which is the famous depiction of Ba'al wielding a club in one hand and a thunderbolt in the other.

On the tablet, Ba'al is pictured standing over four hilltops—the same four hills that are seen when looking at Jebel Aqra today.

Included in the discovery, were fragments of a story known as the Ba'al cycle, which tells of the ascension of Ba'al and the construction of his Palace on the mountain.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

KASIOS

Jebel Aqra is the largest landform on the Syrian coast. It straddles the shore and punctuates the moment where the Orontes river empties into the Mediterranean Sea. Its barren, white summit is formed almost entirely of supra-cretaceous limestone;⁴⁸ acting as a natural beacon for seafarers and providing the building material for ancient domiciles—both domestic and deific.

...

Cypriot and Euboean mariners first settled on Jebel Aqra's northern shores in the 8th century BCE⁴⁹—it was likely around this time that the mountain was given its Greek name: Kasios.⁵⁰ Though it wouldn't be until Alexander the Great marched through the Syrian gates that the territory came under their control. Here, Seleucus Nicator climbed to the summit of Jebel Aqra and gave an offering to Zeus Kasios—the thunder-god's regional appellation—asking where to settle his new city. Suddenly, an eagle took the offering north of the mountain to where Seleucia was founded.⁵¹

...

Soon thereafter, a temple was built near the mountain's summit that was dedicated to Zeus Kasios—the ruins of which have only recently been uncovered. Alexander's successors would refer to the Seleucid coast as Pieria and its geological landmark became a monument to the expanding Greek and Roman Empires, leading scholars to refer to Jebel Aqra as the Olympus of the Near East.⁵²

...

Even Pliny attested to the strange mystery of this cosmic mountain. He claimed it rose to such a height that by standing on its peak at dawn, one could witness day and night simultaneously.⁵³ Roman emperors would famously climb Jebel Aqra to pray at its altar and experience its premature dawn. Trajan was the first, joined by his adopted son Hadrian⁵⁴—who would return years later as emperor himself.⁵⁵ Julian is also said to have climbed Jebel Aqra and—as Libanius tells in his orations—was greeted with prophetic visions by the god of the mountain.⁵⁶

...

The mountain's importance to the ancient world does not end there. Following Trajan's visit to Jebel Aqra, Seleucid coins were minted with the temple of Zeus Kasios. On each coin, within the temple, was a sacred stone known as a *baetyl*, which we know to represent the 'navel' (in other words, the center and origin) of the Greco-Roman world.⁵⁷ Some have also pointed out that the stone bears a striking resemblance to the conical shape of Jebel Aqra.⁵⁸

[48] Francis Rawdon Chesney, *The expedition for the survey of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris* [...] (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850), 1:386–387.

[49] Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 246.

[50] Corinne Bonnet, "Typhon et Baal Saphon," *Poenicia and the East Mediterranean in the First Millennium B.C.* (November 1985): 125n133, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02021686>; Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 246.

[51] Johannes Malalas, *Chronicles* 8.199.

[52] Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 246.

[53] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 5.80.

[54] *Palatine Anthology* 5.332.

[55] SHA Hadr. 14.3.

[56] Libanius, *Orations* 18.175.

[57] Arent Jan Wensinck, "The Navel and Mountains," in *The Ideas of the Western Semites Concerning the Navel of the Earth* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1916), 1–10.

[58] Wachtang Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations in the Region West of Antioch on-the-Orontes* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1986), 4.

27. All coins depict the sacred stone (baetyl) in the temple of Zeus Kasios on Jebel Aqra. Minted in Seleucia in Pieria and made of copper alloy.
© The Trustees of the British Museum.



27.1 Ruler: Trajan Coin G.4129 [98–117] (Ø24mm).



27.2 Ruler: Trajan Coin 1844,0425.840 [98–117CE] (Ø25mm).



27.3 Ruler: Trajan Coin 1844,0425.837 [98–117CE] (Ø24mm).



27.4 Ruler: Trajan Coin G.4132 [98–117CE] (Ø23mm).



27.5 Ruler: Trajan Coin 1844,0425.838 [98–117CE] (Ø23mm).



27.6 Ruler: Antoninus Pius Coin 1895,0508.308 [138–161CE] (Ø25mm).



27.7 Ruler: Caracalla Coin 1841,0730.175 [211–217CE] (Ø22mm).



27.8 Ruler: Elagabalus Coin 1844,0425.213 [218–222CE] (Ø31mm).



27.9 Ruler: Severus Alexander Coin 1897,0405.14 [222–235CE] (Ø23mm).

ZAPHON & PARLIER

The Phoenicians knew Jebel Aqra as Zaphon. It was the northernmost edge of Canaan and a familiar icon to the semitic-speaking peoples in the ancient Near East. This name would be passed to the Israelites—whom the Phoenicians shared a close relationship with—and it was adopted into Hebrew scripture as the word for ‘north’. To the Israelites, it wasn’t just a mountain *in* the north, but north itself. It represented the edge of civilization; a hermetic counterweight to their own mount Zion;⁵⁹ and the place where the Earth rose into the heavens.⁶⁰

[59] Ps. 48:2.

[60] Isa. 14:13.

...

The mountain was so deeply embedded in the pre-Christian worldview of the Levant that early Christian figures would attempt to re-frame the mountain’s iconography. The first of these figures was the young Barlaam who climbed Jebel Aqra in the first half of the 6th century to ‘defeat its demons’.⁶¹ Upon finding the temple of Zeus Kasios, he is said to have destroyed its statuary and founded a small monastery on the foundations of the Hellenistic temple.⁶²

[61] Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, 5.

[62] Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, 4.

...

The monastery collapsed later that century, most likely from earthquakes, and when the Byzantines recaptured Antioch from the Arabs in 969AD, it was entirely rebuilt.⁶³ One century later, when the Crusaders landed near the mouth of the Orontes, the mountain was renamed Parlier—thought to be a corruption of the Saint’s name.⁶⁴ The monastery continued to function until the invasion of Antioch by Baibars at the end of the 13th century.⁶⁵

[63] Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, 10.

[64] Diana Darke, *Brad’s Travel Guide: Eastern Turkey*, (USA: The Globe Pequot, 2011), s.v. “Mount Cassius (Keldag).”

[65] Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, 3, 26.

...

The second prominent Christian figure, Symeon Stylites the Younger, made his mark in the foothills north of Jebel Aqra in the mid-6th century. He would become the center of one of the great monastic compounds in all of northern Syria.⁶⁶ While not built on Jebel Aqra, the windows of the side chapel below Symeon’s pillar framed the mountain perfectly: a demonic backdrop to his ascetic life.⁶⁷ Building on and in-relation-to Jebel Aqra would wane from this moment onward as it faded from cult interest. However the Armenian diaspora villages in its shadow would continue to grow.

[66] Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, 57.

[67] Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 250.

...

“Did you ever climb Jebel Aqra?” I asked. “Of course not! Your grandfather was only four years old when Turkey took control of the mountain,” my grandmother explained, “but Kessabtsi people used to go to an old church up there called ‘Balloum’ (Barlaam’s monastery), to celebrate the annual feast of Vartavar.”⁶⁸

[68] Vahe Apelian, “Balloum or the Feast of the Assumption,” *V. H. Apelian’s Blog*, August 4, 2020, <http://vhapelian.blogspot.com/>.



28. Jean Colombe **le siège d'Antioche** [1474] (320×230mm), illumination on parchment.

By the end of the 10th century, the Seljuk Empire had taken over most of the Near East and were expanding through Anatolia into Europe. The perceived threat against Constantinople was one of the impetuses of the First Crusade, plunging the Holy Lands into 200 years of religious wars.

Illustrated above is the first siege of Antioch, in 1097AD when the Latin church claimed the ancient city as the capital of a new Crusader state, the Principality of Antioch. Reinforcements can be seen

marching from the shores north of Jebel Aqra, the moment when the balance of the siege shifted in the favour of the Crusaders.

The walled city would be held until 1268AD when the Mamluk Sultanate successfully captured Antioch (then a vassal state of Armenia) for Baibars.

By the time the Crusaders marched past Antioch, Jebel Aqra had ceased to be a central monument of pagan gods and had successfully been banished to the periphery.

Source: Wikimedia Commons

CASIUS

Building on Jebel Aqra's upper slopes wouldn't resume until the 21st century. But before that happened, the region would see two periods of considerable colonial interest which rediscovered and redrew the mountain: first by British explorers in the 19th century and then by French archaeologists in the 20th.

...

Surveys of Jebel Aqra and its environs began when Antioch's bay was being considered as the entrance for an alternate route to India. An expedition along the Orontes and Euphrates culminated in a detailed scientific analysis—including hydrology, geology, ecology, and human geography—between Jebel Aqra and the Persian Gulf.⁶⁹ (It also included the speculative predecessor to the Suez Canal, which proposed cutting a 67 mile-long channel through the Syrian desert, joining the two rivers.)⁷⁰

...

At the same time, a more amicable relationship between the British and Ottoman Empires led to a relaxation of travel restrictions into the Near East.⁷¹ Orientalist authors and explorers would sail into Antioch's bay and compose poetic accounts of the region.⁷² They would retrace the path of the Crusaders through the Holy Lands, from Jebel Aqra to Jerusalem, and produce some of the first engravings of the mountain; engravings which named it Casius, decidedly using its Greek name instead of the Arabic.

...

Later, in the 1930's, two separate archaeological surveys were conducted on Jebel Aqra by the French. Both surveys noted a six meter deep mound of ash on the mountain's summit, likely from centuries of cult activity.⁷³ One team was able to start excavating, but could only reach a Hellenistic level at two meters before a sudden storm forced them to suspend their dig⁷⁴—the gods of Jebel Aqra, it seemed, decided to keep their secrets buried. Unfortunately, this would be the last chance to excavate the ashen summit. Within the year, Turkey's military occupied the mountain and access was immediately restricted.⁷⁵

...

It remains an active military zone to this day, though one archaeological study of Barlaam's Monastery was allowed in the late 1980s. The dig uncovered the foundations of Zeus Kasios' temple and produced the single most detailed account of ancient architecture on Jebel Aqra—including a brief note on Kessab, where several artifacts from St. Barlaam's monastery are kept.⁷⁶

[69] Chesney, *The Expedition*, xv–xvii.

[70] John Carne, *Syria, The Holy Land, Asia Minor, &c.* [...], (London: Fisher, 1836–38) 1:77.

[71] Carne, *Syria*, i.

[72] William Burckhardt Barker, *Lares and Penates: or Cilicia and its Governors* (London: Ingram Cooke, 1853), 273.

[73] Henri Seyrig, *Les Guides Bleus: Syrie–Palestine, Iraq, Transjordanie* (Paris: Hachette, 1932), 287; Claude F.-A. Schaeffer, "Les Fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit [...]" *Syria* 19, no. 4 (1938): 323–27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4196197>.

[74] Schaeffer, "Les Fouilles," 325.

[75] Fox, *Travelling Heroes*, 245.

[76] Djobadze, *Archaeological Investigations*, 24.



W. H. Bartlett.

H. J. Jen.

MOUNT CASIUS, FROM THE SEA.

FISHER, SON, & CO LONDON, & PARIS, 1840.

29. John Carne Mount Casius, From the Sea 1836 (127×190mm).

One of the first landmarks visited by John Carne was Jebel Aqra. In Carne's poetic description of the encounter, he writes:

"The entrance into Asia Minor by the mouth of the Orontes possesses a grandeur rarely equalled even in this beautiful country. Mount Casius, above five thousand feet in height, rises abruptly from the sea, its sides

broken into deep ravines, and lower down into wooded slopes; its summit is a bold rocky pinnacle... it was a lovely moonlight night, not a cloud in the sky, not a breeze amidst the mountain forests; the murmur of the low waves on the bar alone broke on the stillness."

Source: University of Toronto.

30. Francis Rawdon Chesney The First Caravan Preparing to Leave Amelia Depôt 1850.

The first ever minute survey of Jebel Agra and its environs were undertaken by Colonel Chesney in 1836 and were published in a four-volume set in 1850. This image was the frontispiece to the first volume.

The surveys were so meticulously documented, that the work has become an invaluable resource for modern scientists researching the ecological transformations that have occurred between the 19th century and today.

Here, we see the start of Chesney's campaign, a landing party in the bay of Antioch with Jebel Agra on the left and Jebel Moussa (a well-known mountain which was also historically inhabited by Armenians) on the right.

Shown in the foreground are the unassembled pieces of two modular steam ships—the first of their kind. They were sent from England to the mouth of the orontes, where they were then taken up river in search of a connection to the Euphrates.

Source: Wellcome Collection.



D. Col. E. Thomas & Co. Lith. by J. S. The Figures by W. A. Saunders Royal Artillery

THE FIRST CARAVAN PREPARING TO LEAVE AMELIA DEPÔT

Chesney's description of Jebel Aqra (Mount Casius) is as follows:

"[the coast] ends at the western extremity of the bay of Antioch with the remarkable culminating peak of Mount Casius, which is bounded on its southern and eastern sides by a deep valley celebrated for its fine tobacco. With the exception of some highly crystalline gypsum near its foot on the eastern side, and some diallage rocks, serpentines, &c., towards the south-eastern extremity, this great mass, like the preceding part of the chain, is entirely composed of supra-cretaceous limestone, rising abruptly from the sea to the height of 5318 feet. This is, however, very different from the height implied by Pliny's remark, that a spectator on the mountain, by simply turning his head from left to right, could see both day and night. In the lower and wooded region, at 400 feet above the sea, is the temple said to have been consecrated by Cronus or Ham on this mountain."

Source: Wellcome Collection.



July 8. English 1847. In the Ocean.

G TO LEAVE AMELIA DEPÔT .

AKRA

The rain stopped as quickly as it came and our conversation left the winters under Jebel Aqra. My grandfather was now recalling summer days in his youth that began at dawn, working in his family's tobacco field.⁷⁷ His work would end late in the afternoon and, if anyone was looking for him after that time—he told us—they would always know where to find him: in Karadouran's bay, swimming in the sea.

[77] Haigaz Terterian, "Kessab Economy," in *Kessab and the Kessabtsis*, ed. Missak Apelian, trans. Hrair Atikian (Reseda, CA: Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles, 2011), 49–51.

...

It was a short walk to the coast from his home. He would take a gravel path down to the rocky beach, passing a concrete bunker with a Syrian flag raised on its roof. He remembers the sharp sound of a whistle from soldiers in the bunker when a swimmer would lose track of themselves in the water and float too close to the Turkish border; a border which split the beach in two.

...

The border was first redrawn by the League of Nations, following the First World War and the partitioning of Ottoman territory; France was given transitional sovereignty in the mandate over Syria and Lebanon.⁷⁸ The northwestern region of the mandate—which included the prominent mercantile bay of Alexandretta in the north and Kessab in the south—was identified as a special case and given autonomy as the Sanjak of Alexandretta. Its upper borders were defined by a Franco-Turkish peace treaty, appended twice in favour of Turkey,⁷⁹ and its lower borders met the sea at the southern foot of Djebel Akra's [*sic*] mountain range.

[78] Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, League of Nations, August 12, 1922, C.528.M.313.

[79] Franko-Turkish Agreement Signed at Angora[...], Cmd. 1556, October 20, 1921; Treaty of Lausanne, League of Nations, July 24, 1923, L.N.T.S. 913.

...

During the mandate, France would attempt to amalgamate the Sanjak into a series of newly constituted states: first of Aleppo, then Syria, and then the Arab Republic. Assimilation was unsuccessful, though, and it would become autonomous once more when the League signed a statute reiterating the Sanjak's border in 1937.⁸⁰ The territory was renamed one year later as the Hatay State by a Turkish majority and, in 1939, was officially ceded to the Republic of Turkey following a contentious vote.⁸¹

[80] Collection of Texts Concerning the Sanjak of Alexandretta, League of Nations, June 21, 1937, C.282.M.183.

[81] Inga Brandell, *State Frontiers: Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), 144.

...

Kessab, which had decidedly belonged to the Sanjak, was just barely able to escape annexation into Turkey with the support of a *papabile* Armenian Cardinal in Paris. This exception resulted in the border's conspicuous circumnavigation around the town. Unfortunately, the agreement still cut the community off from most of Jebel Aqra and the lands they had cultivated for centuries.



FIG. 5. — ESQUISSE GÉOGRAPHIQUE DU NW DE LA SYRIE ET DU HATAY, d'après les cartes de l'Institut Géographique National.

31. Louis Dubretret Fig. 5. — Esquisse géographique du NW de la Syrie et du Hatay, d'après les cartes de l'Institut Géographique National 1955.

One of the few surveys completed in northern Syria after WW2. I have highlighted the border and the town of Kessab in red.

Source: Paris - Muséum national d'histoire naturelle/Direction des bibliothèques et de la documentation.



Fig. 1

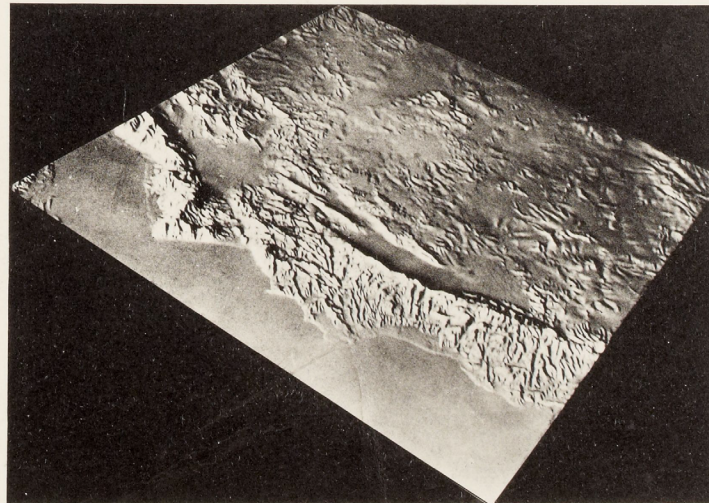


Fig. 2

Clichés L. DUBERTRET

Phototype Jean Brunson
30, rue Le Brun - PARIS 13^e

32. Louis Dubertret Plate I: Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 1955.

Images created for Dubertret's geological survey by l'Institut Géographique National, showing elevation data of the surrounding mountain ranges, coastal valleys, and sea of northern Syria and the Hatay Province of Turkey.

The top image is oriented along the zenith axis and the bottom image is a perspective from the southwest.

Source: Paris - Muséum national d'histoire naturelle/Direction des bibliothèques et de la documentation.

KELDAĞ & KILIÇ

The Turkish translation of Aqra is Keldağ, but its use is uncommon. Instead it has been given a new epithet in Turkey: Kılıç—the word for ‘sword’. I was unable to locate the origin of this new name, but its modern military function is likely an indication. A veil of state secrecy now shrouds Jebel Aqra, making research difficult. Nevertheless, aerial imagery and conflict journalism have shown that in the last ten years—for the first time in almost a millennia—construction has resumed on the mountain’s summit.

...

In 2012 the branching path of a new road appeared in satellite imagery. Two years later, in the next available aerial, a finished road can be seen leading to the summit where a military base had been built. The same year a barrier wall project began, spanning the 900km border between Turkey and Syria.

...

Political unrest in Syria was the motivation for these two projects. The Arab Spring had given momentum to wide-spread protest against the leadership of president Bashar al-Assad in 2011, resulting in the country’s on-going civil war. Initially, Turkey took an open-border stance for Syrians against Assad—letting refugees in and supplies out. However, willingness to provide support to rebel groups resulted in an increase of smuggling and violence in Turkish towns near the border.⁸²

[82] Dasha Afanasieva, “Turkey Builds Wall in Token Effort to Secure Border with Syria,” *Reuters*, May 5, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSBREA4409Z20140505>.

...

The completion of the military base on Jebel Aqra coincided with an attack and occupation of Kessab by jihad rebels in 2014—though it is only conjecture that the two events are related. Western powers would eventually denounce Turkey’s support of the recognized terrorist groups and the Turkish government soon took a harder stance on Syria’s internal conflict.

