

**ANLÄSSLICH DES BESUCHES VON BUNDESPRÄSIDENT,  
JOACHIM GAUCK, IN DER TÜRKEI.**

Wir danken dem Bundespräsident, Joachim GAUCK, für seine offenen Worte zu den bislang auf politischer Ebene totgeschwiegenen Thema der Kulturgüter der Erstbesiedler Anatoliens, Griechen, Armenier, Aramäer, Chaldäer und Dersimer Kizilbas Alewiten.

Beispielsweise das Kleinod frühchristliche armenischer Baukunst, die im Herzen Dersims gelegene, im Jahre 301 nach Christi erbaute Kirche SURP GARABET MONASTERY oder auch genannt KİLİSA HALVORİ VANK, welche 1915 im Kontext des Genozides an den Armeniern, Dersimer und Dersimer Urchristen MILETO KHAN (in Kirmancki Dersim Sprache) zerstört wurde.

Die monotheistischen Religionen Judentum, Christentum und Islam prägten das Bild der wechsellager Geschichte Kleinasien. Die Geschichte des Islams begründet mit der Geburt Mohammeds um 570 nach Christi, um 1071 nach Christi erreichten die ersten türkischen Invasoren Kleinasien, somit ist die islamische Periode eine kurze Episode nach mehr als einen Jahrtausend christlicher Kulturgeschichte in diesem Teil der Welt, die sich eine Vielzahl zerstörte beziehungsweise erhaltene aber nicht zweckentsprechend genutzte Bauten niederschlägt.

Als Surp Garabet Monastery oder auch genannt „Kilisa Halvori Vank“ im Herzen Dersims um 301 nach Christi erbaut wurde, existierte weder Islam noch Türken auf dieser Welt.

**IN ERINNERUNG AN**

**1915**

**1938**

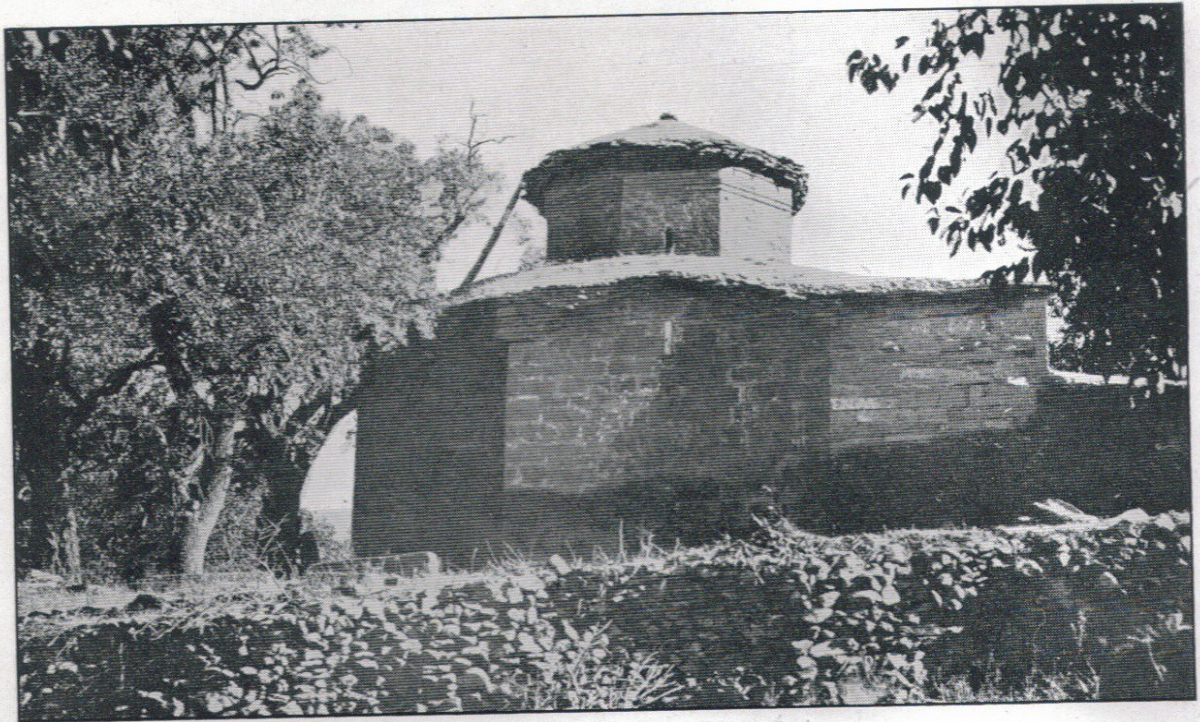
**Zerstörung der Kulturgüter im Kontext des Genozides an den Armeniern,  
Dersimer und Dersimer-Urchristen MILETO KHAN**

