

Hovhannes Der-Pilibbossian, *Արաբկիրցի վերապրողի յուշեր* [Memoir of a Survivor from Arabkir], *Memoirs of Survivors of the Armenian Genocide*, 12. Editor, author of preface and references Hayastan Martirosyan. Yerevan: AGMI, 2023, 192 pages.

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The memoirs of genocide survivors are extremely valuable to history, given that they serve as a resource for victims' descendants to learn about their past, as well as for researchers to discover new insights.

Each memoir has its own significance; yet when viewed as a collective, they form a clear image of the genocide period and, as a result, play a significant role in the reconstruction of a nation's identity. Of course, a memoir may contain inaccurate information due to an individual's psychological state, age, sensitivity to trauma, and so on. However, as the *Encyclopedia of Genocide* states, "first-person accounts are valuable historical sources in that they provide unique personal insights into the genocidal process, the consistency of information found in various accounts about the same incident(s) provide valuable corroboration of facts, and that there are certain issues and events about which information can only be gleaned from first-person accounts."¹

The life story of Hovhannes Der-Pilibbossian (1898-1996), a survivor of the Armenian Genocide, is one of the many memoirs maintained in the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute's archives; the author wrote these accounts at the age of 93. Hovhannes admits that, given his age, he may have forgotten some incidents and left them out, having written the memoir with his "weak pen", "weak ability", "the events back and forth."² He further notes: "*I am sorry I have to explain a little more, I may depart from the theme and either forget or repeat vital things. I am 93 years old, my forgetfulness impairs my memory, and my vision bends up and down the lines, but as a duty, I will continue as much as possible.*"³

Hovhannes Der-Pilibbossian was born in Arabkir,⁴ in Western Armenia's Kharberd Province. According to Hovhannes' mother, he was born in May of 1898. "*My mother was illiterate, she only knew that I was born two years after Talan [loot];*⁵ in the

¹ *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, ed. by Israel Charny, Vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 242.

² Hovhannes Der-Pilibbossian, *Արաբկիրցի վերապրողի յուշեր* [Memoir of a Survivor from Arabkir], *Memoirs of Survivors of the Armenian Genocide*, 12, editor, author of preface and references Hayastan Martirosyan (Yerevan: AGMI, 2023), 86.

³ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴ Before the Armenian Genocide in 1915, the population of the city reached about 20 thousand, 10 thousand of which were Armenians. See Tadevos Hakobyan, *Պատմական Հայաստանի քաղաքները* [Historical Cities of Armenia] (Yerevan, Armenia, 1987), 50-51.

⁵ Arabkir people described the Hamidian Massacres as looting, pogrom, massacre, incident. See *Ոսկեգետակ. Տարեգիրք նուիրուած Արաբկիրի եւ շրջակայքի պատմութեան-ազգագրութեան* [Voskegetak. Yearbook Dedicated to the History-Ethnography of Arabkir and Its Surroundings], edited by Sargis Bakhtikian, No. 3 (Beirut: Hayk, 1945), 40.

*month of reaching the red pear.*⁶ Between 1994 and 1995, Der-Pilibbossian presented a copy of this memoir to Stepan Zoryan School No. 56 in Yerevan (the other copy was given to Henrik Ginosyan in 1996), stating that he was born on May 15, 1900, with this date likely being mentioned in his passport. The memoir did not include a photo, but it did reference a group photo from the Lyon branch of the Arabkir Compatriotic Union taken in 1928, located in Andranik Poladian's "History of Armenians of Arabkir", on page 929.⁷ In the photo, Hovhannes can be seen with his wife, daughters, grandmother, and other Lyon branch members. Hovhannes was also the chairman of the Union's Lyon branch—about which the author of the memoir modestly keeps his silence. The original photograph is stored in the National Archives of Armenia.

The author's memoir, according to his writing, can be conventionally divided into three parts: 1. Arabkir and the daily life of Arabkir's residents, the prevailing general atmosphere and, then, the events of the genocide within the Ottoman Empire, 2. Hovhannes's rescue and transfer to France, alongside his activities in Armenian organizations, 3. Hovhannes's family life in Soviet Armenia.

