

# **PAZMASHEN**

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## PAZMASHEN

The name Pazmashen is self explanatory; it means a dwelling place with many buildings. The Armenians of Pazmashen, comprised of farmers, artisans, businessmen, and constructors, were renowned throughout the Golden Plain of Kharpert for their products and works, and they were placed among the most advanced groups in the region.

The popular name of the village of Pazmashen was Bezmashen—a name influenced by Turkish misspelling.

To reach the city of Kharpert, located eight or nine miles away from Pazmashen, people traveling on foot needed three hours.

According to a tradition passed down from generation to generation, the village initially was called Gultig. Sometime between late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, after a dark period of time in which the village showed so much construction and prosperity that it was given the name Pazmashen .

Some think that *Pazman* was the initial name of the village, when it was newly established by seven families, most probably in the middle of the twelfth century. There are some places close to Pazmashen with historic names, such as Osman Kar, Bzdi Dap, Bzdi Taroug, Chrnoud Aghpiur.

Pazmashen is located west of the city of Kharpert, and seven miles to the north-west of Mezre. Pazmashen was surrounded by the villages of Khoulakiugh, Artsroug, Jip, Chorkegh, Hnakarag, Hntsor, and others. Approximately ten miles to the south-west of Pazmashen was located the village Khankegh, which was populated by Turks and comprised of fifty households. Eight miles away, there was Khoulakegh, while Soursouri was between Pazmashen and Mezre, closer to the latter.

**The Plain of Pazmashen-** The plain was divided into two parts, one called Lower Yazin, the other Upper Yazin. Both consisted of widespread fields. Lower Yazin extended eastward, reaching the sides of Mount Vorpoug. From there it turned towards the hill of

Khoul\* in Khoulakegh and extended towards the villages of Artsroug and Jip. From the west, Pazmashen's properties reached the boundaries of the villages Khankegh, Hntsor, and Khan. Upper Yazin laid in between mounts Soursouri and Mariam.

**Historical Inscriptions-** There were two inscriptions in the village of Pazmashen depicting its past, but villagers did not know whether they were written in Greek or Assyrian. One was inscribed on the inside wall of the old Armenian Church, while the other was located a mile away from the village, on a well-known "Cross Stone." Both inscription may have been written in the Middle Ages, dating back some six to eight hundred years.

**Population-** Pazmashen was a village populated exclusively by Armenians. It comprised close to 460-500 households, or 3500 individuals. It is possible to add on this last figure, for villagers' households counted numerous members in them. A patriarchal Armenian family would usually gather ten to fifteen family members under one roof. Pazmashen was no exception. The founders of the village and their descendants, in order to protect themselves from barbaric attacks, gathered on top of the hill of Pazmashen and settled there.

In idioms and phrases frequently used by villagers there were traces of historical events and names, such as "He's Hittite," "He's Hetoum," or "He's Mrtad," perhaps indicating the invasions of the Hittites, or Romans, or Mrtads.

Names of locations provide evidence that the old Armenian monuments of the Plain of Kharpert date back to ancient times. In Pazmashen, all fields, springs, mountains, valleys, and holy places carried Armenian names and were recognized as such, despite the distortions they were subjected to by the Turks. This also was an indication that these places belonged to the Armenian kingdom from ancient times.

## SCHOOL AND CHURCH

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\* An artificial hill similar to many others dispersed throughout the Plain of Kharpert. These hills were cultivated by peasants. During the atrocities of 1895, the Turks located cannons on the top of Khoul hill and bombarded the villages.

Half a century before the Armenian Genocide, Pazmashen harbored all three Armenian denominations—Apostolic, Protestant, and Catholic.

Apostolic Armenians were a majority. The least in number were the Catholic Armenians. All three denominations had their churches. The Protestants called their church a meeting house.

In old times, when the village was smaller and known as Pazman, there was a chapel made of bricks called St. Toros. Daily services were performed in the church. There was an old cemetery next to the chapel. It was used until recently for the burial of children. The ruins of the chapel were familiar to the villagers.

In modern times, Pazmashen, as a village inhabited by a larger Armenian community, had its large church named after the Holy Mother of God. It was built of stone in the 1840s. It had arches and a ceiling as high as thirty feet, on top of which stood the dome. Next to the dome was placed the bell. The stones used for construction were brought from a stone mine named Ozmakar (Odzman Kar; that is, Consecration Stone) which was located three and a half miles west of the village. The church was eighty feet wide and one hundred and twenty feet long. The whole construction stood on four pillars between which stretched thick arches. The three broad altars were decorated. The faithful could climb stairs built behind the left and right altars to reach the upper rooms and lodges. These were used by the acolytes and deacons who went there on feast days fully dressed to stand facing each other and sing magnificent hymns. The church also had an upper room designated exclusively for women. It took the villagers four years to build the church which was solemnly consecrated with the participation of many clergymen. Similar to the Holy Mother of God church of Pazmashen were the churches of the city of Kharpert, as well as of Husenig and Kesirig, perhaps built by the same master, especially if they were contemporaries of each other.

The round pillars holding the beautiful arches were each made from one block of stone. All villagers participated in the construction of the church. There were no exceptions.

The dome, closer to the altars rather than at the center, was built of pumice-stone. This helped provide a more sublime look to the church.

Pazmashen once had twelve priests. Among the most recent priests mentioned were Fathers Simon, Giragos, Asadour, Sarkis, and Bedros. These priests divided Pazmashen into sections, each servicing fifty households and sustaining themselves through their gifts.