**SURP GARABET MONASTERY - KİLİSA HALVORİ VANK DERSIM (\*)**

**(\*) Im Jahre 301 nach Christi im Herzen Dersims erbaute Kirche  
Surp Garabet Monastery auch genannt Kilisa Halvori Vank in Dersim.**

**A Journey in Dersim 1911  
Fotos: 1911 Copyright © by Captain L. Molyneux-Seel**





SURP GARABET MONASTERY, OR HALVORI VANK.

**KİLİSA HALVORI VANK (\*)**

Surp Garabet Monastery or Halvori Vank (\*) in Dersim  
A Journey in Dersim in July, August and September 1911

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(\*) Im Jahre 301 nach Christi im Herzen Dersims erbaute Kirche Surp Garabet Monastery or Halvori Vank  
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VIEW TOWARDS OVAŞIK, LOOKING NORTH-WEST.

A Journey in Dersim in July, August and September 1911

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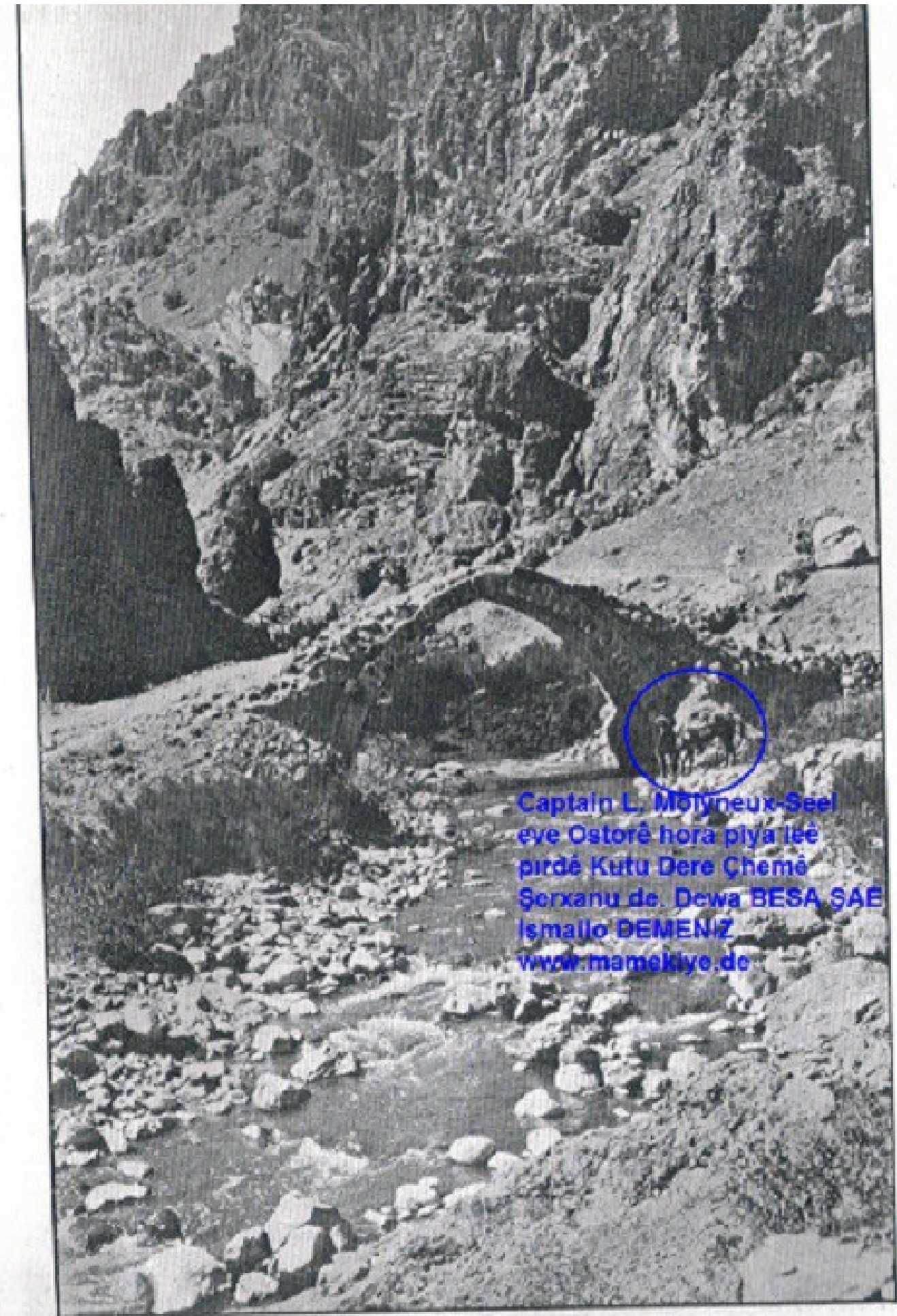
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**Xanîma Ağaê Kirmanci ve Xîsmekare.**  
**A Jorney in Dersim in July, August and September 1911**  
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Captain L. Moynieux-Seel  
eye Ostorê hora piya leê  
pirdê Kutu Dere Çemê  
Şerxanê de. Dewa BESA SAE  
İsmailo DEMENİZ  
[www.mamekiye.de](http://www.mamekiye.de)