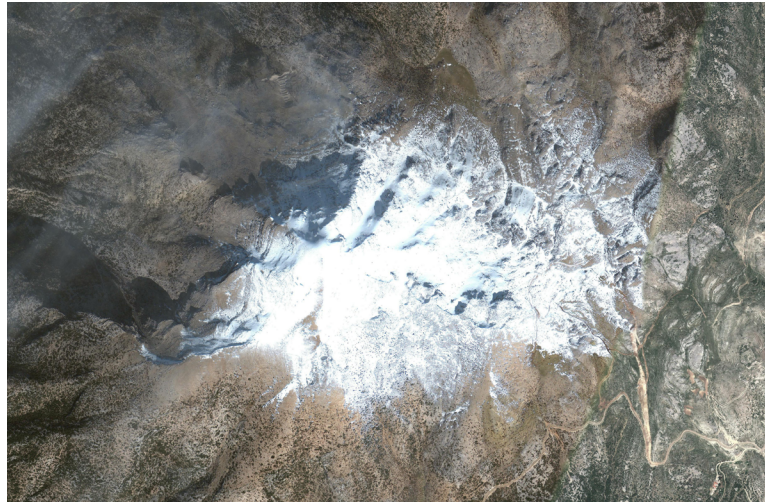
...

The wall reached Karadouran’s beach earlier this year. It is made of modular concrete slabs, 2m wide and 3m tall, with another meter of barbed wire fencing above.⁸³ The wall traverses most of the border, making it the third largest in the world—behind the Great Wall of China and the American-Mexico border wall.

[83] Orhan Coskun and Daren Butler, “Turkey to Complete Syria Border Wall within 5 Months, Official Says,” *Reuters*, September 28, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-turkey-idUSKCN11Y1MB>.

...

I helped my grandmother clear the dishes from the table and my grandfather walked outside to see if the hail had damaged our young fruit trees. He opened three chairs for us to continue our conversation in the garden.



34. Jebel Aqra's Summit in May 2012.

The extension of a road leading to the peak of Jebel Aqra can first be seen under construction at the beginning of 2012, branching off of the existing road north of the border.



35. Jebel Aqra's Summit in November 2012.

By the end of 2012, the road was complete and the foundations of a military base were being built. Shown in this aerial image, is a line of vehicles arranged along the road.



36. Jebel Aqra's Summit in April 2014.

The base, still partially under construction here, was completed at the end of 2014.

In March, Kessab would be attacked and occupied by jihadist militants known as al-Nusra—or al-Qaeda in Syria—who were seen replacing the Turkish military patrols at this base.

Today, the Turkish base still functions as a military outpost. Photos of the border wall can now be seen all the way to the water's edge.

On the Mountain, They Grew

The archive has neither status nor power without an architectural dimension... its motifs and columns, the arrangement of the rooms, the organisation of the 'files', the labyrinth of corridors, and that degree of discipline, half-light and austerity that gives the [archive] something of the nature of a temple and a cemetery: a religious space because a set of rituals is constantly taking place there... and a cemetery in the sense that fragments of lives and pieces of time are interred there... And so we arrive at the inescapable materiality of the archive.

— Achille Mbembe, *The Power of the Archive and its Limits*

BEFORE JEBEL AQRA was home to an exiled diaspora, it was the domicile of gods, demons, and disciples. Cuneiform tablets, pagan myths, and religious exegeses—the iconography of those who built on the mountain—have each attempted to untangle its cosmic mystery. For the semitic-speaking peoples in Canaan, it was the northernmost edge of the world; for the ancient Greek and Roman Empire it was the center of a new one; and for the early Christian ascetics, it was a pagan monument to be banished into the periphery. For the first Armenian settlers, its remoteness was a secret refuge, until it became a military panopticon for their persecutors. For Western explorers who drew, surveyed, and studied the mountain, it was the threshold between the Occident and the Orient and for the modern nation-states in turmoil, it would be the wall that divided north from south—Turkey from Syria. Archived within the many names of its unexcavated strata are millennia of these secret contradictions. Yet, in the nostalgic ruminations of my grandparents, the history of the world collapses into the stone they built their homes with, the sea they swam in, and the land on which they grew.

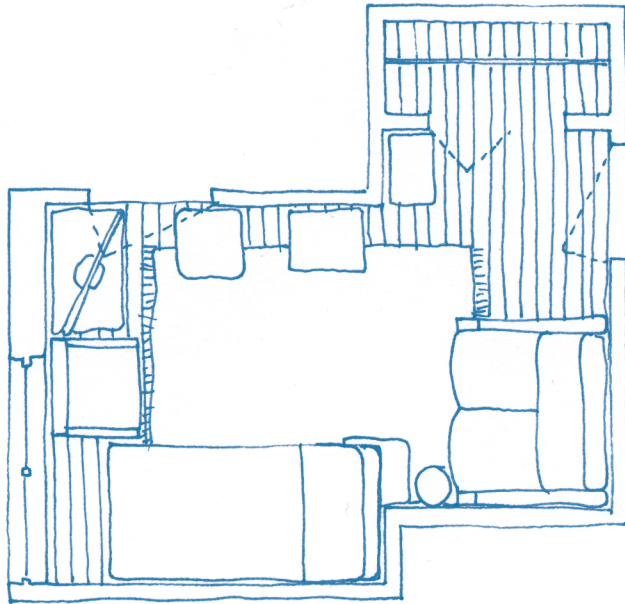
37. Haroutioun Sarkissian *Voice of the Land* 1986, VHS stills. ►

A short documentary produced by the Land and Culture Organisation, based in Paris, during their conservation and reconstruction of a traditional church in Kessab.



PART THREE

Television Room



38. Plan of Television Room 1:50. 



39. Interior of Television Room

DE' AH DA' IAH

Kessab is the only Armenian town in Syria, so when I ask about the buildings I hear about the churches first. They function as central sites of governance; they manage respective sectarian schools, and facilitate cultural, public, and administrative activity. There are three Christian-Armenian denominations in Kessab: Apostolic, Evangelical, and Armenian Rite Catholic (colloquially known as Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic).*

* There is also a mosque that was built in the 1970's for the town's minority Alawite population, but I don't hear about it as often.

...

I asked my grandmother if the churches had any kind of museum or archive. She thought for a moment. "There is one building," she said. "But I never went—they started giving tours after we came to Canada. And it's not run by the church, someone still lives there! Each summer they take tourists around their traditional village home. There was even a film[†] made there, called *De'ab Da'iah*." I asked her what the name meant. "It's Arabic," she said, "It's like a village, one that is slowly..." She struggled to find the word. "Fading?" I suggested. "Yes!" She said, "Like slowly fading."

† When I first heard my grandmother mention there was a film made at the house, I assumed it was a documentary. I forgot that she also uses the word 'film' when referring to the Armenian soap operas my grandparents watch every evening.

...

I was immediately fascinated by this building, it sounded like the perfect case study. Here was a building that was both a home *and* an archive; a space constantly alternating between public tours, cultural posterity, and domestic life. And there was a film dedicated to it! It even inspired me to finally give my thesis a title.

...

I spent the entire week searching but I couldn't find anything about the building. Feeling defeated, I described my search to a Syrian friend who had visited Kessab when she was younger. She messaged me back in minutes with a link to a Youtube playlist. "I think it is a series, not a film... a comedy," she said. Apparently, the film I was looking for was actually an Arabic soap opera—a satire praising the simplicity of traditional life—and this house was the main set. We laughed and I thanked her for her help.

...

I thought about changing the title of my thesis, feeling embarrassed by the misunderstanding. In the end, though, I came around to it. It was a conspicuous reminder of a moment where my research intentions had driven my interpretation. Besides, the village *is* fading. And this house in Kessab, *De'ab Da'iah*, has found a funny way to adapt; actively protecting the memory of traditional practices while simultaneously participating in the modern economy that is replacing it.



40. dir. Al Laith Hajo **De'ah Da'iah** 2008–2010, TV Series.

A highly-rated comedy series about the simplicity of traditional life, unburdened by modernity. The entire series was filmed in Kessab and was an unexpected wealth of imagery depicting the traditional homes, villages, and landscape.

These images show scenes that are easily recognizable as Kessab: a view looking north at Jebel Aqra as its slopes reach the Mediterranean coast; a village home in Karadouran, with the range of Dounag behind; and a paved road in the valley with a two-story, limestone block apartment.

Source: Youtube.



HEN-HEKEIK

I found a catalogue containing 23 photographs of Kessab in an online archive. Most of the images were from 1909, one was from 1911, and two others from 1946. The latter two images were titled *A large picnic gathering at the home of Dr. Injekjeekian*. I recognized my grandmother's maiden name and ordered scans.

...

"Where did you find this?" My grandmother asked, surprised. She put her glasses on. "My grandfather's brother was the only doctor in Kessab," she told me, "He was Protestant too, but had to convert to Orthodox when he joined the Syrian parliament."⁸⁴ He represented all the Armenians in Syria." She leaned forward and I zoomed into the image. "I think that's him, there, next to the one with the glasses in the middle," she said, pointing out the doctor.

...

"Our family had lots of land in the town," she said, "The doctor lived close to my home, where we spent most of the year, but in the summers we would go to our summer home, in a neighbourhood at the edge of town called Hen-Hekeik. It means 'the old vineyard'." I asked her if we could find it and I opened Google Maps. She asked me to point out the Protestant church to orient herself. We followed the main street of Kessab north, stopping at the Orthodox church. "The doctor lived up the hill from here, on the corner," she said, squinting at the fuzzy mess of buildings. "We lived on the second floor of this building, just behind the church," she explained.

...

"Our summer home is only a ten minute walk from here," she said. We started to pan east along Jebel Aqra towards the border wall, she pointed out the Catholic church on the way. "This was a dirt road when I was there," she said and I noticed the long shadows of new apartment buildings cast onto the asphalt road. "It was very close to here," she said, noting a section of the road that bent around the mountainside. "Could this be it?" I suggested, pointing out a tiny roof surrounded by farmland, completely dwarfed by a complex of apartments across the road. "Yes! That must be it!" she said excitedly.

...

My grandfather stepped into the room, having woken from his afternoon nap. "Okay, it's the time!" my grandmother said, jumping up. She prepared dough earlier that morning and the two of them went downstairs to bake their weekly batch of *manaeesb*.

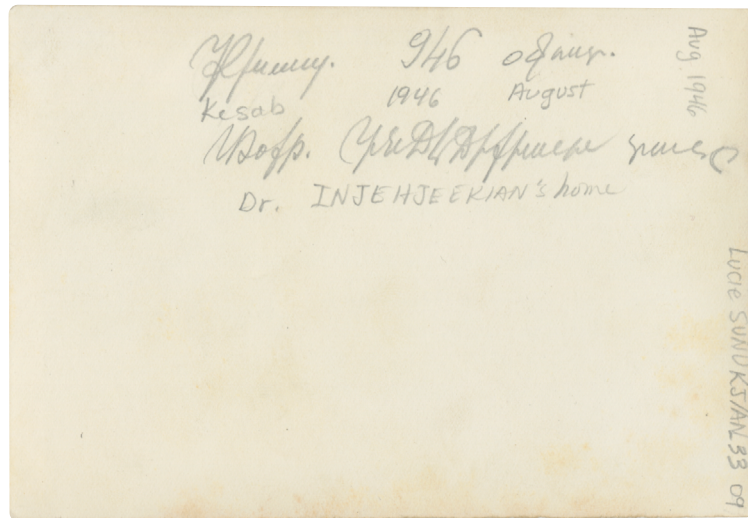
[84] Rev. Hovhannes Sarmazian, "Dr. Avedis Injekjian," in *Kessab and the Kessabtsis*, ed. Missak Apelian (Reseda, CA: Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles, 2011), 98–99.



41. Photographer Unknown
A large picnic gathering at
the home of Dr. Injehjekian
1946.

A short piece on the life of Dr. Avedis Injehjekian was written in a special publication commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles' yearbook and directory project.

Source: Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Lucie Sunukjian.



1909

“The Protestant church is the biggest church in Kessab—even though there are more Orthodox people,” my grandmother reminded me proudly as she swiped through images posted by her friend on social media. “It’s very old and built right at the entrance of the town,” she said. Its stone facade had a glossy, white sheen and she explained it was recently painted in a renovation.

...

Construction of Kessab’s Holy Trinity Evangelist Church began in 1909. It was the fourth iteration of a Protestant meeting place in Kessab. The first was a simple stone house, holding only a matful of communicants in 1848. The second, a few years later, was three houses under one roof—a common typology in the town. As the congregation grew, the need for a larger, dedicated space was needed and, in 1859, Kessab’s first official Protestant church was built. It would stand for 50 years until, months before the semi-centennial festivities, it was set ablaze in a series of anti-Armenian pogroms known as the Adana Massacre of 1909.⁸⁵

...

The people of Kessab fled into Karadouran’s mountain, Dounag, during the attack, seeking safety in the coastal caves. When they returned five days later they found their home burned, plundered, and in ruin. The Protestant church had been destroyed and reconstruction plans started immediately in an empty lot nearby. This time, an even larger church was planned, with 1.5 meter-thick, stone walls excavated from Jebel Aqra. The residents donated what little they had—even offering key-stones taken from their own homes. Letters were sent to Evangelicals in Europe and America asking for monetary aid as construction continued.

...

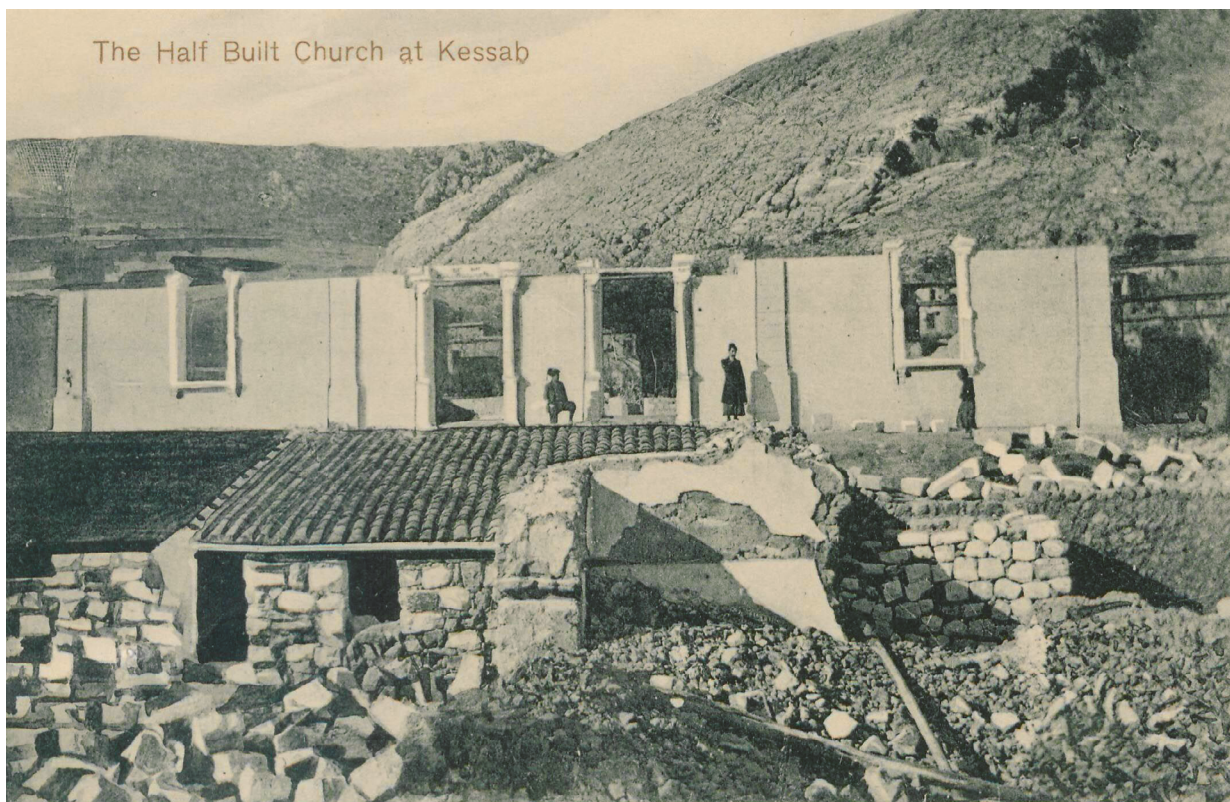
Unfortunately, the church would remain incomplete when, six years later, in 1915, the Ottoman campaign of ethno-religious cleansing reached Kessab. This time, despite efforts to bring it down, the walls of the half-built church would remain standing.⁸⁶

...

“We would play in the church as kids,” my grandmother told me. “The walls were finished after the [Second World] War, but it had no roof for a very long time. We would climb the spiral, stone staircase and would dare each other to walk around the top of the wall,” she said. She then explained it was eventually consecrated with a red-shingled roof in 1969 and the 60 year-old church held its first mass.

[85] D. H. Koundakjian to the American Bible House, 4 May 1911, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Transfer 153. From K to Ly. Index No. 26. Ko., SALT Research, Istanbul. <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/3577>.

[86] Sarkissian, *Kessab, Voice of the Land*, 05:10.



42. D. Koundakjian **The Half Built Church at Kessab** 1911.

A photograph included in a correspondence from the Protestant pastor in Kessab—D. H. Koundakjian—showing the progress of the Protestant church, two years after the Adana Massacre in 1909. Construction continued but would be left unfinished

once more, four years later, when the genocide began.

Source: SALT Research. © United Church of Christ (UCC), American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT), SALT Research.

43. D. Koundakjian What the Protestants of Kessab Have Done for their Church, Destroyed by Fire During the Recent Disturbances 1911.

Correspondence from the Protestant pastor in Kessab—D. H. Koundakjian—two years after the Adana Massacre in 1909.

This document shows an itemized list of donations received, whether in the form of pledges, labour, or building material, shown in Turkish lira.

Source: SALT Research. © United Church of Christ (UCC), American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT), SALT Research.

WHAT THE PROTESTANTS OF KESSAB HAVE DONE
FOR THEIR CHURCH, DESTROYED BY FIRE
DURING THE RECENT DISTURBANCES.

-
- ₺T. 100. From regular pledges.
- 30. On the day of laying the Foundation-stone.
 - 70. At different times from the people.
 - 12. From the women for the Pulpit.
 - 8. From a man for the first Corner-stone.
 - 3. From the Christian Endeavour children.
 - 3. From the school-children for carving two verses (John 6 : 37, 14 : 6) on the doors.
-
- ₺T. 226 Total cash.
-
- ₺T. 40. For 600 loads of wood for the preparation of lime.
- 80. For 100,000 loads of sand for the walls, brought by women.
 - 50. For thousands of common stones for the inside of the walls.
-

The young men undertook to defray the expense of the Belfry.

Every person is contributing, *i.e.*, one key-stone, etc.

THE MOST URGENT NEEDS ARE

6,000 Stones at \$0.25 per 1,000	\$1500.00
300 Corner-stones at \$1.00 per 100.....	300.00
100 Poutrelles at \$12.50 each	1250.00
8 Stone Pillars at \$50.00 each.....	400 00
50 Windows at \$12.50 each.....	625.00
2 Doors at \$25.00 each.....	50.00
Cost of Plastering.....	700 00
Cost of Flooring.....	700.00
Cost of Roof.....	300.00
Miscellaneous Expenses.....	300.00
	<hr/>
TOTAL - - -	\$6125.00
	<hr/>

Will you kindly help these struggling people?

On behalf of the Church Building Committee.

D. H. Koundakjian

44. D. Koundakjian The Most Urgent Needs Are 1911.

Correspondence from the Protestant pastor in Kessab—D. H. Koundakjian—two years after the Adana Massacre in 1909.

This document shows an itemized list of what is still needed for the completion of the Protestant church in Kessab, shown in American dollars.

Source: SALT Research. © United Church of Christ (UCC), American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT), SALT Research.

2014

I looked up when I noticed my grandmother was distracted by the news. Martial law had been declared between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the *de jure* territory of Artsakh. There were rumours that Turkey was supplying Azerbaijani soldiers with drones, providing a clear advantage in both military and digital warfare.⁸⁷ My grandmother looked back at the images of the Protestant church on her iPad and was reminded of the time Turkish-backed militants attacked and occupied Kessab in March, 2014.

[87] Alex Gatopoulos, "2020: A Year in Conflict," *Al Jazeera*, December 30, 2020, www.aljazeera.com/features/2020/12/30/2020-a-year-in-conflict.

[88] "I am Kessabtzi," in *Kessabtsis in USA, Canada, and Australia: Yearbook/Directory*, ed. Haig Chelebian, 54th ed. (Reseda, CA: Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles, 2014), 211–12.

