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Your Eminence:

I am taking the liberty of asking for your advice and help on the following.

At Leo Hamalian's suggestion, I am preparing an article which may be used in a forthcoming issue of the ARARAT Quarterly. It is about Mariam Davis whom you met this past December; she is a survivor of the genocide and both she and her husband were close friends of Arshile Gorky at one period in their lives. Wyatt Davis, a professional photographer, took most of the photographs now seen of Gorky.

Mariam was five years of age in 1915 and is the only survivor of her large family. She believes that her grandfather was a married priest, Giragos; her grandmother was Anoush. One of their several sons, Apet, was Mariam's father--but she remembers no surname. They lived in the Derdjan district of Erzeroum (Garin) on the bank of the Western Euphrates. Her father was not home; he was off fighting, possibly with Gen. Antranig, she believes. Her grandfather, the married priest, was also a leader of their village (also named Derdjan?) and managed or owned trade caravans and khans.

Our question is this: Would there not be a record of her grandfather in the files of the Patriarchate, either in Constantinople or Jerusalem, for that area between about 1890 and 1914? He died, apparently of natural cause, shortly before the genocide. This information is not for the contemplated article. You can understand what it would mean to Mariam to find a record, however limited, of her family who now exist solely in memory.

Were I to write to Istanbul or Jerusalem I have the conviction the request for information would be lost!

Respectfully,

Florence Chakerian