A "YAILA" IN MERJAN DAGH.

**KOË MERCANI DE WARE**

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A GROUP OF KEZELBASH TRIBESMEN.

**AŞIRA KIRMANCU RA ZU QELFE**

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VIEW IN MAZGIRD, SHOWING FORTRESS IN BACKGROUND.

**KHÊLA MAZGÊRD**

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CITADEL AND VILLAGE OF BAGHIN.

**DEWA BAĞİNE  
GIRMIKA BAĞİNE**

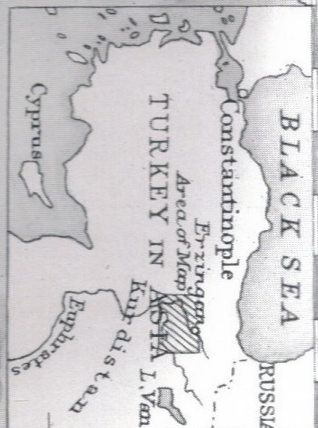
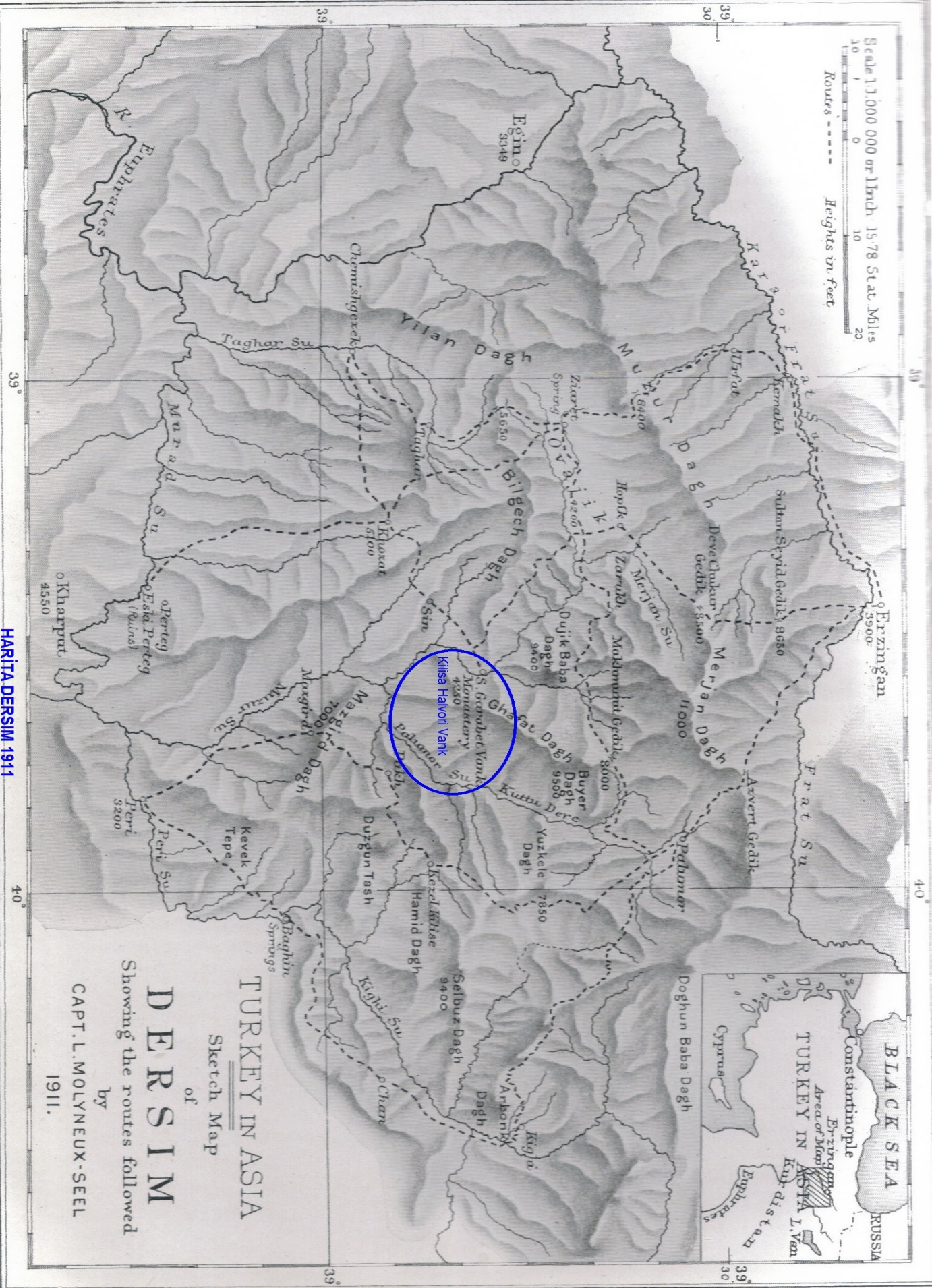
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Scale 1:100,000 or 1 inch = 15.78 Stat. Miles  
 0 10 20  
 Feet in feet  
 Routes - - - - -



TURKEY IN ASIA  
 Sketch Map  
 of  
**DERSIM**  
 Showing the routes followed  
 by  
 CAPT. L. MOLYNEUX-SEEL  
 1911.

HARITA DERSIM 1911  
 SURP GARABET MONASTERY OR HALVORI VANK IN DERSIM  
 A Journey in Dersim in July, August and September 1911. Copyright 1911 © by Captain L. Molyneux-Seel



impossible to prove its deep-seated source, but if Mr. Parkinson be right as to the plutonic origin of the sodium bicarbonate, some silica would also have come from the same source.

Mr. Parkinson's paper seems to me a valuable contribution to the geology of British East Africa.

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## A JOURNEY IN DERSIM.

By Captain L. MOLYNEUX-SEEL.

THIS account of a journey in Dersim in July, August, and September, 1911, has been written with the hope of familiarizing the readers of this *Journal* to some extent with this as yet little-explored tract of country, and more particularly of recording information gathered by the writer concerning the curious religious beliefs and traditions of the Dersim inhabitants such as may perhaps throw additional light on the difficult question of their racial origin.