[89] Charles Glass, "The Battle for Kessab," *Granta*, no. 131, *The Map is not the Territory* (Spring 2015): 164.

[90] Glass, "The Battle for Kessab," 174.

[91] Elyse Semerdjian, "#SaveKessab, #SaveAleppo, and Kim Kardashian: Syria's Rashomon Effect," *Jadaliyya*, April 24, 2014, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30576>.

[92] Glass, "The Battle for Kessab," 175.

[93] Glass, "The Battle for Kessab," 176.

...
Kessab had mostly managed to avoid Syria's civil war, suffering primarily from a lack of tourism in the first three years.⁸⁸ However, the Armenian town eventually fell in the marching path of a rebel force on its way to Latakia. Days before the attack, residents in the town noticed regular Turkish patrols on Jebel Aqra being replaced by bearded paramilitaries in assorted non-Turkish uniforms. Apparently, Turkey had relinquished their posts to a ragged group of militants and no one in Syria knew why.⁸⁹

...
"I remember seeing it on the news and all over Facebook," my grandmother told me. "The entire town was crowded into Latakia's Armenian church—many still in their pyjamas." Misinformation quickly circulated diaspora social-media groups, drawing clear similarities to the genocide. Despite exaggerated claims of visceral killings,⁹⁰ the #savekessab campaign was famously retweeted by Kim Kardashian and soon after reached the ears of six congress members who denounced Turkey's association with the US-recognized terrorist group.⁹¹ Turkey was forced to weigh its patronage to Syrian rebels and its political relationship with the West. On June 3rd, Turkey labelled al-Nusra a terrorist organization and their support soon dried up.⁹²

...
Three months after the occupation began, Kessab was reclaimed and residents returned to assess the damage. The town had been vandalized but not destroyed, though churches had been especially targeted—books were burned, paintings were slashed, and walls were graffitied with death threats.⁹³

...
My grandmother told me she has been a member of the Armenian red cross for over 50 years. She remembers helping organize donations that were sent to Kessab after the attack and I was reminded of the freshly painted facade of the Protestant church.



45. iPad

Every afternoon, while my grandfather naps, my grandmother lays on the chaise in the small TV room, scrolling through Facebook on her iPad and chatting with her sisters in Fresno and Aleppo.

Shown here, my grandmother was sent her wedding photos from her sister. She thought the photos were lost and asked me to download the picture and print it out for her.

1915

APRIL 24TH, 2021—The news was playing as I leaned against the door frame of the TV room. My grandparents were listening closely and didn't notice me. The US president began to speak:

Each year on this day, we remember the lives of all those who died in the Ottoman-era Armenian genocide and recommit ourselves to preventing such an atrocity from ever again occurring. Beginning on April 24, 1915, with the arrest of Armenian intellectuals and community leaders in Constantinople by Ottoman authorities, one and a half million Armenians were deported, massacred, or marched to their deaths in a campaign of extermination...⁹⁴

[94] Joe Biden, "Statement by President Joe Biden on Armenian Remembrance Day," *The White House*, April 24, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/24/statement-by-president-joe-biden-on-armenian-remembrance-day/>.

[95] Katie Rogers and Carlotta Gall, "Breaking With Predecessors, Biden Declares Mass Killings of Armenians a Genocide," *New York Times*, April 24, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/us/politics/armenia-genocide-joe-biden.html>.

[96] Tim Arango, "A Century After Armenian Genocide, Turkey's Denial Only Deepens," *New York Times*, April 16, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/17/world/europe/turkeys-century-of-denial-about-an-armenian-genocide.html>.

[97] Ani Duzdabanyan-Manoukian, "The Secret Language that my Family Knew," Duzdabanyan Collection - Yerevan, Houshamaydyan, last modified October 5, 2021, <https://www.houshamadyan.org/oda/armenia/duzdabanyan-collection-arm.html>.

...

Armenians around the world exhaled. This was the first official recognition by the United States that the systematic killings, mass deportations, and forced Islamization of Armenians in 1915 constituted a genocide. It represented a major victory for activists who see recognition by the States as crucial in the fight against denial.⁹⁵ The US had avoided using the term 'genocide' until now, hesitant of the political implications and potential alienation of Turkey—one of the two nation states in the world who continue to explicitly deny the genocide, framing the "Armenian Question" in history books as wartime deportations.⁹⁶

...

My grandmother looked over her shoulder and invited me to sit down. She told me that for Kessab, the genocide started in the town. The Orthodox people were forcibly marched east to death camps in the Syrian desert; some were able to escape but many died in the process.⁹⁷ France sent ships to Karadouran's bay and were able to evacuate some of the Protestants to Egypt.

...

The villagers in Karadouran, my grandfather then explained, were able to escape by foot, walking south to Damascus and then to Jordan. In 1918, British allies took control of Jerusalem and the refugees relocated there, to the Armenian quarter in the Old City. From Jerusalem, they travelled to Egypt, this time by train, to join their countrymen in Port Said. It wouldn't be safe to return until 1920, after which many travelled to Aleppo by train, then Kessab by carriage, and, finally, they walked home to Karadouran.⁹⁸

...

The news report cut to commercial and my grandfather changed the channel to check the weather. He stood up to leave, saying he had some work to do in the garden before it rained.

Armenians Stage Protest Over Turkish Massacre

The murderous massacre of the Armenian nation over 55 years ago may be dimmed by time, but it is not forgotten in the hearts of many who live in Canada. This will be proven today in Ottawa in a "silent march" of protest by 450-500 Armenians, many of them from the Galt area.

A busload of nearly 40 Galt and district Armenian ex-citizens and descendants left the city at 6 a.m. today, en route to Ottawa. They plan to gather at the front of the Turkish Embassy, then to conduct their silent march to the Parliament Buildings, to the external affairs office.

"We will then present a

special memorandum which notes the brutal act of genocide committed against the Armenian people in 1915 by the Turkish government," said a local Armenian spokesman. No disturbance will be caused hence the silent walk, but their protest against such a cruel and callous act will be renewed. Armenians have never forgotten this disaster.

When all the Armenian visitors gather, they will be hailing from Galt, Kitchener, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Toronto, Montreal and other cities. In charge of the Galt group is Archie Titizian, with Jack Boghossian in charge of the group from Kitchener.

En route to the Parliament Buildings and their official memorandum of protest, the Armenian contingent will pause at the Canadian War Memorial to lay a wreath in honor of those gallant Canadians who died in the cause of freedom in two terrible world wars.

They expect to arrive in Ottawa about 12:30 p.m., with the crowd to be gathered at the Turkish Embassy by 1 p.m.

Back in 1915, during the First World War, the Turkish troops were turned loose on the Armenian population, with many thousands of men, women and children slaughtered in cold blood within a short time.

[98] Lalai Manjikian, "Kessab Roots: A Survivor's Story," *Armenian Weekly*, November 19, 2011, <https://armenianweekly.com/2011/11/19/kessab-roots-a-survivor%E2%80%99s-story/>.

46. Armenians Stage Protest Over Turkish Massacre 24 April 1971, newspaper clipping.

Source: City of Cambridge Archives

Friday July 21 1961
Armenians Celebrate Freedom

One of the biggest events each year for Galt district's Armenian population is the annual outdoor picnic which celebrates the fight for their homeland's freedom many years ago.

On Sunday, Aug. 6, at the Fred Sage Farm, located west of Galt, Armenians will hold the 1961 celebration. This is being conducted by the local ARF committee, which is connected to the Armenian Gashnag Association of Canada.

Goodwill, good food, dancing and a strong feeling of nationalism will pervade the affair. Over 300 members, special guests and visitors are expected to attend. Chairman will be Jack Mooradian, of Hamilton, a former Galtonian, while Martin Avedesian and Rubin Vahradian are handling details from the Galt end.

Galt and district dignitaries are to be present, including Mayor E. M. Griffiths, Chief Constable J. J. Carson and other officials. The major guest speaker is the Hon. James W. Monteith, Minister of Health and Welfare.

Although Armenia is now mostly behind the Iron Curtain, in Soviet dominated areas, the western Armenians celebrate the gaining of their independence 43 years ago after the First World War.

"Our purpose is just to celebrate our freedom," said a local official. "We want our children to know what lies behind it, not to forget it." While the Armenians are conscientious, hard-working citizens of countries like Canada, they do not forget their native soil. Feelings of patriotism are strong within them, especially the older generations. Through events such as this, they try to impart such treasured ideas of freedom to the younger ones.

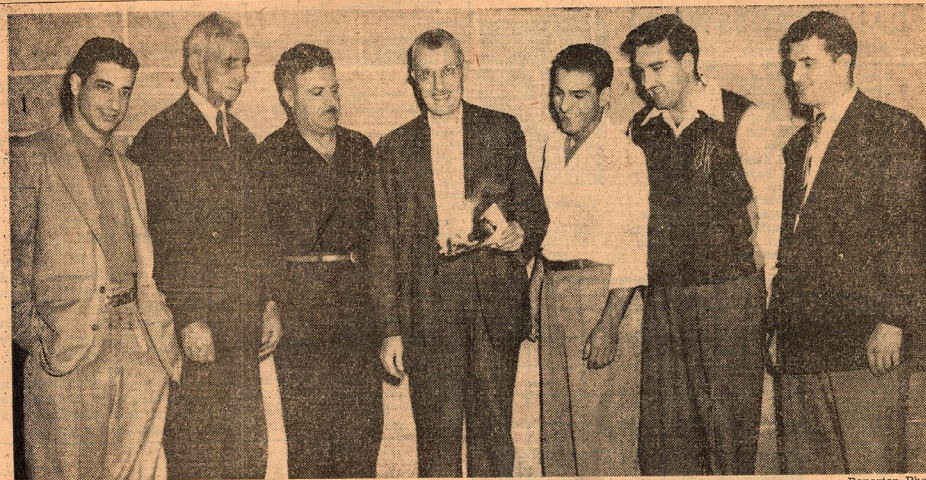
Beginning around noon, the gala afternoon features some national observances, a luncheon, music, talks and general good fellowship.

An excellent Armenian band from St. Catharines is expected to be on hand. Dancing will take place later in the outdoor event.

Armenians from Ontario, the west and from United States plan to be present. They'll troop in from Galt, Guelph, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Toronto, Kitchener, Brantford, Sarnia, Buffalo, Niagara Falls (N.Y.) and many other cities and towns.

48. Armenians Celebrate Freedom 21 July 1961, newspaper clipping.

Source: City of Cambridge Archives



—Reporter Photo

MORTGAGE IS BURNED — The Galt Armenian Aram Tashnag Association recorded another memorable event in the history of their club recently when they conducted a "burning of the mortgage" ceremony. Three years ago the local Armenian organization erected club rooms in Galt and today those club rooms are entirely free of debt. They are located on Imperial Lane, at the rear of the Reporter build-

ing. Members who participated in the ceremony are shown in the above photograph. Left to right, they are Reggie Avedesian, Arshak Manoogian, Mike Krikorian, President Harry Kalpakjian, McKay Peters, Treasurer John Kostigian, Secretary John Hagopian. Two other members were not present when the picture was taken. They were Edward Derdarian and Louie Sahagian.

47. The Evening Reporter Mortgage is Burned 13 July 1951, newspaper clipping.

Source: City of Cambridge Archives

Hillside School Is Sold To Armenian Association

Oct 17/68

North Dumfries' remaining one-room school house has been sold to the Armenian Aram Tashnag Association of Galt for \$15,300. The organization will use it as a community centre.

The school known as Hillside is located in North Dumfries Township just east of the city limits on Highway 97.

Members of the association come from Galt, Guelph, Kitchener and Preston. Joseph Titzian of Galt is president of the club.

Present plans call for some renovations to the existing building and sometime in the future a new hall will be constructed on the two-acre site.

The present club quarters are located at the rear of The Evening Reporter building and access to the premises are from two lanes running from Ainslie Street. Also in the same building is the Orient Rug Company and several apartments.

FUTURE PLANS
 Charles Nagge, owner of the

building, said today he plans to remodel the apartments. Any comment on the rest of the building would be premature, he added.

He said he had long term plans for the building that would be made known at some future date.

A spokesman for the Armenian group said they will take over the school property almost immediately for their association's activities.

Hillside school was officially opened in 1950 to serve pupils who formerly attended Little's Corners school on the Branchton Road.

In 1964 Hillside was one of four one-room schools remaining in the township. Today it is the last to be sold.

The oldest school under the board's authority, Stone school located on Highway 24A was taken over by the township council in 1967 and has become the business office and council chamber.

Two other schools in the town-

ship have become private residences during the past two years. Greenfield and Reidsville schools also disappeared as school buildings.

The Polish Alliance purchased a three-room school, Mill Creek from the township board and has turned it into community quarters for the association.

The school board still operates seven schools in the township. Two and three-room schools are located at Little's Corners, Branchton, Dickie Settlement, Riverside, Roseville and Wrigley's Corners.

The largest and most modern school in the township is the Cecil Cornwell Senior Public school on Highway 97, west of the city. This school handles all the grade six, seven and eight students from the entire township.

49. Hillside School is Sold to Armenian Association 17 October 1968, newspaper clipping.

Source: City of Cambridge Archives

Armenians 1971
stage protest
 OTTAWA (CP) — About 1,500 Canadians of Armenian descent demonstrated peacefully outside by Turkish Embassy on Saturday.

Two or three small stones were tossed at the embassy after police refused to allow demonstration leaders to present a letter to Turkish Ambassador Irfan Tansel.

A police officer explained that Mr. Tansel had asked that the letter be mailed. The officer politely offered a stamp.

The demonstrators put the letter in a nearby mailbox, then marched in the rain one mile to Confederation Square.

They placed a wreath at the War Memorial in memory of 1,500,000 Armenians they said were slain by Turks in 1915.

Then they marched to Parliament Hill, where police kept them separate from a smaller but noisier anti-Vietnam war rally in front of the Peace Tower.

The anti-war rally began at the Civic Centre, where New Democrats were preparing to vote in a new leader. Outgoing leader T. C. Douglas spoke briefly to about 400 demonstrators.

But fewer than 200 went on to Parliament Hill, carrying red revolutionary flags and pictures of Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara. They were mostly in their early teens.

The Armenian group meanwhile was addressed by its leaders—Vazken Terzian of St. Catharines, president of the Committee for the Independence of Armenia, and Aram Aivazian, the vice-president. They urged the Canadian Government to take an active part in restoring the territory of Armenia, now divided between the Russians and the Turks.

50. Armenians Stage Protest 24 July 1971, newspaper clipping.

Source: City of Cambridge Archives

Oct. 1977

Galt Armenians to Bring Out 150 D. P. Countrymen from Europe's Concentration Camps

In the first community effort of its kind to be organized in this Dominion, approximately 150 displaced personnel from the concentration camps of Europe will arrive in Galt before the end of this year.

Such is the expectation of the Galt Armenian Society which has been working in conjunction with the Galt Board of Trade to achieve this object. The program when it comes to fruition will provide an outstanding example of how community effort can eliminate apparently insuperable problems and bring effective results.

This city, like any other in the province, has been faced with the conflicting problems of labor shortage and housing shortage. Both have been faced by the local Armenian group, which approached the Board of Trade last month with an original proposal of how displaced personnel can be brought to this city and be housed.

Pledge to Care for 150

The solution lies in the warm hearts and practical minds of the Armenians resident in this community. They have the Board of Trade was told pledged themselves to house and care for as many as 150 of their countrymen and women if they can be brought here from famine-ridden Europe. Under the general chairmanship of Martin Avedesian, the local Armenian society has registered housing accommodation that will take care of that number as soon as they can be brought to this city.

With this pledge to work on, Board of Trade officials under the direction of Bob Malcolm and Secretary Harry Groves set in motion machinery for action through government channels. Government requirements demand not only that adequate housing facilities be available but also that there be a guarantee of employment. This the Board of Trade is securing by a canvass of industrial plants in the community.

Assured of Jobs

Their task has not been a difficult one for the Armenians in this city have long earned a high reputation as good citizens and reliable workers and guarantees to employ at least a hundred men and women flowed into the Board of Trade office within a few days of the canvass being carried out and this number is being augmented in each day's mail.

Among the local firms that have given such pledges of employment are: Babcock-Wilcox and Goldie-McCulloch Co.; Galt Malleable Iron Co.; Galt Paper Box Co.; Stauffer-Dobbs Co.; P. W. Gardiner and Sons Ltd.; and C. Turnbull Co.

This pledge covers employment for at least twelve months at current rate of wages providing that the personnel are competent to carry on the work for which they are engaged.



ARMENIANS OPEN HOMES TO DISPLACED PERSONNEL—Through the combined efforts of the Galt Armenian society and the Galt Board of Trade, 150 men and women from the concentration camps of famine-ridden Europe will be brought to this city by the close of the year. Local Armenians have pledged themselves to house 150 of their countrymen and women and Galt industrialists are guaranteeing employment for 12 months to the incoming personnel. Board of Trade officials anticipate that arrangements will have been completed with government authorities for these displaced personnel to arrive in Galt before the close of the year. ABOVE, Mrs. Queenie Tosoian of Wellington street is seen pledging herself to house five displaced persons, while Martin Avedesian, general chairman of the Galt Armenian committee, and R. H. Malcolm, president of the Galt Board of Trade, look on. —Galt Reporter Photo

No difficulty is anticipated in this regard as a thorough screening is being carried out to ensure that personnel arriving in Galt can be readily absorbed into its economic life and be welcomed as good citizens.

From 18 to 40 Years

A list of over 3,500 Armenians in the displaced personnel camps on the continent is in the possession of the local Armenian society. The 150 men and women selected will be in an age group from 18 to 40 years. While nothing but unskilled labor is promised, there is little doubt that many coming to Galt will be qualified in many types of employment.

A further responsibility that the local society has accepted is to provide interpreters in any cases where language difficulties might provide a bar to employment.

With the pledge of homes and

work in this community, responsibility for bringing these 150 men and women to Canada will be carried out by the federal authorities and it is anticipated that they will arrive in Galt before the close of the year.

51. Galt Armenians to Bring Out 150 D. P. [Displaced Personnel] Countrymen from Europe's Concentration Camps October 1977, newspaper clipping.

Source: City of Cambridge Archives

Diasporic Networks

We have just witnessed the revolutionary confiscations playing the role of a deity who often favors the scholar: the goddess Catastrophe... Certainly, the great disasters have not consistently served history... Nevertheless, the peaceable continuity of social existence is much less favorable to the transmission of memory than is sometimes supposed... A good cataclysm suits our business better.

— Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*

A *CHANGING WORLD MEANT* that those who grew on the slopes of Jebel Aqra would not remain hidden forever. The Armenian villagers who made their home on the mountain would come to face martyrdom, pogroms, and war—catastrophes which attempted to erase the evidence of their existence. The irony, I have learned, is that the town's existence (and my own existence) is indebted to those who were displaced. In the wake of this displacement was the creation of ephemeral infrastructures—networks of relation that connect a diaspora to a life lost. These networks, whether religious, social, or generational, would become the means to overcome catastrophe and to actively rebuild their homeland, both locally and afar. Although, even in peaceable continuity, the village would be faced with loss: through the slow creep of a modern tourist economy that has replaced the agricultural village with seaside hotels, vacation homes, and roadways. The attempt to hold on to a traditional way of life has inevitably presented itself in odd ways. Its memory would be recalled in local gatherings and church services; in Facebook messages and soap operas. And, in the end, a community displaced would stand side by side again, at political rallies and demonstrations, decrying a history of silence, from the far edges of the world.

52. Rev. Stephen Trowbridge Kessab and its Villages after the Adana Massacre 1909. ►

During my research, I found only two archival collections with images of Kessab from the early 20th century. While the first was unable to scan images for me, the second, shown here, included a small batch of photographs taken after the Adana massacre in 1909. Source: Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Douglas Crary.