The author begins his memoir by describing a scene of how a group of Turks beat his father in front of him, leaving a deep impression on him. Then, the author details the lifestyle, crafts⁸ and trade of the Arabkir people—the main means of their livelihood. He remembers his father, who worked day and night to support the family; following this, he left for the USA in 1908, one of the reasons of which was (per Der-Pilibbossian) the pressure by Turks on the Armenian youth. As the author notes: "[...] the situation of the Armenians is understandable, it is not to blame that the youth was running away from the country." Historian and geographer Tadevos Hakobyan also mentions this:

As a result of the bad economic conditions and the harsh tax policy of the Turkish authorities, migration was also widespread in Arabkir, in order to earn a piece of bread, many *Arabkirtsis* were forced to leave their homes and look for work in various cities. Moreover, almost only Armenians, Armenian craftsmen and blacksmiths, were leaving.⁹

Der-Pilibbossian recalls the details of his birthplace, describes the preparation of cheese, bread, wine, pasty, etc., the rituals of death, mourning and wedding ceremonies

⁶ Der-Pilibbossian, *Memoir of a Survivor*, 184.

⁷ *Պատմություն Հայոց Արաբկիրի* [History of Armenians of Arabkir], edited by Andranik Poladian (New York: Arabkir Union of America, 1969).

⁸ In the 19th - 20th centuries, Arabkir was famous for its canvas production. In the middle of the 19th century, 15 weaving, 9 spinning and 18 tablecloth production enterprises were operating here. The fabrics of Arabkir were of high quality and could compete with the textiles of any city in the Middle East. The enterprise of Poghos Effendi Ter-Petrosyan was particularly famous in Arabkir at that time, whose fabrics were comparable in quality to the fabrics of Aleppo and other famous cities. See Hakobyan, *Cities of Historical Armenia*, 51-52.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

with vivid and beautiful description. These details introduce the reader to their lifestyle and customs, “transporting them” to Arabkir and metaphorically including the reader as a participant.

Recalling the landscape: the author notes that there were four churches¹⁰ in Old Arabkir. Turkish authorities destroyed them in 1896, leaving only one: the half-destroyed St. Astvatsatsin Church, which was renovated through the tireless efforts of Arabkir’s residents. “*Thousands of believers took part in the construction of that church, voluntarily and freely, strong men like my father...*”¹¹ The author then describes the interior of the church, the arrangement of items within, and the three priests of Arabkir—reflecting contemptuously about only one, Father Tornik, who became Turkish after escaping the atrocities, dying a year later before being buried in the local “Turkish cemetery.”

The author refers to his interest in the activities of the Armenian *fedayis* from a young age—the subject from which his patriotism was rooted. He recalls taking revolutionary books from the Dashnaks’ Club and reading them at night. Hovhannes was so excited by the story of *hayduk*¹² Arabo¹³ that he was given the code name “Arabo” for being his follower. Apart from the history of Hovhannes’s family, thanks to the memoir, we also get to know the stories of other families in Arabkir. For example: the history of Hovhannes’ aunt’s family is presented, starting back during the pogroms of 1896, from which Hovhannes’ aunt and female cousin survived, finding themselves in a worse situation during the years of the genocide. The episode is presented in which people were called in front of the government building to hear an order, and Armenians, young and old, gathered to be informed about the status of their brothers, fathers, and husbands. After that, the search for the alleged fugitives begins: the Turks entered the houses of the Armenians, robbing, raping, and destroying everything in their path. These attackers especially targeted and tortured the wives of *Hnchakyan* party members, whose lists they had in advance; Hovhannes’ aunt’s husband was one of them.¹⁴

¹⁰ The churches of Arabkir in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century were seven, four of which were Apostolic, two were Protestant, and one was Catholic. See Hakobyan, *Cities of Historical Armenia*, 52-53.

¹¹ Der-Pilibbossian, *Memoir of a Survivor*, 103.

¹² *Hayduk*, 1. rebel guerrilla in the Balkans and Hungary during the Ottoman rule, 2. an Armenian partisan fighting against the perpetrators during the Armenian massacres.

¹³ Arabo, a renowned Armenian fedayi in the nineteenth century who fought against the oppression of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁴ *The Hnchakyan party* was founded in 1887 in Geneva on the initiative of a group of Caucasian Armenian students (Avetis Nazarbekyan, Mariam Vardanyan, Ruben Khanazatyan, Gabriel Kafyan, etc.), the goal of which was the liberation of Armenia from the Turkish rule. The official paper of the party was “Hnchak.” The Arabkir branch of the Hnchak party was active until WWI. The Reformed Hnchakyan party is a wing separated from the Hnchakians, which was against socialism and preferred only the national-patriotic direction. It entered the Ottoman Empire after 1908. Among the leaders of the party were Arpiar Arpiaryan, Mihran Tamatyan, Mihran Swazli, Levon Mkrtychyan, Anton Rshtuni, Suren Surenyan, Apah, Aghasi and others.