The Armenian bishop of Kighi, who has made a long study of the Dersim Kurds, maintains that they are of pure Armenian race. What grounds in support of this theory it was possible to find during a visit extending over less than two months have been set forth; at the same time other facts or traditions pointing to other conclusions are stated, and the reader is left to formulate his own hypothesis.

The country known as Dersim is geographically clearly defined. It lies in the angle formed by two large branches of the Euphrates, called respectively the Frat Su and the Murad Su,\* and a line drawn through Kighi, Palumor, and Erzingan (see sketch-map) would form the north-eastern boundary. The area thus comprised is roughly 7000 square miles.

The whole of this is extremely mountainous and rugged. Between the higher mountains is a tangled mass of deep V-shaped valleys and ravines for the most part thickly covered with forests of stunted oak, containing also a sprinkling of hawthorns and wild pear trees.

Here and there a stream valley widens for a short distance, and what before was a turbulent torrent becomes a smooth-flowing river, meandering through park-like meadows studded with gigantic oak trees. The higher slopes of the mountains are, for the most part, devoid of forests, and it is consequently here that the tribesmen find pasture-land for their flocks. The Dersim villages are very superior to the collection of mud hovels which pass for villages in other parts of Kurdistan. Here the houses are of stone, well constructed, and sometimes of two stories. The villages, however, are small and often consist of a number of small hamlets scattered throughout the length of a valley. Their position is usually marked by woods of very fine walnut and mulberry trees, which afford the most perfect shade that a tired traveller could desire. Almost everywhere in Dersim, water is abundant. Springs and mountain streams, ice-cold and of

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\* Su means river; Dagħ means mountain.



absolute purity, are providential compensations for the arduousness of travel in a country where a march of from 12 to 15 miles will usually occupy the entire day. Distant views are seldom obtained, which makes it difficult to grasp the general physical features, and the tracks, never visible for any considerable distance ahead, often wind about in a most bewildering way in their efforts to minimize the difficulties of the country.

The general impression of Dersim received by a traveller whose eye has become accustomed to the bare parched mountains of Kurdistan, is that of an oasis—green, fresh, and full of grateful shade.

Stretching along the south bank of the Frat Su from Egin to Palumor, and yet further east, is a great barrier of mountains from 10,000 to 11,000 feet high, called the Muzur Dagħ and the Merjan Dagħ. This mountain range forms the real northern boundary of Dersim. The western portion, called Muzur Dagħ, as viewed from the plain to the south of it, presents the appearance of an immense wall. Its steep slopes, in striking contrast to the green mountains to the south, are absolutely bare. Its continuation, the Merjan Dagħ, equally bare, bends somewhat to the south-east, and the austerity of its outline is relieved by several lofty and craggy peaks.

This mountain barrier is traversable at four points by passes 8500 to 9000 feet high, leading into the Frat Su valley. None of these passes are practicable in winter. One, very rough and rocky, leads from the west end of Ovajik valley to Kemakh, and is passable only in summer. Another, not difficult, called Deve Chukur Gedik, passes from the eastern end of Ovajik to Erzingan, and forms a dividing line between Muzur and Merjan Dagħs. Between these two are two others seldom used and impassable for pack-animals.

At the foot of Muzur Dagħ is Ovajik, a stony plain about 15 miles long and 3 miles broad, having an elevation of 4200 feet. Its length is traversed by the Muzur Su, augmented by a tributary from the west. With the exception of small patches around villages, the plain is uncultivated and does not look as if it would repay labour spent on it. The Muzur Su, after traversing Ovajik in an easterly direction, turns south, and receiving numerous affluents from the east and the west, both large and small, drains practically the whole of the Dersim. Falling 1000 feet during its course, it eventually throws its not inconsiderable waters into the Peri Su, a few miles to the west of Peri. The general configuration of the country is thus that of a series of broken ridges running, roughly speaking, east and west and of successively diminishing altitudes, until the southernmost ridges slope by gentle undulations down to the Murad and Peri rivers.