52.1 Burned Inn on Road from Kessab to Alexandretta, K1988.011.155



52.2 Interior of Destroyed Kessab Church, K1988.011.161



52.3 American Mission Residence in Kessab, K1988.011.162



52.4 Destroyed Home in Ekizo Look, K1988.011.163



52.5 Rev. Eskijian's Destroyed Parsonage in Ekizolook, K1988.011.164



52.6 Destroyed Girls' High School in Kessab, K1988.011.166



52.7 West End of Destroyed American Girls' High School in Kessab, K1988.011.168



52.8 Interior of Destroyed American Girls' High School in Kessab, K1988.011.169



52.9 Interior of Destroyed in Kessab Church, K1988.011.170



52.10 Destroyed Home in Kessab, K1988.011.171



52.11 Panorama of Beyrias, K1988.011.172



52.12 Kessab in Ruins, K1988.011.174



52.13 Destroyed Homes in Kessab, K1988.011.176



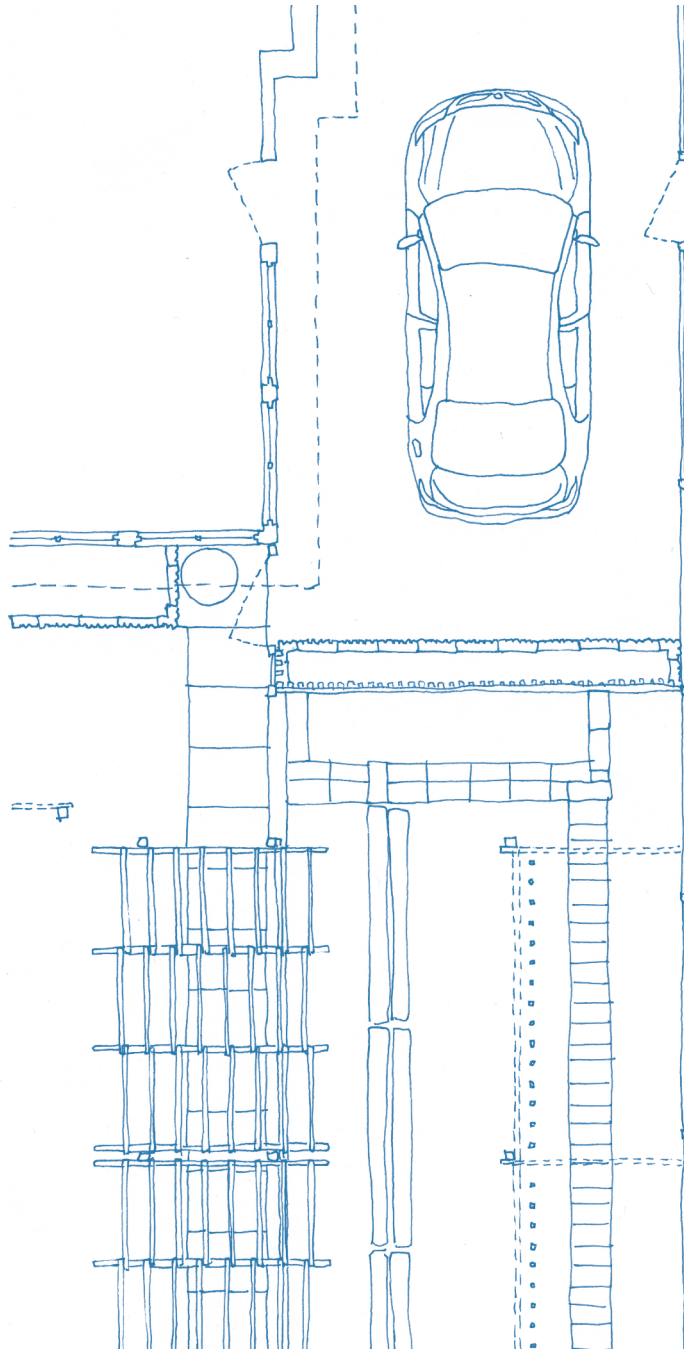
52.14 Burned Kessab Protestant Church, K1988.011.198



52.15 Burned American Mission Residence in Kessab, K1988.011.199

PART FOUR

Toyota Camry



53. Plan of Driveway and Garden 1:75. 



54. Interior of Toyota Camry in Driveway

STORE OWNER

A few weeks ago my grandfather had his last three teeth pulled; a subtle lisp now mixed with his accent and I held back a smile. We were on our way to meet his friend Moses from ‘back home,’ who owned a dental lab in North York, specializing in molding and fitting dentures. As I drove, his reminiscences departed Kessab and made their way to a young, enterprising life in Beirut.

...

At the age of 22, the prospect of inheriting an agrarian life on his family’s tobacco field didn’t interest my grandfather; off-seasons were unproductive and the pay was low. He heard about Lebanon’s burgeoning economy from his eldest brother, Panos, who owned a pharmacy in Beirut. My grandfather decided to leave Kessab in 1956, to live in the ‘impossible city.’⁹⁹ He found a job in an Armenian-owned workshop—as a carpenter’s assistant—building casings for windows and doors. Although he went back to Kessab after two years, unhappy with the people he worked for.

...

Instead of returning to farm work, though, he opened a small thrift shop in town, selling American clothes that had been sent to Syria. He enjoyed being his own boss and every evening his friends from Karadouran would come visit. “I didn’t know your grandmother at the time,” he said with a toothless grin, “but, she remembers her mother complaining about ‘Karadouran people coming to Kessab.’” He started to laugh. “She would say: ‘they’re always out late drinking and singing too loud!’ That was me!”

...

Two years went by before he heard about a vacant shop front back in Beirut, a few doors down from Panos’ pharmacy. He purchased the shop, moved back to the city, and started a new business: making and selling shoes. His younger brother, Avo, joined him in Beirut—working night shifts at their brother’s pharmacy—and they rented a house together nearby. Not long after, the two brothers moved their parents and sister from Karadouran into the house with them. “Your grandmother came to live with me and my family in Haret Hreik* when we married, in 1966,” he said, “those were the best years of my life. Beirut was golden.”

...

“How was the drive?” my grandmother asked when we arrived home. I told her it was good—the weather was nice and the roads were clear. I explained we would need to go back next week, after the molds were finished, to have the dentures properly fitted.

[99] Jan Morris, “The Impossible City: Beirut, 1956,” in *Among the Cities* (1963; repr., New York: Viking, 1985) 52–58.

* Haret Hreik was a predominantly Maronite neighbourhood in south-western Beirut. My grandfather remembers it as a busy, cosmopolitan place of commerce. However, the area became an early target when the city was being divided along sectarian lines during the civil war.



55. Unknown Author A Meal with Friends in Kessab [1959] (63.5×88.9mm).

My grandfather (on the left in the top image and second from the left in the bottom image) sharing a meal with friends in Kessab.

In the top image, they appear to be drinking *tabn*, the Armenian word for a yogurt-based drink popular in Eastern Europe and Western Asia. He still drinks *tabn* to this day, making his own yogurt from scratch and adding salt and ice.



STORE OWNER (CONT.)

Our conversation paused as the traffic ahead of us slowed to investigate the source of a dark, billowing smoke. As my grandfather and I approached, we saw the cab of a semi-truck on the opposite shoulder of the highway; flames were bursting from its engine. The cab looked empty, but before I could locate the driver my eyes returned to the road in front of me and the accident soon disappeared from my rear-view mirror.

...

By 1972 my grandfather's shoe store had been in operation for over a decade. This changed when an Armenian man from Aleppo approached him with a business proposal: selling batteries and other electronic parts for automobiles. Half of the shop was used to test the partnership and, after a year, the entire shop was converted for the new wares. The venture proved profitable but mounting political tensions would make closure inescapable.

...

My grandfather woke up on a spring morning in 1975 to a strange smell in the air—it was the burning smell of battery acid. A bomb had been placed in his store overnight. The explosion destroyed the entire block of shops, including his brother's pharmacy, a bookstore, and a bakery. He explained to me that the Palestinian Liberation Army (PLO) based their operations out of the two refugee encampments in the city, one of which was only a five minute walk from his store. The group had been targeting Christian-owned businesses in response to escalating outbreaks between the Lebanese National Movement and the Phalanges.*

...

A lull followed the initial conflicts and my grandfather rebuilt his shop, unaware that war had only just begun. Before moving back, though, he was convinced to give the space to his brother's pharmacy instead, while the old pharmacy was being reconstructed. In the meantime, he and his family—which now included four sons and a fifth on the way—relocated to East Beirut.

...

The city's golden years had ended. 1975 represented the first of 15 years of civil war in Lebanon. The country's capital was transformed into a sectarian battlefield, divided into the Christian East and Muslim West. Hotels became sniper towers, car parks became bunkers, and urban warfare was indiscriminate of civilians. Nonetheless, daily life would go on in the midst of sporadic, violent clashes between a complex web of militant gangs.¹⁰⁰

* While the composition of belligerents in the Lebanese civil war is highly complex, the two early, major aggressors were the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and the Kataeb party (known as the Phalanges in English). The former was a leftist, pan-Arabist, and Syrian-Nationalist party who supported the PLO, while the latter were a right-wing, national socialist party modelled on the Italian Fascists.

[100] Hiba Bou Akar, *For the War Yet to Come: Planning Beirut's Frontiers* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 11–34.



56. Unknown Author Shoe Store in Haret Hreik [1968] (92×139.7mm).

The front desk of my grandfather's shoe store. He is pictured here with one of his two employees.



57. Unknown Author Store After Being Converted to Sell Vehicle Batteries [1973] (92×139.7mm).

After more than a decade selling shoes in the southwestern suburb of Haret Hreik, my grandfather converted his shop to sell automobile batteries and other electronic components for cars.

TAXI DRIVER

In the summer of 1975, my grandfather and his family returned to Kessab—as they had done every year. He was in search of a new source of income and soon discovered he had something few others in Kessab had: a car. He started driving people, in his '58 Volkswagen sedan, between Kessab and Latakia. The trips started to get longer and by the end of summer, many families in Kessab were migrating back to Beirut for work and school.

...

My grandfather found himself crossing the border more frequently. After about a year, he purchased an official taxi license from the Lebanese government and a grey '65 Mercedes 190. He continued to drive for the next 13 years. His days started early, at 5:00 in the morning. He would leave Beirut by 6:00 with five passengers. He took the coastal road to Latakia, sometimes taking the mountain-route around Tripoli when there was fighting. It was a 250km drive, but it would take five hours with the border crossing and military checkpoints. He would wait in Latakia for a couple hours, picking up another full car of passengers before heading back to Beirut, getting home after dinner. He remembers keeping a small book to keep track of his passengers' information. At the border, he would give the guards his book and they would copy the information by hand into a much larger leather-bound book.

...

While the civil war began as a secular political issue, political parties soon became reliant on religious affiliations to motivate a supportive base.¹⁰¹ Gangs of militant factions had individual ideologies and loose connections with one another but were principally divided between the Muslim West and the Christian East.¹⁰² The Armenians in Lebanon were Christian in religious belief, but aligned more with the socialist ideologies of the Muslim groups. As a result they existed in a uniquely neutral position, hesitant to commit to any one side.¹⁰³ “Muslim and Christian people both liked the Armenians during the war,” my grandfather told me, “so it was easier for me to drive between East and West Beirut.”

...

We said goodbye and I thanked Moses for the coffee. My grandfather started to take out his wallet but Moses pushed back immediately, saying he would not accept money for the dentures. Voices rose, but eventually, they were accepted without payment; a favour for the years my grandfather drove Moses' family between Kessab and Beirut.

[101] Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A Modern History of Lebanon* (London: Pluto, 2007) 157–90.

[102] Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Nation Books, 1990), xxii.

[103] Vicken Cheterian, “Armenians in Middle Eastern Wars: From ‘Positive Neutrality’ to ‘Impossible Neutrality,’” *Agos*, November 8, 2017, <http://www.agos.com.tr/en/article/19650/armenians-in-middle-eastern-wars-from-positive-neutrality-to-impossible-neutrality>.



58. Unknown Author Dropping Passenger Off in Beirut [1980] (101.6×152.4mm).

My grandfather has fond memories of driving a taxi between Latakia and Beirut. He told me he drove for a short time exclusively in downtown Beirut, known locally as a *servees*, but preferred the long drives along the Mediterranean coast. He enjoyed meeting new people everyday and conversing in Arabic or Armenian.

Shown above is my grandfather, standing next to his Mercedes 190 somewhere in downtown Beirut during the civil war. He could not remember who the passenger he was dropping off was or why the photograph was taken, but he did point out the military trucks loaded with sandbags and desolate streets in the background.

CHAUFFEUR

One evening I asked if my grandfather ever drove anything other than people. My grandmother quickly jumped to reply: “Of course! You can’t make too much money just driving people across the border.” A sharp “Shush!” came from across the table and I glanced over inconspicuously. My grandfather was staring at her, unimpressed. “What *kind* of stuff?” I asked, somewhat cautiously. “Oh, all sorts of stuff,” my grandmother replied, pretending to not hear my grandfather, “like pomegranate juice and laundry detergent. Things in Syria are much cheaper than in Beirut.” The subject quickly changed but the moment stayed in my mind.

...

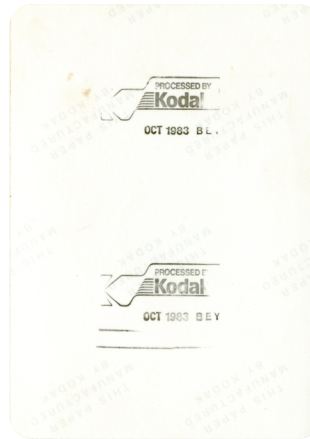
It wasn’t until my grandfather and I were driving home months later—after getting his dentures adjusted—that his years as a taxi driver during Lebanon’s civil war came up again. He told me driving people between Beirut and Latakia was enough for the family to get by, but it was the transportation of goods that really made money. Sometimes it would be barrels of pomegranate juice or fresh fish delivered to a business owner in Beirut. Other times he would bring things to Syria that could only be found in Beirut; he told me about a shipment of steel garden spades, made in France, that he brought to Kessab. And twice a week he would take Kodak film negatives back to Lebanon with him, since the only colour developing services were done in West Beirut.

...

The money he was able to make by delivering goods across the border allowed him to buy more land in the Karadouran valley. When the war swelled and the family had to relocate to Kessab for an entire school year, he was able to rebuild his childhood home to accommodate them. He explained that it was difficult to buy building material during the war and most of the steel rebar and concrete was purchased on the black market. The house was finished in 1980, built in the same footprint as the one his father built sixty years prior.

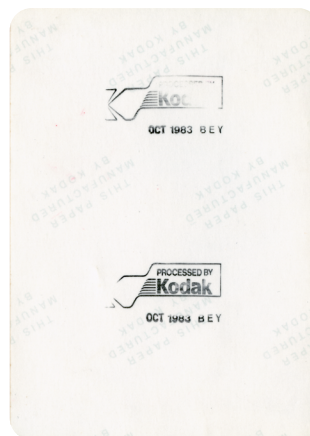
...

“In my village, everyone had a second name,” my grandfather said—we were almost home now. “My best friend was Maybouhz, which means mayor. And there were our neighbours Stalin and Gandhi.” (I’ve seen pictures and their likenesses are truly unsettling.) I asked if he had a nickname. “I was the only taxi driver in Kessab, so sometimes they would call me ‘Chauffeur Zaven’,” he said. I told him that I was the chauffeur now and he laughed.



**59. Unknown Author
Walking into the Karadouran
Valley from Home 1983**
(88.9×123.8mm).

A photograph showing two of my uncles walking down a newly constructed road that my grandfather commissioned. The gravel road connected his home and all of his neighbours' homes on the mountainside to the main arterial road in the Karadouran valley.



**60. Unknown Author
Boxing Apple Harvest for
Sale 1983 (88.9×123.8mm).**

A photograph showing my grandmother and her mother-in-law, boxing the apples they harvested that year to sell in Latakia. The backside of this and the previous photograph show they were processed in Beirut, during one of my grandfather's bi-weekly trips to West Beirut.



**61. Unknown Author
Sorting and Boxing Apple
Harvest for Sale 1983[?]**
(101.6×146mm).

Two of my uncles and my grandfather's mother, sorting apples for sale. They are leaning against the recently renovated concrete house my grandfather rebuilt during the civil war. In the background are the original stone stairs of my grandfather's uncle's half of the house. The roof had caved-in, making it unusable.

FOUNDRY LABOURER

Every two weeks I drive my grandmother to the only Arabic grocery in Cambridge: Shaan Food and Fresh Meat. It's on Hespeler road—a three-lane thoroughfare packed with speeding commuters and tractor-trailers, located in a post-industrial labyrinth that connects Galt to the Trans-Canada highway. Neither of my grandparents like driving out here.

...

"I haven't stopped working since I moved to Beirut," my grandmother said with an animated exhaustion when I asked about her life there, "everyday I would do the shopping, cooking, cleaning, and laundry. And when your grandfather left, no one was making money. For three years I had to take care of everything by myself!"

...

She remembers the date my grandfather flew to America—January 16, 1986—because it was his birthday. He went to California first on a visitor visa, but was told it was a difficult time to immigrate and that he should try Canada instead. There was a small community of Kessabtsi in Cambridge at the time and he stayed in an apartment with my grandmother's cousin, Joseph. After six months he started to work with Joseph at a brass foundry where they made bridle hardware for the local Mennonites.

...

In 1989, during a phone call from Beirut to Cambridge, my grandmother said they needed to leave Lebanon immediately.* The sun was still up when she and her five sons left their apartment, but it was dusk by the time they boarded a dinghy at Jounieh's port. They were ferried to a larger vessel further out in the Mediterranean where over a hundred people sat crowded below deck. The boat was used for transporting livestock—she still remembers the smell. They travelled for half an hour before they reached a third boat, a ferry owned by the Cyprus government. By this time the sun had gone down and they were told to jump from one boat to the other. She remembers hearing a splash when one of my uncles was jumping. "Was it a bag, or a body?" a sailor shouted in Arabic, "A bag!" another yelled back. They were in Nicosia by morning.

...

They stayed in Cyprus for a month before they were cleared as refugees and were able to fly to Canada. They landed at Pearson airport, where my grandfather waited to greet them. He drove them back to their new home in Cambridge, Ontario—getting off the highway at the Hespeler road exit.

* By 1989, a military government had formed in East Beirut, headed by interim Prime Minister Micheal Aoun. A war was declared by Aoun on the Syrian presence in Lebanon and East Beirut soon came under constant artillery fire from the Syrian military. Most of East Beirut was destroyed at this time and many Christians fled the country.



62. Unknown Author(s)
Marie Titizian in Beirut
1983–1989 (101.6×152.4mm).

Photos of my grand-mother taking care of her five sons in Beirut during the civil war, in the years leading up to their escape to Canada.



FACTORY WORKER (HOUSE TWO)

“Before this Arabic store opened, when we first came here, our pita bread came all the way from Windsor!” my grandmother said on our way to Shaan’s. “There was one guy here, Haroot. He would take orders from all the Armenian people in Cambridge and, once a month, we would go pick up our bread from his garage. Cambridge has changed so much.”

...

When my grandmother arrived in Canada, she moved into the apartment with my grandfather and Joseph moved out to make room for the family. She found a job, soon after, at a distribution facility applying price-tags to childrens’ books, on the recommendation of an Armenian friend who also worked there.

...

The family moved out of their cramped apartment in 1991 and bought a house—the same one they live in today. It was built in the early 70’s as a parsonage for the Portuguese-language Baptist church next door. They had saved a small amount through work, but were only able to cover the down payment by selling all their land in Karadouran; an Armenian lawyer in Cambridge did all the legal paperwork pro bono.

...