Then, the author goes on to describe the deportation, noting that the Armenians were assured by local authorities of their eventual return—rendering there no need to close the doors of their houses and shops. The people of Arabkir were to join the deportation caravans from Erzerum, Sarighamish, Baiburd, and Yerznka. The path of exile, the death marches, the impoverished conditions of tired and hungry Armenian women and children, the corpses on the banks of the roads and rivers—where the stench of decay lingered—and cases of murder and looting by gangs of opportunists are presented in different episodes. The author's descriptions document the brutality and diversity of the methods and means used to carry out the genocide.

While studying this memoir, we came across the memoir of another survivor, Hovhannes Alexandryan (1902-1988),¹⁵ which described the route of the death march, corresponding with the directions and the episodes that Hovhannes Der-Pilibbossian also mentioned in his memoirs. Despite the fact that Hovhannes Alexandryan was from Sebastia and Hovhannes Der-Pilibbossian from Arabkir, it is probable that the two of them traveled the same road together, as the Turkish military brought groups of Armenians from different places and joined them together. Let's present one part of Hovhannes Alexandryan's memoir and compare it with the notes of Der-Pilibbossian's memoir. Hovhannes Alexandryan writes:

Kirk Geoz is located 10-15 km from the city of Malatia, on the Tokhmakh River, on the left side of the river, where our caravan was staying, there was a rather large area where the Sebastia-Kharberd highway passes... The next day, they informed us that the carts would return. From there, those who want[ed] to travel in a cart must pay 2 gold coins, and those who do not pay drams w[ould] go on foot.

On the eve of departure from there, it was announced that we should leave the next morning, [and] those who would pay 2 more golds would be taken in a cart. Accordingly, the cart and the oxen were sold to us at double the price, only for 2 days, because when we reached Firinchilar,¹⁶ the carts would be taken from us.

¹⁵ Hovhannes (Onik) Alexandryan, *Յեղասպանությունն Վերասյրածի հուշեր* [Memoirs of a Genocide Survivor] (Yerevan, 2012). Manuscript of the memoir is kept in the National Archive of Armenia, fund 439, list 3, doc.115.

¹⁶ *Firinchilar*, a large caravan stops. According to the Armenians' annihilation plan, it was defined which routes the caravans should take and which checkpoints they should pass. Three directions were planned, with large milestones. The first stop of the Armenians of Trapizon-Samsun, Endires and the villages and the entire Armenia Minor was Kangal, the second was Firinchilar, where the Armenians would unite and pass from the inaccessible mountains of Zeynal to Samusat-Euphrates and then, Mesopotamia: Suruch, Ras ul Ain, Raqqa, Der Zor... It is mentioned that Firinchilar was a small village, the destitution of the caravan is indescribable: in the field there were pieces of rags, bed wool, everywhere, unburied corpses, which were torn apart by dogs and predatory animals, there was a stench, and the attacks of the Armenians on every new caravan continued, carts and other belongings left by the Armenians were taken by force. things... See

The carts that were given to us were confiscated from the Armenian exiled villagers who came there the day before. ... The next day... we were not allowed to enter the city of Malatia, to take a midday break. Our caravan stopped in a plot surrounded by trees 1 km from Malatia. The Turks of Malatia had brought various types of food and fruit to sell to us, of course, at double or triple prices. On the one hand, they wanted to buy clothes and jewelry from us at low prices, and if the owner of the product did not agree, they took it by force, free of charge. After resting there for two hours, the caravan left. In the evening, the caravan stopped for the night in a valley called Bay Bunar. [...] Bay Bunar, next to the highway from Malatia to Kharberd, is a valley surrounded by hills on 3 sides, from the center of which flowed a cold water that could power a flour mill. Starting from Hasan Chelepi up to there, in all the huts and roads, we encountered countless dead bodies, there were not few here either, but the sad thing was that two dead bodies were thrown into the water tank so that we could not use that cold water. [L]ater[,] I learned that while using that water by a village [villagers] below, the population got infected with an infectious disease by drinking that poisonous water and the epidemic cleansed the entire population of the village.¹⁷

Hovhannes Der-Pilibossian writes:

That day too, again in the scorching sun, walking in the dust, we approached the place that was called Ghuruchai. We knew that we would really meet a river, we would see a lot of water. On the contrary, it [was] very wide, the water [was] reticulated, broken, in some places green[,] rotten [...] we saw many dead people, some swollen in those puddles, swollen corpses and stench all the way to Kirk Geoz (a big river with a bridge with forty arches). The condition of Der Hakob, Poghos Agha, my mother, uncle, and grandmother worsened, she could not hold herself on the mule. So that it wouldn't happen, Poghos Agha tied her on the mule, as she was dead, we reached the road leading to Malatia, where we had to cross the bridge of Kirk Geoz. That day, many people were missing from our caravan. When it was evening, we saw the group, the area became smaller... On the highway villagers selling bread and cheese appeared, they gave us a break. At the edge of a field, there was a lot of people buying bread and water. There was little left of gata,¹⁸ we didn't buy bread, saying it wouldn't be a burden [...]we bought buttermilk instead of water, and we also filled two empty bottles. The stop was to buy bread, [and] we continued to cross Kirk Geoz to reach Firinchilar before reaching Malatia. There were people who had relatives in Malatia, whom

Arakel N. Patrick, *Պատմագրիք յուշատեան Եփեսոսիոյ և գաւառի հայութեան* [History of the Armenians of Sebastia and Neighboring Villages], Volume A (Beirut: Mshak, 1974), 751-752.

¹⁷ Alexandryan, *Memoirs of a Genocide Survivor*, 27-28.

¹⁸ *Gata*, an Armenian pastry.

they hoped for. There were many Turks near the bridge and on it, who were walking along the edge of the bridge. We saw people be thrown into the water from the bridge.¹⁹

We see similarities in both memoirs. In both accounts, the group rested near the Kirk Geoz bridge. First, Hovhannes Alexandryan mentions that their group was going to the village called Firinchilar, and Hovhannes Der-Pilibbossian refers to the settlement of Frun Chular—which we believe is the same settlement, given that the caravans which reached Frnchlar from different settlements were thinned out, resulting in regroupings. The remnants of the caravans from the Black Sea coast, Shapin Garahisar villages, Samson, Amasia, Evdokia, Alis Valley villages, Kharberd and Akin all joined the caravan of Sebastia.²⁰ Then, both accounts refer to the water near Hasan Chelepi being non-potable—and full of dead bodies.

Continuing the journey of exile, after crossing Kirk Geoz, at night, Poghos Agha (Der-Pilibbossian's mother's cousin) negotiates with the local villagers, the *ghzlbashes*,²¹ who were offering to buy their security—which would enable them to escape the deportations—in exchange for a hefty sum of gold. Thus, after a four-day exile, Hovhannes' family stayed in that village by paying gold, handing over their clothes and carpets, and working for the *ghzlbashes*, receiving food and rudimentary lodging in return. Here, it is necessary to highlight Hovhannes' strategy of “surviving” the genocide, as well as the methods used to do so: speaking diplomatically with the Turkish military, bribing local police, engaging in physical self-defense, hiding his identity, and engaging in hard labor to earn a living for himself and his family. For all the survivors of the genocide, we believe that staying mentally strong and focused on finding salvation in any way, regardless of the cost, had great importance. Despite all these difficulties, Hovhannes held a deep sense of patriotism—which remained with him until the end of his life.

The memoir also enables the readers to learn about the battles of WWI on the Caucasian front. It presents the Russian advance, the effect of the Bolshevik Revolution on the front, as well as Kurds siding with the Russians and saving the Armenians, and then siding with the Turkish and then massacring the Armenians. Through the memoir's depiction of Hovhannes' conversation with a friend, we learn about the general political climate within the Ottoman Empire, the lives of Armenian refugees, camps, and the ongoing Russian-Turkish war.

¹⁹ Der-Pilibbossian, *Memoir of a Survivor*, 131.

²⁰ Robert Sukiasyan, *Օսմանյան կայսրության հայ բնակչության տեղահանության մեթոդները և ընթացքը (Մեթոդները և ընթացքը (Մեթոդները և ընթացքը օրինակով))* [Methods and the Process of Deportations of Armenian Population In the Ottoman Empire (Based On the Case of the Sebastia Province)] (PhD diss., Yerevan: Armenian Genocide Museum Institute, 2019), 158.

²¹ *Ghzbash*, redhead (Persian), Shiite groups, mostly from Turkmen tribes established in the Armenian Highlands and adjacent territories since the late Middle Ages.