On a clear day an impressive view of Dersim is obtained from Kharput, and travellers, as they gazed at these mountains rising range above range until capped in the far distance by the snowy peaks of Merjan Dagħ, can hardly have escaped being influenced by the fascination of mystery which hangs over an almost unknown and impenetrable land. This completes a very general survey of the physical geography of Dersim.



It would be well now to briefly recount what is known of the political history of this country. Dersim, probably, became nominally, or rather geographically, a part of the Ottoman dominions at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Kurdistan and the province of Diarbekir were subjected and annexed by Sultan Selim I. Subsequently the Kurds, who had always enjoyed special privileges, became practically independent and very turbulent, and in 1834 an Ottoman army was sent to pacify the country. No attempt was then made, however, to enter the mountain fastnesses of Dersim, and its tribes remained wholly independent, paying no taxes or tribute and recognizing in no way the Ottoman authority. In 1848 Dersim became a Kaza, the seat of government being at Khozat; but the Ottoman Government still exercised no effective authority over the Dersimli. Resolved to put an end to this state of affairs, the Turks, in 1874-75, sent a military expedition into Dersim. Though the troops completely failed to subjugate the tribesmen and suffered severe losses, a footing was obtained in the country and governorships were established at Mazgird, Ovajik, Kezel Kilisé, and Chemishgezek. In these places the Turks constructed barracks and Government buildings, utilizing for this purpose the stones of the then numerous but half-ruined Armenian churches. The garrisons of these towns sufficed merely to maintain at their posts the governors, whose authority did not extend beyond their immediate environs. The Dersimli continued to defy the Government. They paid no taxes, contributed no soldiers, and plundered and pillaged as they liked. This state of affairs continued until 1908, when a second expedition, under the command of Ibrahim Pasha, Mushir of the 4th Army Corps, was sent to complete the subjugation of the country. The troops penetrated into the mountains simultaneously from Khozat, Palumor, and Kezel Kilisé. The Dersimli, though they offered a stout resistance, as is testified by the graves of the fallen Turkish soldiers to be seen in various parts of the country, were in the end reduced to complete submission. Their villages were destroyed, their flocks seized, and they were left in a state of wretched poverty.

The Government of Dersim is now being gradually assimilated to that of the rest of the Ottoman dominions. Practically the whole of Dersim is comprised in what is known as the Dersim Sanjak, the headquarters of which is at Khozat. The Sanjak is divided into kazas, and the kazas into nahies, the mudirs of which are mostly tribal chiefs.

We now come to the inhabitants. The Dersimli are styled by the Turks "Kezelbash," which means "red-head," a term of opprobrium which they apply also to the Persians and to other unorthodox Mohammedans. But a native, if he be asked what is his religion, will say that he is a "yoloushaghi," a picturesque term which might perhaps be best translated as "a child of the True Path." The sect called Kezelbash, though themselves repudiating the term "Islam," are Mohammedans of the Shiite branch, their religion embodying also certain Christian rites. The Kezelbash



religion is not confined to the Dersimli nor to the Kurd race, but, on the other hand, the dialect Zaza, which differs widely from Kurmanji, does appear to be confined to this sect.

The Dersimli have a tribal organization similar to other nomad Kurds, and have in all about forty-five tribes, some of which are quite small, being merely fragments of larger ones. The chiefs of the most important tribes are Seïds. These Seïds are religious chiefs, and hence exercise an unbounded influence over the tribesmen. The Dersimli are semi-nomads, that is to say, they inhabit their villages in winter and "yailas" in summer, though the latter are never at any great distance from their villages. When not engaged in inter-tribal warfare, they occupy themselves entirely with pastoral pursuits, only growing enough corn in the vicinity of their villages to supply their own immediate needs. The Dersimli number about sixty-five thousand.

This brief account of the geography, history, and inhabitants of Dersim will serve, it is hoped, for an introduction to a more detailed examination of the country.