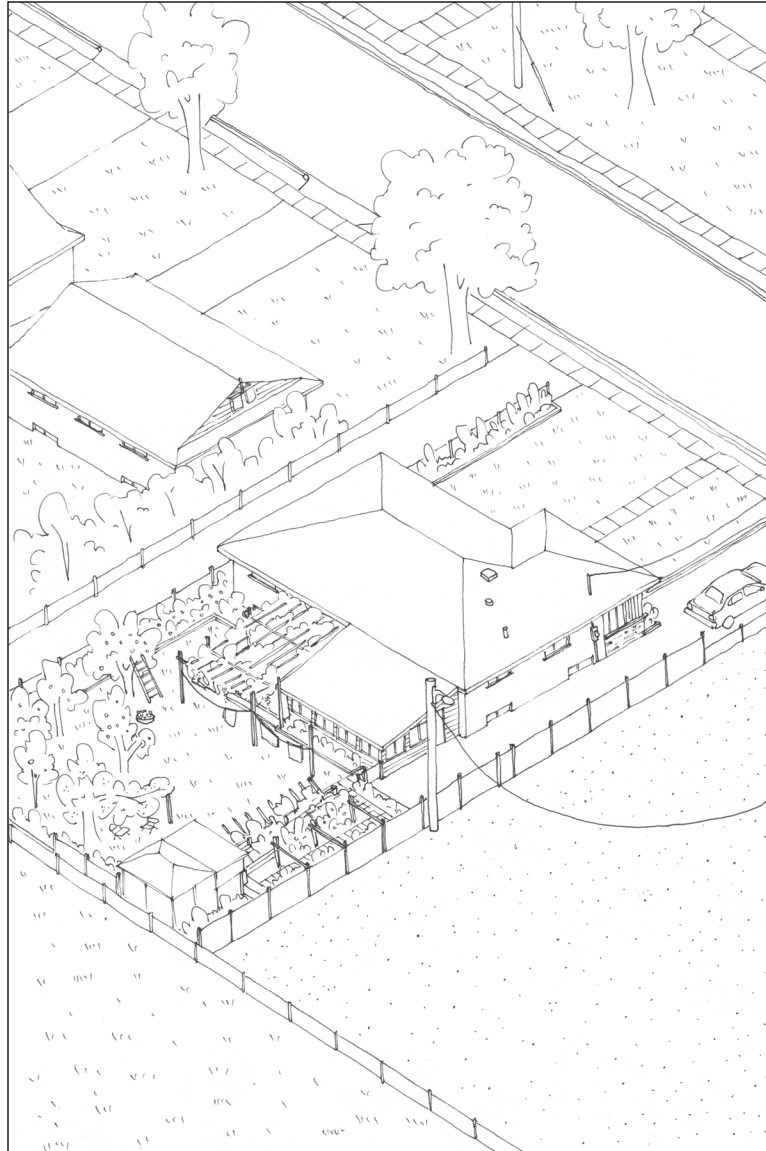
After seven years my grandmother took a leave of absence with workers’ compensation due to carpal tunnel that had developed in her right hand. She was off for about a year, undertaking two surgeries—and avoiding a mass layoff of permanent employees—before being re-hired. She would only be employed there for another six months, though, after declining book sales forced the Golden Press publishing company to restructure. The facility in Cambridge closed down and relocated its operations to Mexico.

...

My grandfather had since retired and my grandmother was in search of a new job. In 1997 my grandmother was hired by an automotive factory, Bendoll, where she worked on an assembly line for the next 13 years before retiring herself. It was here, she told me, that she really learned English. She jokes that the workers there taught it to each other, even though none of them spoke it.

...

“Turn left here, at the Scotiabank,” my grandmother said—never failing to remind me of the turn. We stepped into the grocery and she waved at the owner. I went to fill our cart with pita bread and she disappeared into a lane to grab *za’atar* and *balloumi*.



63. Galt House 2021
(1:400).

An axonometric sketch of the house my grandparents bought after three years in Cambridge, Ontario, and the principal site of this research project.

The home was built in the early 1970's, as a parsonage for the Portuguese-speaking Baptist church—located on the opposite side of the gravel lot in the bottom right.

In the first years after moving in, my grandparents built garden beds, planted grapevines and fruit trees, and constructed a solarium addition, trellis, and shed.

It is here, in a suburban plot of land in Galt that they have translated and recreated a small piece of Kessab.

Labour, Commerce & Favours

From the viewpoint of a private property economy, the “gift” is deemed to be “free” because we obtain it free of charge, at no cost. But in the gift economy, gifts are not free. The essence of the gift is that it creates a set of relationships. The currency of a gift economy is, at its root, reciprocity.

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

DESPITE ITS REMOTENESS, Kessab’s economic landscape has seen a radical transformation in the past two hundred years: from subsistence, to an open economy of agriculture, trade, and tourism. These economies are bound to the town and its environs, but the systems of modern capitalism have eroded a reliance on traditional knowledge; living off and for the land has become an unsustainable practice. This was the motivation for many Kessabtsi to leave their homes in search for opportunity elsewhere, to escape from the oppressive socio-economic conditions imposed by neoliberal governments. In the migration of a diaspora, alternative economies have emerged. These Other economies—of gifts, favours, and remittance—operate at the margins of a capitalist framework. They appropriate state infrastructure to move matter—whether photographs, pomegranate juice, pita bread, or people—across state borders and along networks of relation. The stories of moving matter are the stories of the diaspora. And these stories are told through the means that move matter and the matter they move.

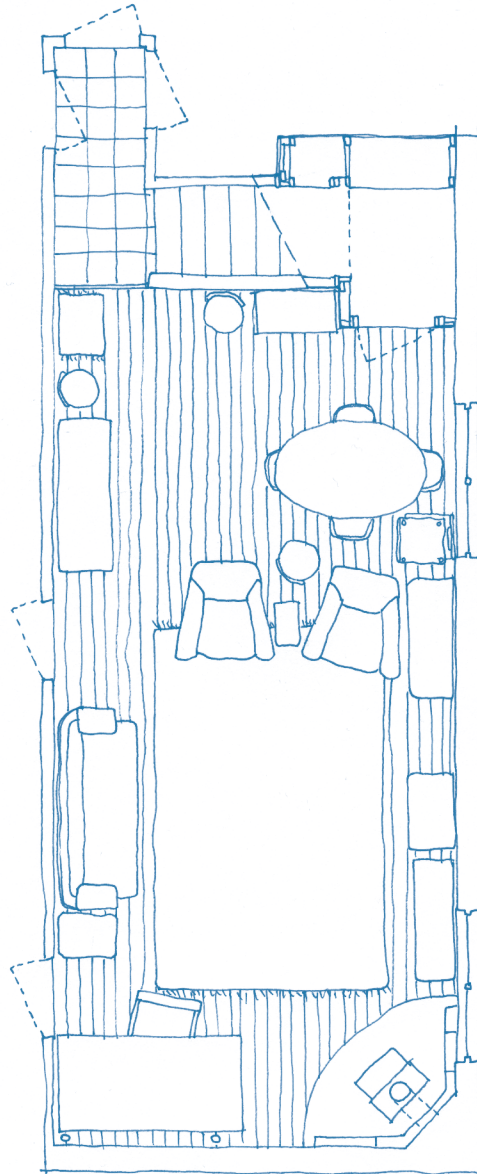
64. Unknown Author Building a Well in Karadouran 1986[?]. ▶

One of the major community projects that my father remembers participating in when he was younger was the construction of a well in the Karadouran valley. Friends, family, and neighbours gathered to complete the project together.



PART FIVE

Basement



65. Plan of Basement 1:75. ↻



66. Interior of Basement

TWO BOOKS

I felt that familiar apprehension wash over me as another headache faded into focus. I forgot to wear my glasses—again. Today wasn't particularly productive or reassuring either. The books I wanted to read were being shipped, online references were improperly cited or nonexistent, and I was awaiting email replies that may never come. I needed a distraction.

...

I got up from my desk and looked around. The messy basement-turned-storeroom had become a project of mine after the pandemic-induced facility closures were extended into the next semester. My cleaning campaign started on the side closest to my bedroom, where I uncovered a large desk that would be my new workspace. I was slowly making my way to the other end of the room; continuing each time I needed a break from my screen.

...

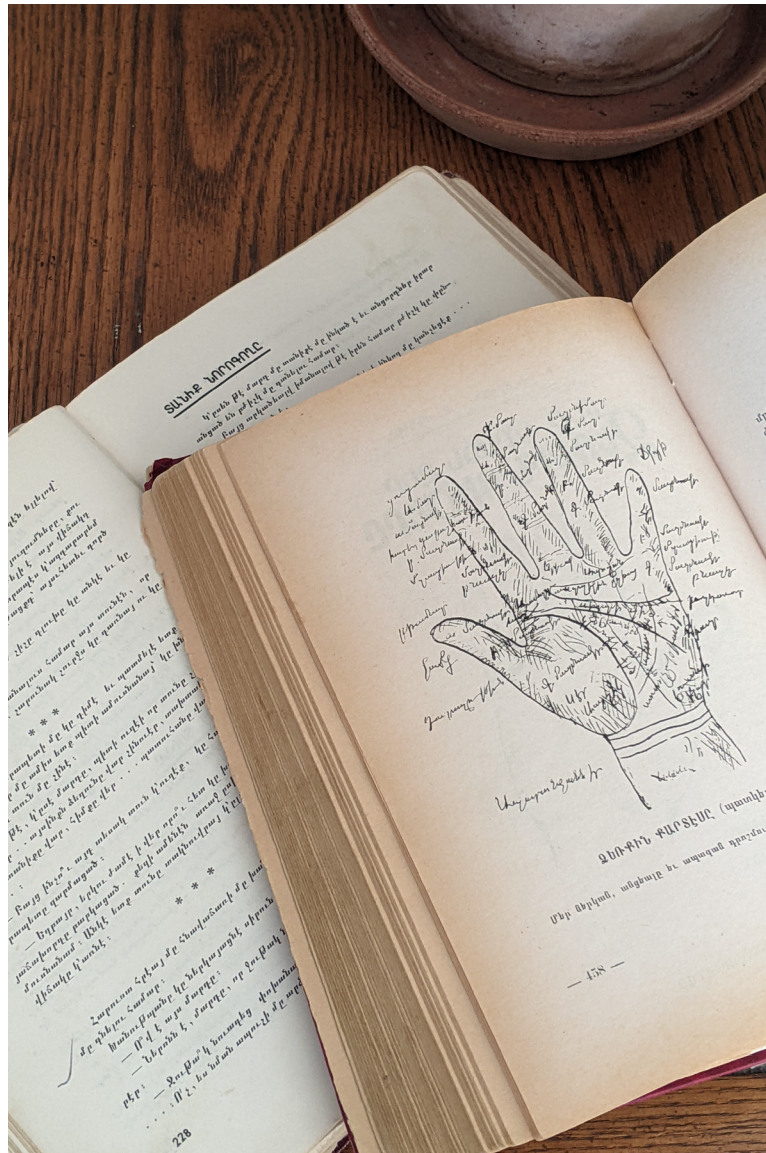
I sat on the floor, returning to a box I discovered beneath an unused dining table. It was a collection of things decidedly grouped together into this box over the last 30 years; it was an assortment of VCR tapes, unreturned library books, CD's, novels, and textbooks. I sorted the contents into piles around me.

...

I was surprised when two books looked especially different from the rest. They were thick, old hardcovers; the spines were broken and taped; and, when I opened them, I saw both were printed in the Armenian alphabet. The first had curious illustrations of human hands while the other had dog-eared pages, directing me to certain paragraphs marked in pencil. Whatever their contents—I thought to myself—they must be important. (Later, I would learn that these were the only two books my grandparents brought with them to Canada.)

...

I set the books down in front of my grandparents and they each picked one up. One belonged to her and the other to him. My grandmother described her book as she flipped through it. It was a subject encyclopedia on the meaning of dreams, birth-dates, and palm creases—not necessarily the rare artifact of Kessab I was expecting. I shared a recent dream but her explanation was interrupted when my grandfather burst into laughter. He spoke to my grandmother in Armenian with a slow, careful cadence. He was looking closely at one of the dog-eared pages and suddenly they laughed together. His book, he told me, was a book of jokes.



67. Two Books

Two books I discovered as I cleaned the basement to make space for a new work-space during the pandemic. One belonged to my grandmother and the other to my grandfather.

TWO MORE BOOKS

Each day, in the early afternoon, my grandparents rest. I could see the fatigue in my grandfather's eyes as he got up from the table and walked to his bedroom; his day started early this morning, in the garden, turning compost into the soil before the winter frost. My grandmother and I chatted as we cleared the table.

...

"Do you have any books about Kessab?" I asked—the two books I found earlier that month were still on my mind. "We have some," she said, thinking about where they might be. She walked over to a closet near the front door and on the shelf, above the winter jackets, was a small stack of printed matter. She handed me the ephemera, recalling their contents as she pulled them down. None of it was *from* Kessab, but it was all *about* Kessab: church pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and a couple publications.

...

She read the title of one book to herself as she handed it to me: "This is a history of Kessab. But it's in Armenian." It was a red hardcover with a gold, foil-stamped title; I recognized the letters spelling 'Kessab' from a baseball cap my grandfather always wore in the garden. Before I opened the book she placed another one on top. This one was dark blue with silver lettering—it had the same title, but was published three years after the first. (A second volume, not edition.)

...

I set the books down on the table and opened them. I couldn't understand any of the text, but an illustration caught my eye as I leafed through. The first book had only a few illustrations—the second had many more. They were all done in a similar hand-drawn style, mostly divided into two categories: traditional objects (like gardening tools, hunting gear, and cookware) and houses. There were sketches of construction details, a typical interior, and even typological distinctions between houses in the town and those in the villages. There was also a fold-out map in the back that apparently named the different villages and neighbourhoods.

...

I asked if she could translate the image descriptions for me, but some of the more specific architectural terminology was beyond her English. And before we were able to get through a page the phone rang. Her sister calls around this time each day and they talk while my grandfather naps. I brought my newfound research material downstairs and continued to study the sketches.



68. Two More Books

Two volumes of a three-volume publication documenting the history of Kessab, written in Armenian; the contents include illustrations of the traditional, household objects, housing typologies, and a foldout map of the region.

CARDBOARD BOX

I found a box of old photographs the other day, on the bottom shelf of a cabinet in the basement. It was a cardboard box: bent, creased, and ripped. Judging by the packing tape it was shipped here, but the sender's name and address had been removed. Company branding was printed on each face in dark blue ink:

Champion® Select Natural Thompson Seedless Raisins. National Raisin Co. Fowler, California, 93626.

Fowler, I looked up, is a small agricultural community in Fresno County and I remember hearing my grandmother talk about lots of Kessabtsi, including her sister, migrating to Fresno.

...

When I asked about the box, my grandmother told me her sister worked at the National Raisin Company's packing facility after immigrating from Syria. She has since retired, but each year around Christmas she would send a package to Canada from the shipping department. A box like this would arrive every December filled with homemade *sujuk*, *bastirma*, dried fruits, and spices.

...

Now it was full of photo envelopes—the kind that you used to get from kiosks in suburban supermarkets. I noticed most of them were processed at the Zehrs here in Cambridge, but their glossy, purple covers made two yellow shipping envelopes stand out. One was addressed to North Hollywood and the other to Fowler. Each had been stamped by the locations they travelled through, partially tracking their voyages from Kessab.

...

When I asked my grandmother why she didn't bring these photographs with her when she left Beirut, she told me they were only allowed one small bag each on the ship that smuggled them to Cyprus. They filled their bags with clothes instead, and a box of mementos was left with friends in Kessab, to be sent to Canada when they had settled or picked up if they ever returned.

...

Over time, these things would make their way here to Cambridge. The envelopes I was looking at were sent to the Kessabtsi Education Union in California. Although my grandmother couldn't remember how the envelopes made their way to this house—possibly packed in a suitcase after visiting family in Fowler or shipped alongside dried figs, dates, and raisins.



69. Cardboard Box

Sent from the National Raisin Co. distribution facility in Fowler, California, to Cambridge, Ontario. The box was originally full of dried fruits, foods, and spices hard to find in Cambridge, now it is used to hold a collection of photo envelopes.

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS

I turned the envelopes upside down and a messy stack of photographs fell into my hand. I moved from my desk to the floor and spread them out over a large, white blanket; I added the other photographs I found in an old biscuit tin earlier that week. This was it, all the photographs my grandparents had of over 50 years of life between Syria and Lebanon. I had the urge to sort them.

...

I set aside the studio portraits first and separated the monochrome prints from the colour ones. Then I sorted them by size, the oldest photographs were the smallest and most fragile; they felt thin and some were ripped from previous handling. Then I went through each set in more detail, considering subject matter, location, exposure, and finish. I saw my grandfather as a young man, on hunting trips in the mountains; my grandmother, as a young woman, sipping coffee in the sun; and my father, with a mischievous smile, exploring the village with his brothers.

...

It wasn't until one particular image caught my eye that I turned it over—this was an exciting development and I turned them all over. Most had watermarks of the paper type they were printed on, allowing me to further resolve my patchwork. Some of the older ones were stamped and numbered by the shop that developed them, placing their processing in Beirut, Latakia, or Kessab. There were also a handful of photographs that had handwritten notes which, after translation, provided me with a date, a location, and the people or event. These annotations validated the piles I was making, clarified the ones that escaped me, and revised those I assumed were correct.

...

I stood up and looked at my piles, a sorry attempt at putting the past back together. I had hoped that I would be able to, in some way, reconstruct a clear picture of the place I had been researching, but in the end my view was still limited.

...

I carefully collected the photographs and brought them upstairs to show my grandparents what I had found. They immediately spread the organized stack of images out on the table, passing certain photographs between one another and setting others aside, until they once again became a messy pile. Certain images would spark a memory and my grandparents would call my attention, filling in the space of missing photographs with their stories.



70. Family Photographs

Stacks of family photographs organized by colour, size, and paper type.

Photographs are taken in Kessab, Aleppo, and Beirut. Family photographs, landscapes, portraits, and candid shots create a fragmented mosaic of ephemeral moments over 50 years.

DIRECTORY

Some of my earliest memories of this house are of a cubbyhole under the stairs. It was always full of stuff, but I was usually too preoccupied with my game of hide-and-seek to look at what I was hiding next to. I turned the brass doorknob and stepped inside. It was smaller than I remembered and the light switch was on the left—I could have sworn it was on the right.

...

There was a nostalgic click when I pulled down on the string to turn the exposed incandescent bulb on. With some work, I could move most of what I had cleaned into here, finishing my project of turning the basement into a workspace. I was clearing space from a bookshelf in the back when I realized that every book I pulled out belonged to the same set—nothing I had seen in this house so far had been so intentionally collected. Each book had a date, one for every year since 1985. They all had the same title as well: *Kessabtzi in United States and Canada: Directory - Yearbook*. (The title was appended with “and Australia,” in 1993 and “the United Arab Emirates” was added in 2001, but removed in 2004. ‘Kessabtzi’ was revised to ‘Kessabtsi’ in 2004 as well.)

...

I was distracted by the set and started flipping through them. They all had a similar format, alternating between Armenian and English text. The directories were introduced with a short note from the editor, reflecting on the past year and recounting the efforts made by the Kessab Educational Association of Los Angeles—the non-profit corporation that organized and published the serial. Following the introduction was the directory itself—a voluntary list of every name, address, and contact information of Kessabtsi in diaspora. Then there were subsequent sections of births, graduations, weddings, anniversaries, and obituaries. Most of the books had a section dedicated to articles and poetry submitted by members of the diaspora, too. Finally, each directory concluded with a list of donors.

...

I was called upstairs for dinner and when I sat down at the table I saw a book in the stack of recent mail. It was this year’s directory, yet to be retired to the bookshelf downstairs. “Mike (Titizian) dropped this off for us today,” my grandmother said when I asked about it. “He brings us one each year. His father, Joseph, was the first Kessabtsi in Cambridge and their family helped us a lot when we arrived.”



71. Kessabtzis Directory/ Yearbooks

Found on a shelf at the back of a small cubbyhole under the stairs. Every Kessabtzis directory since 1985 were archived here, except for the most recent edition, which was still being read upstairs.

Translating Matter

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.

—Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*

*I*T IS THE CULTURAL ARTIFACTS decidedly kept for posterity—not by institutions or historians, but by a diasporic body—which constitutes their collective memory. Contained within these objects are the stories of displacement and the search for a new home; they are the stories of errantry. These artifacts exist apart—fragments of a lost or forgotten whole—and are only found on the dusty bookshelves and basement cubbyholes of the diaspora. They are spread out around the world in cardboard boxes, photo albums, and picture frames. Together, they create a decentralized, diasporic archive. The doors of this archive, however, are not kept closed. They are always open to whoever will listen: guests, grandsons, and nosey researchers. Their contents are never handled with white gloves and they are constantly moved and used, broken and fixed. In this way the diasporic archive is also never still; its vibrant matter is constantly in translation. Family photographs, ephemera, and other printed matter are shipped across oceans and the fading memories of an old world are passed to younger generations in broken English. The artifacts found in the archive of domestic, diasporic space are the means to navigate a foreign world, through the translation of a familiar one.