Hovhannes, who worked various jobs in different villages and cities to collect money, aimed to travel to the USA to join his father. He was cautious while working, as his compatriots advised him to remain inconspicuous. If they found out that he was an Armenian, the Turks would kill him, like other Armenians—who used to work for free. In Arabkir, Hovhannes starts working as a *manusa* crafter for his friend Papik's older brother, well-known community-member Grigor Kichchikean.

Hovhannes then reaches Samson (Samsun), from where he was planning to travel to Constantinople and then to the USA to reunite with his father. At this time, Hovhannes was advised to enter the local orphanage in Samson temporarily, because Armenians were not allowed to go to Constantinople during that period. In the orphanage, Hovhannes works as a clerk, traveling “from the market to the kitchen for vegetables and other supplies.” Hovhannes notes that there were 600 Armenian orphans from different regions in the orphanage, and the orphanage was opened under the auspices of the Near East Relief foundation.²² The author states that there were six orphanages in Samson under which the American flag was flying.

Next, the Greek-Turkish war of 1919-1922 is described. Hovhannes tells how enthusiastically the orphans were following the events of the war, recalling when the Greeks were bombarding Turkish forces with cannons. They expected that soon the Greeks would win and that they would be freed from captivity. There is also a brief note about the burning of Smyrna, which was carried out by the Turks—in which the city's Armenian and Greek residents were thrown into the sea. The author regretfully informs the reader about the defeat of the Greeks.

Hovhannes writes about arranging his personal life as well. Heeding the advice of the Armenians around him, he recalls meeting and courting Geghanush Abrahamyan,²³ an orphan from the same orphanage, as well as the hastily performed wedding ceremony in the church—conducted without traditional clothing. The couple had planned to leave Constantinople for France before traveling further to the USA.

Then, the second part of the memoir begins. Hovhannes and his wife arrived in Marseille, France on 31 December 1922. It should be noted that Hovhannes' name is also mentioned by the “Arabkir Reconstruction Union” in the “List of Arabkir Survivors” published in Boston in 1920, among the survivors of Hachinian and Perenke districts (page 33).²⁴

Not being able to find work in Marseille, Hovhannes and Geghanush moved to the city of Grenoble, where Hovhannes began working in a paper factory (despite the low

²² Near East Relief, a major humanitarian project established in the United States, traces its origins back to WWI and had a significant contribution to the salvation of Armenian Genocide survivors. For more information, see James L. Barton, *Story of the Near East Relief (1915-1930)* (New York: Macmillan, 1930).

²³ Hovhannes's wife, Geghanush, was from Trapizon, she lost her family during the Armenian Genocide, her sister was kidnapped by the Turks. Later, as a result of Geghanush's search, it was found out that Geghanush's father survived the genocide, but was exiled during the Soviet years, and died in Crimea.

²⁴ Arabkir Reconstruction Union, *Արաբկիրիցի վերստիանողներու ցանկը* [List of the Survivors from Arabkir] (Boston, 1920).

salary). Having learned from a letter from his father that his mother, sister, brother and grandmother were in Aleppo, Hovhannes was able to honor his father's request and bring them to France. In March 1924, the first daughter of Hovhannes and Geghanush was born, after which the family moved to Lyon. There were many Armenians in Lyon, especially *Arabkirtsis*, so they were able to make acquaintances quickly and profit from higher pay rates for work. In France, Hovhannes would become a member of the "Armenian Relief Committee" and, together with other Armenians, establish the Arabkir Compatriotic Union [hereinafter Union] in Lyon.

The memoir also presents the beginning of the construction of the Nor Arabkir district of Yerevan (sponsored by the Union), as well as donations that were completely directed to the construction of the new district. After the birth of his daughters, Arshaluys and Anahit, the author moved with his family from Lyon to Bordeaux, where he and his wife worked and sold tights with a patterned fabric, given the difficulties of finding a job. In 1927, Hovhannes' mother, sister and brother moved to the USA. Hovhannes had a desire to move to Soviet Armenia, and when immigration²⁵ to the Armenian S.S.R. started, Hovhannes became registered with his family and moved to Armenia—where he lived for 40 years. One of the houses built by the Union was given to the family. A plot of land was allocated to a family of six, and Hovhannes started building a house in his homeland. However, the family's financial situation was difficult, as the author notes: the only hope for financing this endeavor was the money received from the sale of the working machines he brought with him.