Dersim is most conveniently entered either at the north from Erzingan or at the south from Kharput. Peri, however, is also a good point of entry, as fair routes up to that point exist, and it is proposed to first describe the country to the north of it as far as Palumor.

Peri is a small town geographically within Dersim, but is very little visited by the Kurds of the interior, and hence has no special points of interest.

Immediately to the north of it, and some 20 miles distant, is the town of Mazgird. The track leading to it from Peri ascends a gentle incline of cultivated but uninteresting country for about 4 miles until unexpectedly a saddle is reached whence our first view into the interior of Dersim is obtained. And a very impressive view it is. The ground in front falls abruptly and we look down into a valley 1500 feet below, which stretches far away to the north. This is the valley of the Muzur Su. Silhouetted against the sky is the bold jagged outline of a precipitous range of hills, 15 miles distant, beneath which nestles the town of Mazgird. The rock fortress can just be distinguished. From between the Mazgird hills and the less scarped slopes on the left emerges the Muzur Su. For some miles it winds its way straight towards us, and then, slightly changing its direction, it disappears through a gorge to our left to join Peri Su, a few miles west of Peri. From the west bank of the Muzur Su, the hills rise in rounded slopes, crest upon crest, until the view is shut out by a high distant range whose summits are wrapped in mists. The hillsides are covered with scrub oak, save on a few of the rounded tops and in the immediate proximity of the river. After descending to the valley bed, the track leaving the river winds its way up among rocky underfeatures, difficult in places, until Mazgird is reached.

This little town of 350 houses is snugly ensconced in a small valley



sloping gently down to the river between two rocky spurs of Mazgird Dagħ. Similarly to all other towns in Dersim, the houses are built of stone. Two-thirds of the inhabitants are Armenians. There are evidences that Mazgird was a much larger town in the past, extending a considerable distance down the valley towards the Muzur Su. A tombstone over an Armenian grave bears the inscription: "I am the tailor of 9000 Armenians." Without accepting as exact the tailor's estimate of the number of his clients, we may infer that the number of Armenian inhabitants in his day was considerable. In the upper part of the town is a picturesque little mosque with a ruined minaret. The Turkish inhabitants state that it is 750 years old, thus placing the date of its erection in the century before the Ottoman dynasty. All the Armenian churches in Dersim have long been destroyed, but the Armenians of the towns (there are none now in the villages) zealously guard the memory of the sites of those near them. Above the town on the west slope of the rock fortress is one of these ancient sites. Though no stone remains of the former church, the Armenians assemble at the spot twice a year, Christmas and Easter, for the performance of a religious service. There exist altogether seven ancient sites of churches and three of mosques.

Natural rock-fortresses or citadels are numerous in Dersim, but with the single exception of the one at Bagħin (on the Peri Su) they seem to be devoid of inscriptions. These either did not exist or the stones on which they were inscribed have been shaken down by earthquakes and buried, or removed to form material for houses.

The Mazgird citadel lies to the north of the town. It is an imposing isolated mass of black weathered limestone rising several hundred feet high and surmounted by a peak. Its northern and eastern sides are precipitous, but it is more accessible in other directions. Portions of the old walls still exist, and also of staircases cut in the rock. One of these leads round on the north side to a large rock chamber not dissimilar to the one at Toprak Kale in Van, but access to it is difficult. On one side there is a detached crag where a portion of a spiral staircase and the entrance to a rock chamber are visible. This, however, is quite inaccessible. On the perpendicular north side of the fortress, I was pointed out what the natives maintained to be a cuneiform inscription; but the rock was so worn and so difficult of inspection by reason of its position that it is impossible to say if really an inscription existed thereon or not.

Two routes lead over the Mazgird Dagħ to Kezel Kilisé. The winter route which crosses to the east of the town is longer but easier. The summer route, the one selected, crosses the mountains due north of the town. The track is extremely steep and rough and zigzags up what resembles a rock staircase. However, as there are few loose stones, ponies can negotiate it. A climb of 2300 feet brings us to the summit of the range, which has a veritable razor-edge. The reverse slope is more precipitous and huge craggy buttresses which project from its side here