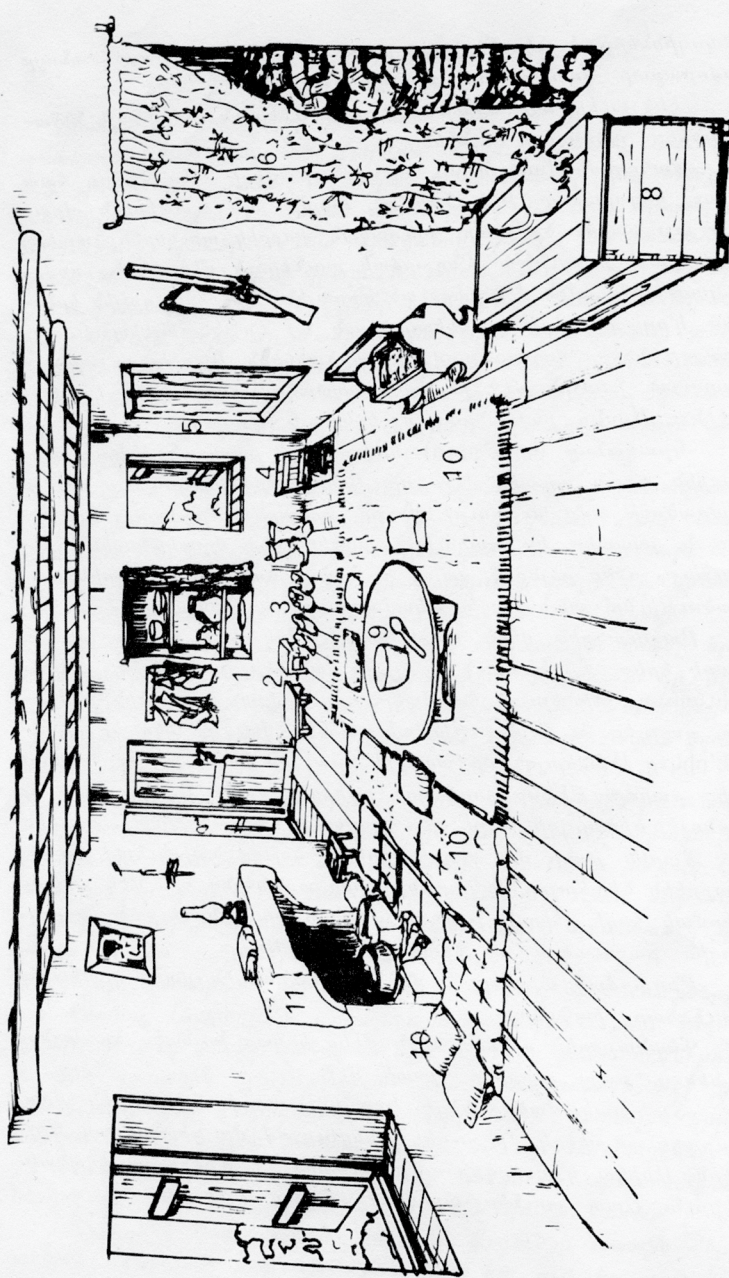
72. Hagop Cholakian Քեսաբ [Kessab] 1995–1998, (p. 88). ►

I undertook a short project of transliterating all of the illustrations across the first two volumes of Hagop Cholakian's history of Kessab. I printed out each image and sat across from my father, who read on one side of the page as I wrote on the other. Shown on the facing page is an illustration of a typical interior room of a traditional village home.

1. GUN-JAN-OVETZ (LOOK FOR CLAY VASE FOR WATER) 2. AUTO-ORBITAL (STOOLS/CHAIRS)
3. GO-SHEEK-NAL-SHEES) 4. (LEADER TO GO DOWNSTAIRS) 5. BAK-HIP-LAN (CURSOR)
6. (BEDDING IS STORED) 7. (CUB (CORNER) 8. SUND-OO-LA (STORAGE BOX) 9. SAE-PAN (TABLE)

VILLAGE HOME MAIN ROOM

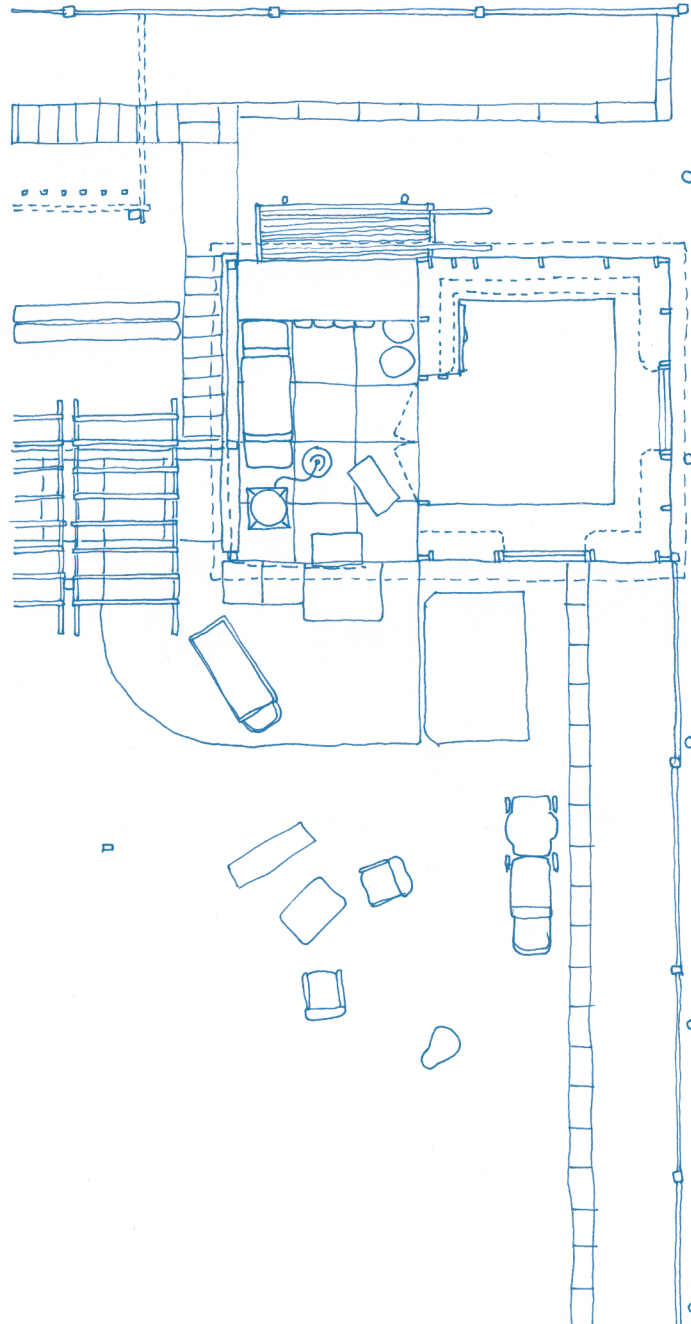
10. PILLOWS (FLOOR COVE LINK 11. FIREPLACE MANTLE
 * INTERIOR WALLS FINISHED IN BURNT LIME AND HAY



Գիւղական տան մը գլխաւոր սենեակը. 1.-Կտանոցը. 2.-Աթոռակներ. 3.-Կօշիկներ. 4.-Գետնայարկ տանող փեղկը. 5.-Պահարան մը. 6.-Անկողնոցը. 7.-Օրորոցը. 8.-Սնտուկը. 9.-Սեղանը. 10.-Բարձեր, օթոցներ եւ գետնի ծածկոցներ. 11.-Միւսնայի հարթակը (ճիւղախումբ):

PART SIX

Garden



73. Plan of Garden Shed 1:75. ↻



74. Fruit Trees and Garden Shed

COFFEE

I pulled into the driveway and brought the groceries inside. My grandfather had been expecting us and coffee was ready. We all sat down together in the backyard and my grandfather leaned back in his chair so his face was in the sun. “This house is a good house,” he said, “it is quiet and there is room all around us.”

...

The house, uniquely, does not have any abutting residential properties. It is one of only eight homes on the short street and belongs to a respite in the monotonous suburban grid. The backyard looks onto a large field owned by a public primary school; we often see children on recess sneaking up to the fence and snacking on the blackberries that grow through the chain link. On one side of the house is a laneway that connects the schoolyard to the street and on the other side is a gravel parking lot for one of the two churches that also front onto our street. Across the road is another parking lot, for a public community centre, which is adjoined to a recently defunct Catholic elementary school.

...

My grandparents bought the home from the Baptist church’s pastor and the first thing they did was build a garden. My grandfather took down a detached carport and cut the green, corrugated roof into panels. He lined the backyard fence with the polycarbonate, to keep small critters from burrowing under.

...

The planters were made with bricks, taken from a nearby construction site, when the strip-mall down the road was being demolished. He walked into the site and was directed to the construction manager, after asking for the bricks in his broken English, he was given as many as he wanted for free.

...

A year later, he renovated a basement workshop into a large kitchen. The one upstairs was much too small. It’s here that they prepare food from the garden, making dough from scratch each week, and storing jarred and picked vegetables. Shortly after the kitchen, my grandfather built the solarium and the deck next to it, where they now spend most of the year.

...

I took my last sip of coffee and turned my cup upside-down into its saucer, letting the sediment of grounds drip down the side of the ceramic. I passed the cup to my grandmother, who likes to read fortunes in the Rorschach pattern of dry coffee grounds.



75. Tomatoes, String Beans, and Blackberries

Each year the placement of vegetables rotate so that the same plant isn't growing in the same location. The year of this photograph was taken, tomatoes were planted against the fence, string beans across the footpath, and cucumbers on the other side of the beans. At the back fence are a couple bushes of blackberries, that children in the schoolyard will come pick during recess.



76. Watering the String Beans

My grandfather, watering the stalks of string beans. Shown in the foreground are the bricks reclaimed from the construction site of a strip mall nearby and behind the beans is the green, corrugated polycarbonate roofing that he used to skirt the perimeter of the garden, sealing it from critters.



77. Reading Fortunes in the Coffee

Ever since I was young, when one of my parents would finish their coffee, I would ask to flip their cups so that my grandmother could read my fortune in the coffee grounds. On this particular day, I was told that I would soon be visited by a man, and a bird.

HEIRLOOM TOMATOES

We walked through a messy carport and my grandfather called out our neighbour's name: "Gourgen? Gourgen!" No response.

...

Gourgen is one of the four men from Kessab who my grandfather meets regularly for coffee—though it has been less frequent since the pandemic began. He is a strongly-built farmer with a slow, thoughtful voice and a degree in agricultural science. Last week he invited us over to pick up heirloom tomato plants that he had grown from seeds over the winter. We wandered into his yard and I was confronted with a wild garden, quite unlike my grandparents' manicured planter beds.

...

Ahead of us was a shed that was clad in sheets of translucent polycarbonate. There was a hand-painted sign with Armenian letters hanging next to its closed door. Another shed was built close by, this one wrapped in chicken wire. I could see a cherry tree inside with a grapevine snaking around its trunk and string beans around the perimeter. Every inch of the yard was growing. Many of the plants I recognized from our own garden and many I did not. I saw stalks of kale towering over varieties of squash; young tomato plants growing in mounded rows of soil against trellises made of branches; and eggplants, zucchinis, and cucumbers weaving around one another. We wandered into a metal-frame gazebo while my grandfather continued to call Gourgen's name. An old radio was playing classical music and a framed photograph—an aerial image of a barn—hung from one of the posts.

...

After a few minutes, Gourgen stepped out of his home and welcomed us. He noticed I was inspecting the photograph and explained that it was the cattle farm he owned when he first came to Canada; now his many acres had been condensed into a suburban backyard. His garden was an experiment. He hoped to subsist year-round off the small plot of land. There were over 40 species growing on his property, he explained, as he toured me around. Rain barrels punctuated each downspout and compost bins stood at the threshold of the garden. There were even worms in the basement where he recycled food waste, he told me, and there were oak logs plugged with mushroom spores in the carport.

...

He led us over to the translucent shed, opened the door, and gestured us in to sit, saying he would be back shortly with coffee.



78. Exchanging Plants

In the polycarbonate shed, Gourgen handed my grandfather and I a couple heirloom tomato plants that he had grown from seeds over the winter to plant in our garden that spring.

FIGS

There were four white, plastic chairs arranged in each corner of the translucent shed. I had to lower my head as I stepped inside to avoid the leaves of a large sapling growing from a planter in the center. The ends of its branches were anchored to the ground by an orange thread that forced it to grow horizontally along the ceiling, rather than upward into it.

...

Planter beds traced the perimeter, which made the three meter by four meter space even smaller. There were a number of younger saplings with similar leaves growing all around us. Their three-pronged, dark-green leaves decorated the walls. Each sapling had a name tag in the soil next to them, but I could not read them. Looking past the plants I noticed that the entire interior was lined with Bubble Wrap. The layers of translucent sheathing created a quality of diffused light unlike anything I had seen before.

...

“What do you think of my greenhouse?” Gourgen said proudly, joining us with a tray of coffee. He set the coffee down on a low table between my grandparents and then walked to the far corner to prop open a small window. He pointed out the two space heaters and a thermometer on the central post. He didn’t have to worry about it now that it was spring, but he watched the temperature attentively through the winter.

...

I asked what the plants were. “They’re figs of course!” he said, pointing to the light-green and purple fruits hidden in the leaves around me. Gourgen walked around the perimeter and picked a couple figs from different plants, then handed them to me. “Tell us which one is best,” he asked me. No one seemed surprised when I noted my favourite, “That one was brought here all the way from Kessab!” he told me, “I am experimenting with different species, but the figs from Kessab are still the sweetest.”

...

We were getting up to leave when Gourgen told us to wait one minute. He pulled two large leaves from one of the fig trees and trimmed off a couple twigs, sharpening the smallest ones with his sicateur. He folded the two leaves into one another and pinned them together with the twigs. One large twig was pushed through the leaves’ stems to create a handle for a fig-leaf basket. He filled it with a handful of ripe figs and handed it to me. He then saw us to the front and we said goodbye.



79. Visiting the Greenhouse and Leaving with Figs

Gourgen propping open a small window in his Bubble Wrap-clad greenhouse. Figs can be seen growing off the stems of the saplings around him. The one's from Kessab are directly behind him.

In the bottom images, the basket made from the figs' leaves is shown. Small twigs pin the leaves together and we carried three figs home with us.



JANERIK

My grandmother was shaking her head as we looked up into one of the fruit trees. “I told him he’s too old for this, but he won’t listen!” she said to me. My grandfather had one foot on the top rung of a ladder and the other on a branch that was bending under his weight. Both of his hands were reaching upward, holding a lopper, trimming the new growth at the top of the tree. As the budding twigs fell into the grass, I collected them into piles and tied them into bundles with a knot he had taught me. I stacked the bundles into a corner of the yard to be set out on the curb.

...

There are six fruit trees in the backyard. The oldest is a sprawling cherry tree next to the shed that we spend most of the summer underneath. Next to the cherry tree is the youngest, an apricot tree; last year we found a single apricot, and were hoping for more this year. The pear and plum trees both bloom later so they usually aren’t affected by the late-spring frosts. The last two trees are a bit harder to explain. They both grow a sour green fruit that my grandparents call *janerik*.

A *janerik*, known in English as a greengage, is Persian dessert plum popular in the Levant and Middle East.

...

Apparently, these are two of the only *janerik* trees in the region. They were brought from Kessab as twig clippings in a suitcase. “This was before 9/11, though,” my grandmother said, “there is no way we could bring them now.” The branches were taken to California first then, the next year, they were brought here to Cambridge. My grandfather explained that the *janerik* was in the same family as an apricot and plum, but the climate here is too extreme for a sapling to survive on its own. He told me that the only way to get them to grow was to graft them onto established trunks. He pointed to a spot about halfway up each tree where a bloated knuckle in the trunk marked the spot where the *janerik* branches were grafted, one to an apricot and the other to a plum.

...

My grandfather got up and walked into the shed, coming back with a knife and black electrician’s tape and he took two thin branches from the pile of *janerik* trimmings. He made three or four push-cuts at the bottom of one, exposing the growth rings as he sharpened it into a wedge. On the second piece, he cut a straight slit, just as deep as the wedge and then carefully pushed the two twigs into one another, sealing them with tape. He told me it was important too have a very sharp knife. “In one or two years,” he explained to me, “small white flowers will blossom.”



80. Janerik

One of the janerik trees, grafted onto the trunk of a plum tree. The fruit is usually eaten before it ripens and is sweet and crunchy.



SARMA

The only thing in the backyard that is older than the cherry tree is a 30 year-old grapevine, planted when my grandparents first moved here. At the start of each spring, my grandfather prunes most of the growth from the previous year, leaving only the twigs that have developed a layer of dark, flaky bark. In the summer, the leaves grow into a vegetal ceiling that shades us on hot days and by late fall, the fruits are ready to pick.

...

One of the most celebrated annual events in Kessab—the feast of the Assumption of Mary, known locally as Asdvadzazin—revolves around grapes. It takes place over three days, beginning on the Sunday closest to the 15th of August. The first day the grapes are blessed by the Apostolic priest at the Orthodox church in Kessab. The whole town is present for the day, regardless of denomination. My grandparents said that they were not allowed to eat any grapes before this day. The second day starts in Eskouran, where sheep are slaughtered on the chapel steps and cooked in large cauldrons. *Harrissa*, a traditional hulled wheat dish, is cooked with the meat broth and made into patties that are distributed to everyone in attendance, which is often one or two thousand people. The third and final day is in Karadouran (though it previously took place in Barlaam’s monastery), where festivities go on into the night. It is spent eating, dancing, and singing.

...

One summer morning I was making coffee while my grandmother boiled water for her breakfast. She stood at the sink looking out the window and said “I wish I knew they were coming, I would have taken those yesterday.” I looked out and saw a landscape worker hired to manicure the church next door. They were trimming a vine plant growing along a chain link fence at the back of the building and I asked what she meant. “I use those leaves for *sarma*,” she said. I was confused, I thought *sarma* was made from our grape leaves. “In Kessab we use grape leaves, but the ones here are too thick,” she explained, “those ones are perfect.”

...

I asked what she would do and she told me there are still some leaves in the freezer from last year; there is also apparently a spot by the roundabout not far from here where the vine grows. She went on to explain the other plants nearby that she uses for salads and other foods. “There are lots of wild plants around here that you can eat,” she said, “but Canadian people don’t know.”

Sarma is a Turkish word which translates to ‘wrapped’. It is a popular food among countries in the former Ottoman Empire, between southeastern Europe and the Middle East. In the Kessab-Armenian context it typically refers to a bulgur-based filling rolled into boiled grape leaves or cabbage.



81. Making Sarma in Cambridge

The top image shows my grandmother, the following year, foraging wild leaves from the vine that grows behind the church. She explained that it was important to take the leaves at the ends of the vine, rather than the ones closer to the roots.

The middle image shows the leaves she collected. She will pour boiling water over them and let them sit and cook. She then freezes the leaves until she is ready to make *sarma*. They will last months in the freezer.

The bottom image shows my grandmother rolling the vine leaves into *sarma*, using a grain-based filling, spiced and seasoned with pomegranate juice before pressure cooking them for hours.



ERROB & PERPOR

The word *takna* translates to 'basin'. It is a large trough, two meters long and half a meter deep, used specifically for grape-treading. Traditional *takna*'s are carved from stone or timber while modern versions are cast in concrete. One side is slightly raised and the other has a spout at its base where the grape juice is collected.

Havura is a white mineral soil found in specific locations around Kessab. The main chemical ingredient is calcium hydroxide, otherwise known as slaked lime, which clarifies the more acidic elements in the grape juice by solidifying into a sediment which is then removed during the reduction process.

My grandmother waved good morning to me as I stepped through the open door onto the deck. She was sitting on a low stool, sorting the last clusters of grapes into a plastic bucket. My grandfather took the grapes and dumped them into a large plywood box he called a *takna*. Yellowjackets were buzzing around the sweet smell. The *takna* was set up against the railing at the edge of the deck, on top of a blue plastic tarp and surrounded by an assortment of bowls, sieves, buckets, and a pair of black rubber boots. They had started *massara*, an annual tradition in Kessab marking the end of summer with the preparation of *errob* and *perpor*.

...

When the *takna* was around three-quarters full, my grandmother reached into a plastic bag on the table and scooped out a handful of white powder, spreading it evenly over the grapes. I asked what it was but she didn't know the English name. My grandfather explained it was important for cleaning grapes. It wasn't exactly the same as what they used in Kessab—a specific white soil called *havura*—but it was similar. Curious, I looked into the bag. At the bottom was a label that read "Dolomite 65 AG," in bold green letters and a handwritten note that said "Lime made in U.S.A."