In Soviet Armenia, the author describes Stalinist repressions, and lists the names of people who, guilty or innocent, never returned from the exile, including Armenians from the diaspora. Hovhannes, once again, suffers hardships in Soviet Armenia. *"I built my house with a 60-year contract, we lived there for 30 years[;] they demolished it, they gave me a governmental house, I was deprived of my freedom, of a big house, and of a huge fruit trees,*"²⁶ the author notes. Hovhannes had six children, but only Arshaluys received higher education, the others left their studies incomplete. He urged all children to at least learn any craft. *"During my 40 years of living in Armenia, we did not live very well, nor did we live very badly, how I can hide my sin? I too did 'black' work, like many others,"*²⁷ writes Hovhannes. Finally, after suffering and losing his home, in 1978, Hovhannes moves to France with his wife, where his daughters settled after getting married; in 1982, Hovhannes would travel to the USA to visit his brother and sister. His son, Martik, stayed

²⁵ After the establishment of the Soviet regime, three waves of immigration took place to Soviet Armenia between 1920 and 1990. During the first stage of 1921-1936, more than 40 thousand Armenians arrived in Armenia. In the second phase of 1946-1948, which is known as the Great Repatriation, about 90,000 people from around 12 countries immigrated to Armenia. Finally, during the third phase, from 1962 through 1982, about 32,000 people immigrated to Armenia. See Hovik Meliksetyan, *Հայրենիք-սփյուռք անհշուրթունքը և հայրենադարձությունը* [Homeland-Diaspora Relations and Repatriation] (Yerevan: YSU, 1985), 24.

²⁶ Der-Pilibbossian, *Memoir of a Survivor*, 179-180.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

with his family in Armenia. As Hovhannes notes, his heart had never been cut off from Armenia. Hovhannes continued to send aid to Armenia from France: physical gifts sent to Armenia include both a Macintosh computer and books to the National Academy of Sciences. After the December 7, 1988 earthquake in Armenia, he continued his financial support through various organizations, such as "Hope for Armenia," "French-Armenian Youth Union," etc. Hovhannes proudly notes, *"I laid the first stone of the foundation of the Armenian embassy in France, with only 100 francs."*²⁸

At the end of the memoir, the author referred to his mother's origins, in the context of which he presents the 1896's massacres that his mother witnessed before marriage. We are also informed that both maternal and paternal grandfathers, and his uncle were killed during the Hamidian massacres of 1894-1896.

This memoir occupies a unique place among the testimonies of the witnesses of the Armenian Genocide as a resource because it contains important information about the course of the Armenian Genocide, the deportation of Arabkir Armenians, the methods and means of carrying out the genocide, and the subsequent lives of the survivors following the atrocities. The memoir is also an important source in the following aspects:

- It presents the conscription of Armenian men into the army and their disarmament, their hard work, and the massacres that ensued, as well as the deportations of women, children and the elderly, the scenes of death on the roads, attacks by Turkish and Kurdish gangs, and the hard work done by Armenian children in various villages to ensure their survival.
- Episodes are presented of the forced Islamization and Turkification of Armenian women and girls who were forced to marry older/adult men to save their families. Some Armenian men, including priests, voluntarily or were forcibly converted to Islam, saving themselves from physical annihilation. As readers, we witness just how many Armenians hid their identity in order to survive an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty
- From the memoir, we learn what kind of "image" was depicted regarding the Armenian in the Ottoman Empire, as well as the attitudes of ordinary Turkish citizens towards the Armenians.
- Records about orphanages during that period are also important. These records include information about the numbers of Armenian children within, their lifestyles, and foreign countries' efforts to build and fund orphanages.
- Through personal stories, we learn about the Hamidian massacres, and episodes of violence and robbery between 1894-1896 in the Ottoman Empire.
- The memoir once again highlights the important role of Armenian *fedayis* in shaping patriotic and combative attitudes of Armenian youth.
- The lifestyle, cuisine, and customs of the Arabkir people are described, thanks to which we can get an idea of the life of the ancient Arabkirtsis.

²⁸ Ibid., 182.

- Thanks to the memoir, we also learn about the activities of the "Arabkir Compatriotic Union" and its work within different countries.

Hovhannes died in Paris in 1996. Currently, three of his children are alive: Anahit, Hasmik and Anush, who live in France. The family of Hovhannes' son Martun lives in the Arabkir district of Yerevan.