...

My grandfather slid the rubber boots on and my grandmother helped him into the *takna*. He held the railing of the deck to balance himself as he marched in place. My grandmother was crouched at the low end of the box, holding a bowl and a steel sieve, collecting the grape juice. When the bowl was full, she quickly exchanged it for another, not letting any of the juice go to waste. She handed the bowls to me as they filled up and I dumped them into a large steel pot in the grass. After about an hour, the pot was about three-quarters of the way full.

...

My grandfather and I each grabbed a handle of the pot and walked it to the shed, lifting it up onto a propane burner. We boarded up the open half of the shed to stop drafts and the first stage of reducing the grape juice into molasses began. The burner was turned to a low heat and was left to simmer for six hours. As the juice heated, a grey-green foam collected on the top that my grandfather intermittently removed with a steel skimmer. By evening, the foaming had stopped and the liquid's colour had turned to a dark brown. We transferred the liquid to two wide, shallow trays to cool overnight.

82. Day One of Massara

The top image shows the homemade *takna*, almost full with the grapes grown on the trellis above.

The middle image shows my grandfather stomping the grapes into a juice while my grandmother filters it into buckets before handing it to me.

The bottom image shows the large pot, filled with the grape juice, before it is brought to the shed to begin the first stage of boiling. This first stage is called *jermil*—an Arabic word which means ‘amber’, in reference to the low, sustained heating.



ERROB & PERPOR (CONT.)

The next morning we poured the liquid into a smaller pot. I helped my grandfather transfer the liquid, stopping short so that the remaining lime sediment that had collected at the bottom of the tray did not pour into the pot. My grandfather asked me to dump the excess liquid at the base of the *janerik* tree, saying it was good luck. Over the next few hours, the liquid would be boiled vigorously into a thick molasses called *errob*.

...

My grandfather stepped out of the shed holding two tools: one was the wide perforated spoon he used as a skimmer and the other was a dipper gourd called a *kernieb*. Once the liquid started to boil, it rose quickly in an agitated foam. As it rose, my grandfather plunged the *kernieb* into the pot, lifting the liquid up to cool slightly before slowly pouring it back. This ritual movement would make the foam descend and would need to be done two or three times a minute for the next three hours, a careful balance to avoid the liquid boiling over. If the liquid rose too quickly and was about to overflow, he would pour it from the *kernieb* through the perforated spoon and the foam would drop more quickly.

...

After a couple hours, the colour had changed to a dark, golden amber and the rising became more intense. Every few minutes my grandfather displaced a scoop of the liquid into one of the aluminum trays next to him. He would call my name after it had cooled and I would pour the liquid back into the pot keeping the foam from overflowing. When I set the tray back down, my grandmother passed her finger through the residual liquid, judging the consistency of the molasses based on how quickly it filled the line her finger made. “It’s ready now,” she said.

...

We poured the *errub* once more into the tray. “It’s time for *perpor* now!” my grandfather said excitedly. He stood over the tray with the *kernieb* and raised a scoop of the molasses up above his waist. He poured it back into the tray and the splashing molasses created a foam called *perpor*. My grandmother left, returning quickly with bowls and three small leaves in her hand. They were dried bay leaves, brought to her years ago from Kessab. She handed us each a leaf—the utensil used for eating *perpor*—and we all crouched around the tray, scooping up the sweet foam. After the treat, the remaining *errob* was collected into jars, to be stored through the winter, and added to the tea we would drink each evening.

A *kernieb* is grown with a long, straight handle and a round base. An opening is cut in the gourd and it is hollowed out then dried. The shell is thin and stiff, making the vessel both strong and lightweight. They have many uses in Kessab, especially historically; my grandparents explained they were used for watering young vegetables, in *massara*, and even for washing and bathing.



83. Day Two of Massara

My grandfather lifting the *kernieb* out of the pot and slowly pouring the *errob* back in. This is the second stage of the reduction process, called *boofril*—a word meaning 'stirred'. This motion is repeated over the three-hour process, to keep the liquid from boiling over.

Kessab in Cambridge

History [with a capital H] ends where the histories of those peoples once reputed to be without history come together. History is a highly functional fantasy of the West, originating at precisely the time when it alone “made” the history of the World... The time has come to ask oneself whether... the written record is “adequate” for the archives of collective memory?

— Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*

I’LL BE MOVING OUT SOON, I’ve decided. Though if I’ve learned anything in my time here it’s that Kessab isn’t so easily left behind; I’m bound to find it again, wherever I might end up next, in the daily rituals, recipes, and stories that I have learned. Before I leave I plan to make one last entry—my own addition to the diasporic archive. It is a farewell to the time spent beneath *janerik* trees, fig leaves, and grapevines; to the time spent with family, inheriting their histories, traditions, and ways of knowing the world; and to the time spent taking my time, learning how to listen in another language, and speaking without words. In short, to the time spent *growing*. The first part of this final entry is a document—this document—in all of its collected, compiled, and collated histories. I plan to print and bind it, to be left on a bookshelf in the basement—an archive to be archived. The second is an object, a parting gift for my grandparents. I have made a coffee spoon, carved from a branch of the *janerik* tree, in appreciation of the stories we shared over coffee each day. It is an artifact from Kessab, brought as a twig in a suitcase many years ago, grafted, grown, and now transformed once more. Both the document and the artifact have come to represent the intentions of this project for me: of discovering, studying, and documenting the lines of relations that connect one place to another. It is the story of finding Kessab *in* Cambridge.

84. A Parting Gift ►

A coffee spoon made from a branch of the *janerik* tree.



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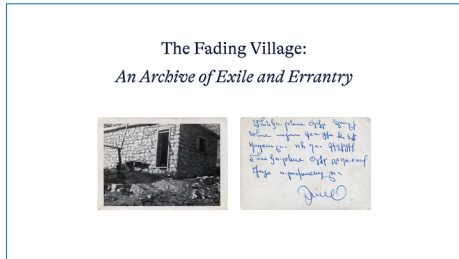
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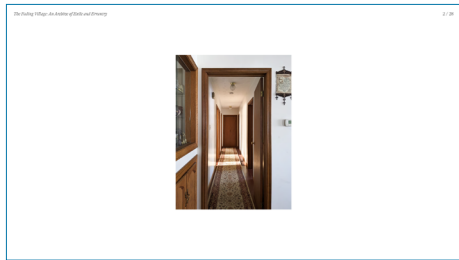
Appendix A: Thesis Defence Presentation

SLIDE 01/28



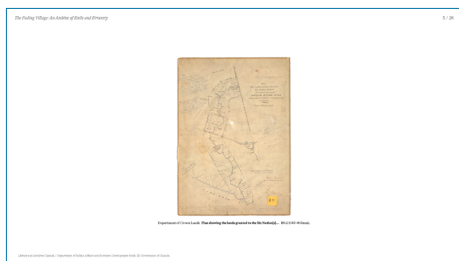
I wanted to start by thanking you all for being here. It's really nice to see some familiar faces and some familiar names. Part of me was optimistic that we might be able to do this in person, at least partially, but it looks like our virtual lives are going to go on a little bit longer. Though, in a way, It feels kind of appropriate that I present my research like this—from here.

SLIDE 02/28



For those of you who might not know, my thesis starts and ends in this house—it's the home of my grandparents—who were born in an Armenian diaspora village called Kessab in the mountains of northern western Syria; who migrated to Beirut, Lebanon, to raise a family and then fled as refugees, after almost 15 years of civil war, to finally settle here in Galt—in Cambridge, Ontario. Over the last two years, I have taken the time to get closer to the paternal half of my family, learning the stories, traditions, and recipes of a culture that, growing up, I had always kept at arm's length. In the end, my thesis has become an archive of my time here and the story of discovering Kessab in Cambridge. It is an assemblage of short writings paired with found artifacts, which document the subtle moments of inheritance. Those times when a new understanding about a place I have never been is unearthed and passed down to me. Through my work, I have explored the lines of relation that exist between my own identity, the written and oral histories that connect here to elsewhere, and the archival quality of domestic, diasporic space.

SLIDE 03/28



I should also mention that the land I am currently speaking to you from is the traditional territory of the neutral confederacy, the Anishinabe, and the Haudenshaunee. Galt is situated in block one of the Haldimand tract, land promised to the Six Nations, which includes 10km on either side of the grand river, beginning at lake Erie and ending at its source in Dundalk. While I have had the time, over the last two years, to learn the land practices and cultural heritage of my own ancestry, it has been at the expense of Indigenous folk who were violently forced to forget their own ways of knowing and were

displaced from the lands they called home. It is in this way, that both colonial settlers and immigrant settlers alike are complicit in the ongoing theft and occupation of Indigenous land. The fight for decolonization has, in part, been a legal fight against the transformation of land into property, through the act of drawing land treaties, surveys, surrenders, and other territorial agreements. These physical documents are too often based on unethical, unequal, and unfulfilled promises that demand material restitution and continue to be legitimized by the institutions that house them, in this case, the national archives of Canada.

However, archives—a subject which has become a central figure in my research—also have the potential to unsettle colonial narratives. The archive, in recent years, has been appropriated by Indigenous communities, artists, and activists, as a framework for posterity and teaching, to record and retell their histories. For those interested, I would recommend checking out the SRSC Archives, a group based in Sault Sainte Marie, who focus on sharing, healing, and learning in respect to the legacy of Residential schools in Canada through their growing photographic collection and events. And I would also recommend volume 57 of the journal *Public*, entitled, “Archive/Counter-Archives,” in which the notion of a counter-archive is considered in a Canadian context—I would especially recommend the article by Mark David Turner entitled “Efficacy and Archival Practice in Nunatsiavut: A Case Study of the Rigolet Inuktut Living Archives.”

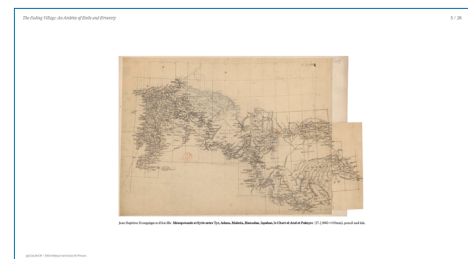
My presentation today is divided into two parts, with a short interlude. The first half is a bit shorter and tells the story of how I arrived at the creation of my own counter-archival project. And the second half shares a couple early iterations before describing the project itself.

A month before my masters degree began, I went on a trip to Beirut for the first time, with my younger brother. Our father met us there—it was his first time back since he left over thirty years ago. We

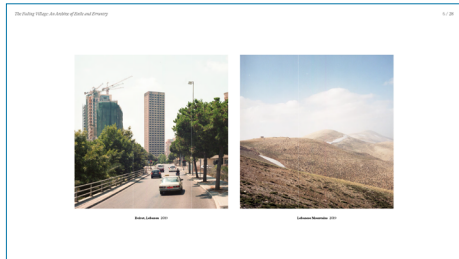
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Slide 05/28

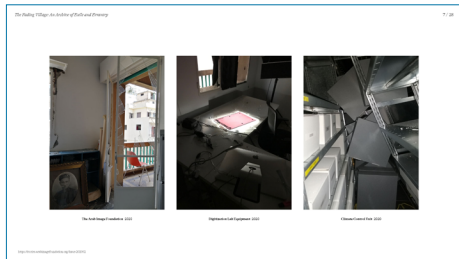


SLIDE 06/28



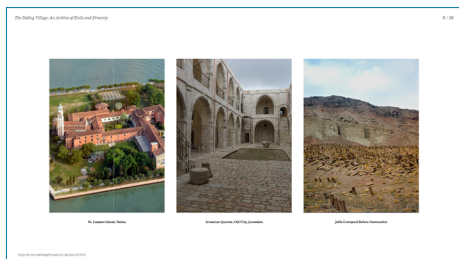
spent a couple weeks in Lebanon together, travelling between different cities on the Mediterranean coast, driving through the mountains and into the Bekaa valley. He showed us the apartment he grew up in and we met old family friends and relatives who invited us into their homes. It was an emotional experience and it had an impact on me in a way that isn't easy to put into words. So, when I returned home and started this degree, I only had one thing on my mind: to make my thesis about Beirut, to go back to the city which had had such a profound effect on me. From the beginning, I knew I wanted to do research which explored the material conditions of a place through both a historical and political lens, with a focus on ethical research methodologies. This, I thought, could only be accomplished through travel and ethnography. By putting lived experiences alongside historical material uncovered in local or regional archives.

SLIDE 07/28



I committed the first two terms of my degree to Beirut. Though, as the year progressed, it became less and less likely that I would be going back to the city, or travelling at all. The political protests which started in October 2019 and have continued on to this day, the pandemic, and then the port explosion have all completely transformed the Beirut that I saw two years ago. Many of the friends I met left the city, family relocated to the periphery or into the valley, and the archives I had hoped to work in were still recovering from the damage.

SLIDE 08/28



My confidence in completing a project about Beirut started to wane in my distance from its rapidly changing environment, and I started to shift my topic out of respect for a place that needed more than just research at the time. So I started to look at what wasn't so distant from me: my new focus became my family's connection to a global community of Armenian diaspora, and the unique and lost architectures resulting from their historical exiles, displacements, and genocide. My potential sites moved from an Armenian Island in Venice, to a neighbourhood in the Old City of Jerusalem, to a demolished graveyard in an autonomous province in

Azerbaijan. All this to say, my thesis plans were moving in anything but a straight line toward an end.

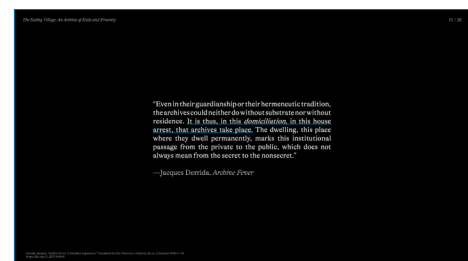
By the summer of 2020, I was struggling to cope with the reality that I would not be travelling for this degree, I had yet to commit to any one site of research, and the evolving pandemic made the near future unpredictable. I put my own work on pause, when I was accepted to participate in a virtual research fellowship with two other MArch students in Canada at the Canadian Centre for Architecture. There, we examined the long echoes of colonial infrastructure in the predominantly Inuit communities of Nunavut, originally through the lens of the CCA's archival collection. It was around this time that I started to think about archives in a new way. I had, up to this point, thought of archives only as spaces of knowledge retrieval, as extensive depositories of cultural material. In reality, though, the diversity of content in institutional archives, especially in remote or historically Othered communities, were extremely narrow and biased toward a White, Eurocentric perspective. I was surprised to learn that very little information, in the entire territory of Nunavut, existed in the CCA's archives. As a result, a significant part of our collective research project involved the aggregation and public dissemination of materials and resources which otherwise would not be included in an institution's collection. This is when my interest in the creation of counter-archives as a methodology for research began.

I want to step out of the story for a few minutes, just to go into a little bit of detail about what exactly I mean when I use the words counter-archive or living archive, or even just archive. The meaning of the term archive can be incredibly ambiguous, even in the field of archival theory. At times it is as narrow as the type of material it contains or the systems of organization it employs that differentiate it from a library or museum. At other times its definition is so expansive that it is easier to describe what the archive is by what it is not. For the sake of this work, though, I think it's important to focus on the archive firstly as a work

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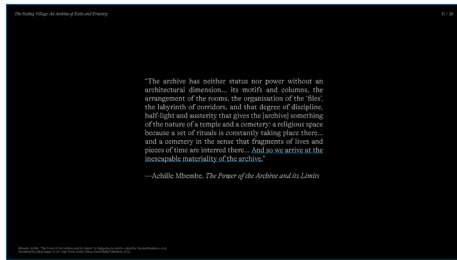


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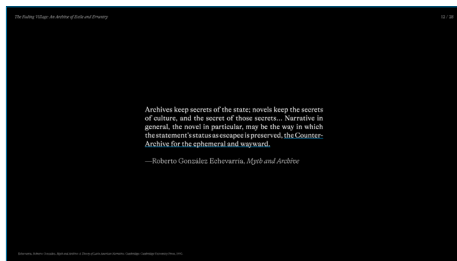
of architecture. Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the term archive, in "Archive Fever" is one of the most cited and seminal texts in archival theory. In it, Derrida discusses the inception of the archive and its connection to domestic space. He states that the meaning of the word archive is necessarily tied to those who lived in the archive, the building itself, and the substrate on which it is built.

SLIDE 11/28



Achille Mbembe, also discusses what he calls the inescapable materiality of the archive. He sees the archive as an instrument of the state, which is as reliant on the contents it safekeeps as the land it is built on and therefore has dominion over. Mbembe goes on to say that the archive is a political machine, granting status and power to specific matter while discarding others. The archive's primary operation, he says, is discrimination; its clear racial and religious biases are defined by the colonial powers who historically controlled their vaults. And it is through this operation that the archive controls what is and what is not a valid object of research and therefore of mention. The question of the archive is unavoidably one of politics.

SLIDE 12/28



These late 20th century reconceptualizations of what an archive is and does have spawned a number of speculative archival projects in recent decades by artists, activists, and spatial practitioners. Up to this point, I have used the terms living archives and counter archives and I think it would be worth briefly expanding on the intricacies of their meaning. While they have come to represent similar notions of postcolonial projects of posterity, they come from slightly different places. The earliest example I have found of the term counter-archive, aside from its use in film theory which isn't necessarily relevant here, is in Roberto González Echevarría's book, *Myth and Archive*, where he proposes the term during an analysis of Michel Foucault's theoretical writings on the power and politics of the archive in the archaeology of knowledge. Echevarría, puts traditional archival documents in contrast with the craft of narrative writing, and specifically of novels. He sees this form of writing as a way of subverting archival power

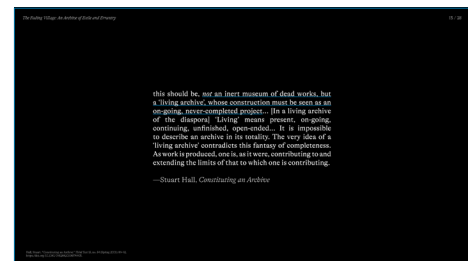
and giving a voice to those who have historically been silenced by the archives. The term also comes around the same time of postcolonial writing from theorists like Edward Said and Nancy Peluso, who use the terms counter-narratives and counter-maps in a similar capacity. So, in an overly simplified way, the counter-archive comes from a postcolonial lens and attempts to unsettle the dominant, colonial voice and makes visible the invisible politics of hegemonic space.

The term living archives, on the other hand, was made popular by Stuart Hall, in his essay “Constituting an archive.” He connects the notion of a living archive to the collection of cultural material from communities in diaspora. Hall is discussing the term in relation to the creation of the African and Asian Visual Arts Archive, but in general, he sees the concept as a new kind of archive, one that is disconnected from the state it is built in and is instead made for those displaced by colonialism or imperialism. For Hall, a living archive is one which rejects the colonial fantasy of completeness and instead embraces a constantly expanding body of shifting perspectives. A living archive is always growing and unrooted from colonial rule. I know that was all a lot to take in, and sort of antithetical to the purpose of an interlude, but I think it’s important for the story.

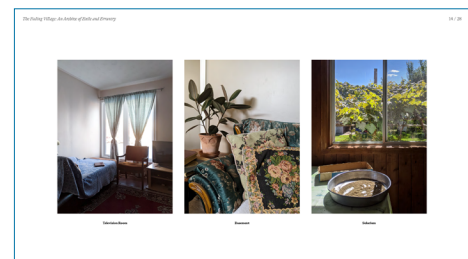
So, following the conclusion of the CCA fellowship and some other extracurricular endeavours, I reexamined my own project. It sounds obvious now, but it wasn’t until this point, somewhere in my fourth term of masters, that I first realized the Armenian diaspora community I should be researching was the one I was living in. And I remember a very real moment when I also realized that this house could be the living archive that I explore.

So my research continued, and as it unfolded, two primary sites appeared: the city of Cambridge in Ontario, Canada, and the sub-district of Kessab in Syria’s Latakia Governorate—with a particular focus on the community of Galt and the village of Kaladouran

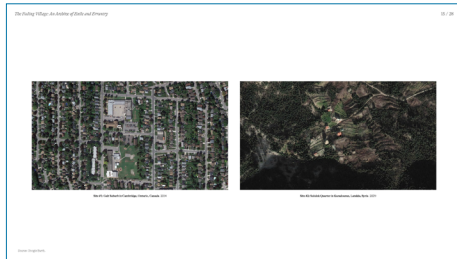
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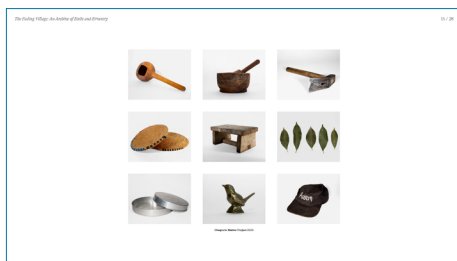


SLIDE 15/28



respectively. It was in Kessab, I learned, that my grandparents' families had lived for hundreds of years. And that when they speak of home or homeland, they are not talking about Beirut, or the Armenian Republic, they are talking about a small agricultural village, built on a mountain, next to the ocean, at the border of Syria and Turkey—the last remaining remnant of the ancient Armenian vassal state of Cilicia. The stories I was uncovering were constantly moving between these two places, they were stories which tethered a diaspora to their homeland—through the things they left behind, those they brought with them, and others they found (or made) along the way. All the while, I was scouring the internet, looking for what little information existed about the history of this remote place in online archival collections.

SLIDE 16/28



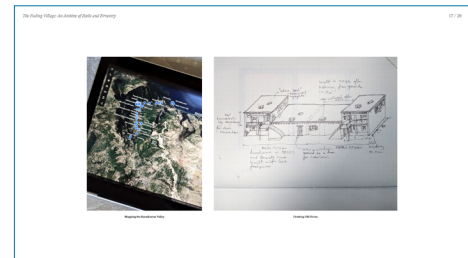
Over the next few slides I'm going to share three sort-of micro-projects that I undertook as early iterations in my project of documenting this living diasporic archive. They weren't necessarily happening in sequence though, they were sort of intersecting and overlapping experiments. The first was the creation of a catalogue of diasporic matter. I removed these everyday objects from their context and photographed them in a pseudo-archival space for study. While this allowed me to consider more closely the material and formal composition of the objects, it became clear that I was engaging in a primarily aesthetic exercise—it seemed to be burying more information than it was revealing. There was, however, one unintended discovery. For each new object I photographed, my grandparents saw my interest in them and told me their stories: where the object came from, its importance, and how it ended up here in this home. By telling me the stories of these objects, they were also, in a way, telling me their own story. And the story of other diaspora connected through the translation of these things.

The second project was the drawing of my grandparents' home in Kessab and the mapping of and the valley where it was built. The project took place over a handful of sessions with my grandparents, first with google maps on my laptop and then a sketchbook and pen. They

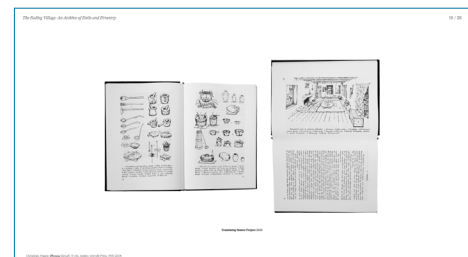
had never seen Kessab on something like google maps before and were excited to give me a tour. They took me through the town and then the valley and I saved markers on the map of places they remembered: the churches they attended, the homes of their friends and neighbours, and the cemetery where their parents were buried. We eventually found their old home, which was originally built by my grandfather's father, after returning from the genocide. But it had since been demolished and another home was built in its footprint out of concrete. We worked together to redraw the home from memory, using a few photographs that I had found. Through the process, though, I noticed their memories weren't aligning with the new developments of hotels, restaurants, and summer homes. The neighbourhoods they drew for me did not correspond with the Syrian divisions shown on Google maps. I started to realize the place they were drawing for me was long gone, transformed after they left by a new economy of internal tourism.

The third project came mostly in bouts of procrastination and a need for a new workspace when the University facilities were no longer an option. I started cleaning the main room in the basement, next to my bedroom, which had become a storage space for old and unused things. During my piecemeal cleaning campaign, I made discoveries of diasporic matter that had been stored away in boxes and on shelves. This included old and forgotten family photographs, ephemera from church services here in Cambridge, newspaper clippings, and diasporic directory books. Two of the last books I found were a pair that belonged to a three-volume set, documenting the history of Kessab. Though it was written entirely in Armenian and no English translation existed. It is one of the only extensive histories written about Kessab and something I couldn't find anywhere online. Luckily, there were many detailed illustrations, specifically of traditional housing typologies and an index of housewares, tools, and other objects—some of which I recognized from my own photographs of diasporic matter. With the help of my father, I worked to transliterate the illustrations' legends into English, though most of the books' contents

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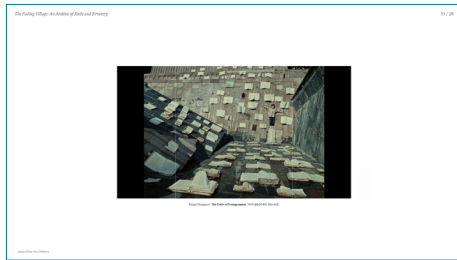


Slide 18/28



still remain unknown to me. I found that I could learn more about Kessab from this house, in a morning with my grandfather in the garden, or an afternoon in the kitchen with my grandmother, than if I were to spend weeks searching online. Here in the diasporic home, there existed artifacts and material that were decidedly kept, for the preservation and continuation of a culture displaced.

SLIDE 19/28



So, In each one of these micro-projects I undertook, I found that the interactions I was having with my family were often more productive than any final representation of the projects themselves. As soon as I took all my material back downstairs to my desk to start making maps, or building my own archive of matter, I found they lost what made them so important. So instead representing my findings as finalized graphics, I started writing about the interactions I was having. The actual act of uncovering these new understandings of a place I have never been. It was from these short writings that the identity of my project emerged. I like to use this image as a sort of diagram of what that identity is. This image comes from a surrealist Soviet-Armenian film called the Colour of Pomegranates. The film is told through a series of disparate iconographic compositions, rather than a linear narrative, which was very unlike other soviet-era films of its time. It shows the life of one of the most influential Armenian troubadours in the 18th century, a poet named Sayat Nova. In this still, we see the poet as a child, after a storm had soaked the archive of a church. He was asked by the clergymen to bring the books out to the roof of the church and lay them out to dry. I see my own archive project in this way, a collection of fragments of stories and interactions, taken from my own living archive and laid out, face up, with space in between, so that a reader might be able to inhabit the liminal space, and draw lines of relation between its contents.

I'll spend the remaining time of my presentation describing the methodologies and contents of the final piece. What I have been calling an errant archive. I always imagine the final contribution

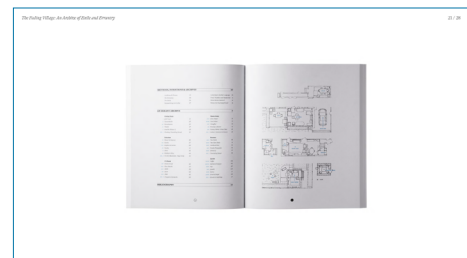
as a book. As I mentioned at the start of this presentation, it is made up of a collection of short written works paired with imagery. Each of the 40 or so pieces I wrote are laid out on a spread and are appended by a system of footnotes, definitions, and image descriptions which animate the margins. For the writing style, I have chosen to represent the phenomenological qualities of my archive through what Albena Yaneva describes as an ethnographic sketch—a writing style which captures the complex layering of information in archival space through alternating levels of detail and resolution. Sometimes I narrow in to focus on a certain object, other times I zoom-out to describe a historical or political context, and other times I share my own personal experiences. The writing is constantly shifting between the contents of the archive, the inhabitants of the archive, and the spatial environment of the archive. They are short and fragmented—emphasizing the space between things in an effort to reject a tightly crafted, linear narrative. As for the images, they contain both formal and informal sources: from state documents, maps, and artifacts, to local ephemera, video stills, and in-situ photographs. By curating these diverse media alongside one another, I have attempted to present diasporic matter with the same privileged status as those canonized by the Archive.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is a preamble, that discussing archives, my intentions, and my methods. The second part is the archive project. It wasn't until I started thinking about how I would organize these pieces into a book that I started to notice the similarities between the writings I was making. There were emerging themes in each of the pieces that were based on the room where the interaction happened. So these six main rooms: the dining room, the solarium, the tv room, the car, the basement, and the garden became a sort of table of contents for the work. I end each section with what I have been calling exergues. The word exergue is often used to describe the inscriptions around the perimeter on the reverse side of coin, but the definition of the French word comes from medieval Latin and Greek, and means “something lying outside

Slide 20/28

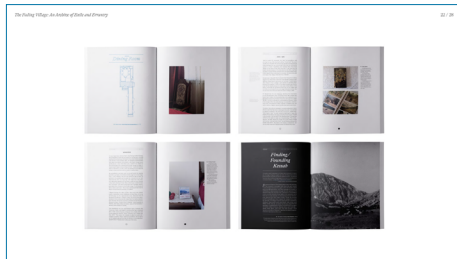


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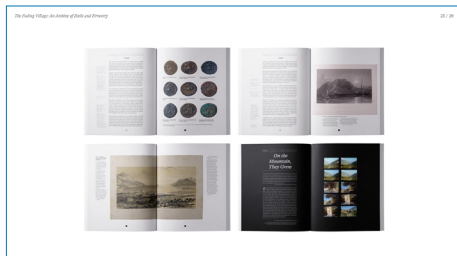
of the work.” In these exerques, I step outside of the errant archive project to offer a concluding reflection that recenters the relationship between a diaspora and an archive. I’ll now quickly run through the six parts of the errant archive project, sharing a couple spreads from each.

SLIDE 22/28



The first part takes place in the dining room. Every evening over the winter we would sit together over tea, and chat. This is where I first started hearing and asking questions about Kessab. Before this point, I had known very little about Kessab, I barely understood its relationship to the border, how close it was to the sea, and I knew very little about the mountain it was built on. I had heard about it so many times at family gatherings and dinners, but it was always a blurry image in my mind. The focus in the section is about finding Kessab, learning about the origins of the settlement, and how it has travelled with the diaspora to be rediscovered by younger generations. The imagery is mostly in-situ photographs.

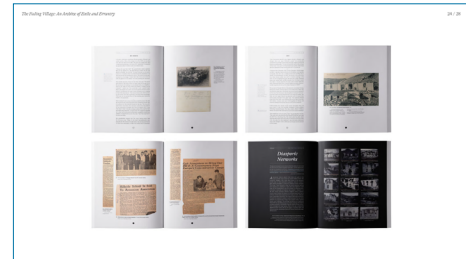
SLIDE 23/28



The second part focuses on the long history of the region, centered around the mountain. Which goes back thousands of years into the pre-Greek past. With very little information about Kessab itself online, I decided instead to focus on the mountain it was built on, which comes up in ancient stories, pagan myths, and even the Old Testament. I write a brief history of building on and in relation to the mountain and the many names it has had in that time. Even still to this day, the history of this mountain is shrouded in mystery, and has not, until very recently, been considered significant to historians. The images focus on the representation of the mountain in the iconography of those who lived on and near it over millennia, I worked with archivists at the University of Toronto to produce high quality scans of the few etchings that were done of the mountain, and ordered one of only three archeological surveys ever completed on the mountain, which was sent to me from an archive in Paris. At the same time I weave the memories and experiences of my grandparents’ into the mountains history.

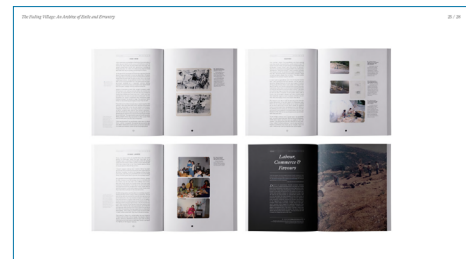
The third section takes place in the small tv room. It is here that I discovered the many forums of diasporic networks that exist, through mediums like newspapers, satellite tv, youtube, phone calls, and Facebook. But also about the collective action by a diaspora, in advocating and rebuilding their home from afar. It looks at donations and other kinds of remittance that travel through religious or social networks with the purpose of saving the memory of their homes after crises or what is lost in the slow transformations of a modernizing world.

Slide 24/28



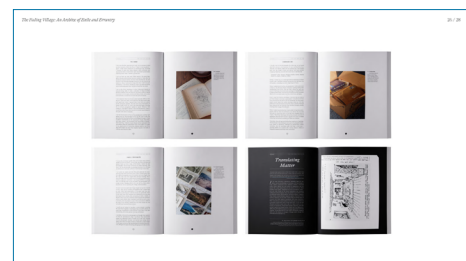
The fourth section takes place in the car, in a number of separate trips where I drove my grandfather to North York and my grandmother to an Arabic grocery store. As we drove, the stories I would hear were usually about their migration story and the jobs they had before and after coming to Canada. The text becomes a short family history which tracks the movement of my grandparents from Kessab, to Beirut, to Cambridge. I focus on the means through which a family can escape one place and establish a home in another. In a diaspora, there are other economies which operate outside of a capitalist framework to help with the transition. This comes mostly from an economy of gifts and favours. Acts which are dependent on reciprocity, rather than monetary exchange and creates a community who are committed to the preservation of one another. The imagery in this section is primarily family photographs and it ends with them moving into this home.

Slide 25/28



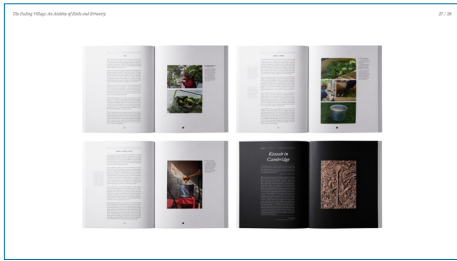
The fifth section takes place in the basement. It expands on the cleaning campaign that I mentioned earlier, the transformation of the basement into a workspace and the discoveries I made in that time. The narrative shifts slightly in this section to focus on my own personal reflections and experiences with finding this stuff. And it is illustrated by the objects that I found which I photographed in-situ.

Slide 26/28



And the final section takes place in the garden. It documents the artifacts that are literally alive in this living archive. It looks at the movement of plants and the making of food, which have conserved

SLIDE 27/28



traditional practises and recipes. It follows one story of a twig that was brought to Cambridge from Kessab in a suitcase and was grafted onto one of the trees in our backyard. It looks at the construction of a greenhouse, by one of our neighbours who is also from Kessab, and the growing of figs that were brought from there. It looks at one instance where a traditional Armenian recipe is substituted with a wild plant growing behind the church next door, when the proper ingredient is not available here in Canada. And it looks at the unique practice of massara, the preparation of grape syrup and the efforts of my grandparents to keep the practice alive outside of Kessab. The archive project ends with what, I suppose, are the designed objects of my design degree. Both are parting gifts for my grandparents, as I prepare to move out of this house. The first gift is a document—this document—in all of its collected, compiled, and collated histories. To be printed and bound and eventually stored on a bookshelf in the basement—an archive to be archived. The second gift is an object, something I hope will be used often. I made them a small coffee spoon, carved from a branch of the tree that made its way here from Kessab. The gift is in appreciation of the stories we shared over coffee each day.

SLIDE 28/28



And so, I have reached the conclusion of my thesis project. From the outset of this work, I assumed the answers to my questions could only be dug up in some distant archive or transcribed after an on-site ethnographic interview. That beyond anything, the ability to travel—to physically experience one's site—was the key to successful (and ethical) architectural research. While I still believe in the importance of travel, I have come to realize that many of the answers I was searching for were next to me; in the closets, drawers, and cardboard boxes of this home. In the stories told to me on long car rides or over coffee in the garden. I'll finish my presentation now by repeating what I said in the introduction: In the end, my thesis has become an archive of my time here and a telling of the story of discovering Kessab in Cambridge. Thank you.



85. University of Waterloo Master of Architecture Defence January 7, 2022.

Top row: Robert Jan van Pelt (supervisor), Zaven Titizian (MARCH Candidate)

Bottom row: Jane Hutton (committee member), Rana Abughannam (external reader),
Anne Bordeleau (internal reader).

GLOSSARY

Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive'... Nothing is more troubled and more troubling.

—Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*

The word 'archive' is at once a place, an act, and a theoretical framework through which notions of memory, knowledge, and power have been interrogated. Its definition is constantly expanding and contracting depending on the context, which is what makes it so elusive. Miriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the term as: "a place in which public records or historical materials (such as documents) are preserved."¹⁰⁴ This might be a good place to start in further clarifying the word 'archive' and its variants mentioned throughout this thesis.

[104] Miriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, s.v. "archive," <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/archive>.

AN ARCHIVE

[105] Paul Ricoeur, "Archives, Documents, Traces," in *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3:116–119.

An archive is firstly a place, most often a building, where things—documents, records, or other historical traces¹⁰⁵—are kept for posterity. These spaces can belong to both public or private institutions, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and private collectors. It can be possible to differentiate an archive from other cultural programs like museums or libraries by the type of material they include and the organizational structures they employ. However, both libraries and museums will likely have their own archival collections with varying levels of public access. In this way, an archive can be both separate-from and contained-within other spaces which collect and catalogue material.

INSTITUTIONAL ARCHIVES

[106] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 44–46.

[107] Achille Mbembe, "The Power and Limits of the Archive," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 19–26.

Historically, archives have been state-controlled storehouses, most importantly used in the safekeeping of legal agreements, records, and treaties. Postcolonial theorists have focused on the power and politics of these archives, whose colonial practices extend into the present. It has been widely discussed that state archives are instruments of knowledge production, rather than boundless depositories of knowledge retrieval.¹⁰⁶ Those who control the archive also control what is kept and what is discarded, consequently controlling what is and what is not a valid object of research and therefore of mention. The archive's primary operation, then, is discrimination; its clear racial and religious biases have been a subject of critical discourse.¹⁰⁷

DIGITAL ARCHIVES

[108] Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines," *Libraries and Academy* 4, no. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 9–25, <http://hdl.handle.net/1721.1/35687>.

The materiality of the archive is the primary focus of this thesis, but it is worth mentioning that in recent decades archival space has also grown to include digital collections, stored in the immaterial "cloud."¹⁰⁸ While it is easy to see these digital spaces as infinite, online archives have the same restrictions and biases that physical archives do. Namely the resources of an institution

or organization to digitize their collection, the physical limitations of servers to store data, and the decisions to control the accessibility of digital content through copyrights.

The Archive—with a capital *A*—represents the theoretical facet of the term’s definition, most often in reference to the works of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Derrida’s deconstruction of the term archive, in *Archive Fever* is one of the most cited and seminal texts in archival theory. In it, Derrida discusses the inception of the archive as the domicile of those who commanded. He sees the archive in relation to Freud’s death drive and compares it to a political machine that combats the fear of death by keeping, storing, and categorizing. The principle contradiction of the archive, Derrida says, is that when an object is taken from the world and placed in an archive, it is rendered essentially dead.¹⁰⁹

For Foucault, the Archive is more easily defined by what it is not than what it is. Though he does go on to define the Archive as a “system of discursivity” that establishes the possibility of what can be said by any one academic discipline—its *langue*—and, therefore, defines the truth within that specific criteria.¹¹⁰ The two deconstructions of the Archive by Derrida and Foucault, especially in their relation to power and knowledge, have inspired projects which seek to unsettle the presumed completeness and authority of the Archive.

In Roberto González Echevarría’s book *Myth and Archive*, he proposes the term counter-archive in response to Foucault. Echevarria contrasts traditional archival documents with the craft of narrative writing, and specifically of novels.¹¹¹ He sees this form of writing as a way of subverting archival power and giving a voice to those who have historically been silenced by the Archive. In my own work, I see the use of narrative writing as a vital character of the counter-archive; it is that which makes visible the histories of those displaced.

The term living archives, on the other hand, was made popular by Stuart Hall, in his essay *Constituting an Archive*. He connects the notion of a living archive to the collection of cultural material from communities in diaspora. He sees the concept as a new kind of archive, one that is disconnected from a nation-state and is instead made for those displaced by colonialism or imperialism. For Hall, a living archive is one which rejects the colonial fantasy of completeness and instead embraces a constantly expanding body of shifting perspectives.¹¹²

THE ARCHIVE

[109] Jacques Derrida, “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,” trans. Eric Prenowitz, *Dialectics* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 9–63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/465144>.

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