Priest Sarkis was the most renowned of all the priests. He was studious and had a remarkable collection of old manuscripts and books. Well informed people say that he had in his collection two parchment Gospels from the twelfth century. It was not clear whether the Gospels remained hidden or were discovered by his killers [in 1915].

**The Protestant Church-** Protestantism was introduced to the village in 1874. American missionaries were already established in Kharpert twenty years earlier.

The national church at first opposed them, but later, emotions calmed and followers of both denominations befriended each other. When the Protestants grew in number, they established a meeting house and a school, both located in the same building. Rev. Giragos Khohararian of Dikranagerd [Diarbekir], a graduate of Yeprad College and a learned and respected fellow, served them for years as minister on Sundays and as teacher during the rest of the week.

**The Catholics-** Catholic Armenians comprised ten households. Only during recent years did they possessed their own church and school in Pazmashen with the help of their church in Mezre. Rev. Fr. Hovhannes often visited them from Mezre, until they were able to obtain their own priest. Harutiun Ghungian was their full time teacher until the black year of 1915.

**The Apostolic school\*** - This was a coed school occupying two separate buildings. Beginning in 1890, the school adopted a modern curricula and achieved success.

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\* Understand a school supervised by the Armenian Apostolic Church.

There has been an educational movement prior to 1890. The year 1871 is specifically mentioned as the date of establishment of the first Apostolic school in Pazmashen. The school had a teacher and a few assistants who through their combined efforts taught the alphabet, and then reading, psalms, and ecclesiastical hymns. The students sat on the ground with crossed legs and learned the alphabet writing on plates. In the evenings, after singing a song, the students would come down to the church with their teachers.

Some students were educated by priests at home or in special halls. Psalms and "Nareg" were the main subjects. This kind of education was common in the 1850s and 60s. It is possible that prior to this period, neighborhood monasteries, such as Khoulavank and the convent of Soursouri, hosted a few students. There clergymen taught the students basics, combined with religious subjects.

Villagers harbored a special respect for Apraham Eoksuzian, a skilled, eloquent, and patriotic teacher, who played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Oosoomnasirats (Education-lover) Association. This association later became the nucleus of the Hunchakist Party in Pazmashen.

Of the teachers Ohan Der Bedrosian and Garabed Proudian were also noteworthy. The latter was a graduate of the Central School of Mezre and was married to a Pazmashentsi. He was a great asset for the school. He often lectured to the public from the auditorium. Yeprad College changed school life in Pazmashen and all villages. Illiteracy became almost extinct in Pazmashen after 1900—at a slower pace among the girls than the boys. The efforts and sacrifices of the Oosoomnasirats Association of America played a significant role in this regard also. After 1908, the Apostolic schools possessed modern buildings and education progressed through skilled teachers.

The Apostolic school had six teachers, while the Catholic and Protestant schools each had two male and one female teachers. The Protestants were assisted by the missionaries, while the Apostolic school enjoyed local support and help from the Oosoomnasirats Association of America.

**The Oosoomnasirats Association in Pazmashen-** This association was established in 1888 in Pazmashen. Its founding members were: Babo Ovisian, Mushegh Mortanian, Kasbar Der Giragosian, Babo Ketskhalian, Boghos Shahpazian, Abdal Klojian, Hagop Derderian, Kasbar Dervishian, Markar Terzian, and Hagop Malkhasian. It was almost an exceptional phenomenon to have people gathered in those years to provide for an Armenian school. They were great help to the school in those harsh years, and they served as a good example for neighboring villages.

**The Apostolic Oosoomnasirats Association in America-** Migration from Pazmashen to America began in 1887, when only a few were those who left for the United States from the Plain of Kharpert. The first immigrant was Haji Zadour Maghakian. Soon other young people, such as Boghos (Paul) Movsesian, Markar Shahpazian, Sarkis Malkhasian, and Bedrosian followed.

Barely forty in number, on September 12, 1892, young Pazmashentsis established the Apostolic Oosoomnasirats Association in Chelsea, Massachusetts.

Despite their scanty income and their commitments to sustain their own families they had left behind, their zeal to provide a progressive education for the young generation of Pazmashen was the driving force behind their decision to organize.

According to the current Central Committee, the founding members were: Mourad Ghazarian, Boghos Jigerjian, the Ametjanian brothers, Garabed Ohanian, Mourad N. Jigerjian, Asadour Najarian, Mardiros Peltoyan, Hagop Yeghigian, Dadig H. Nazarian, Sarkis Berberian, Markar Shahbazian, Mgrditch H. Meghdesian, Dado Ghazarian, Abdal B. Klojian, Ohan Tatoyan, Baghdasar Jelloyan, Garabed Eksuzian, Hagop M. Michoyan, Khayajan Mahdesian, Varteres K. Derderian, and Sarkis Jigerjian.

That same year and in the same city, the association convened its first general assembly and added to its rank 65 new members. The assembly set membership fees for both members residing in Pazmashen and those who had migrated to America. Following the assembly, the association registered with the American authorities. The assembly also

resolved to entrust the preparation of the by-laws to Rev. Fr. Hovsep Sarajian,\* pastor of the Holy Savior Church of Worcester. These by-laws are still in use.

After completing these arrangements, the association focused on the village school, providing financial assistance and skilled teachers.

In 1895 Hamid's massacres took place in all six Armenian provinces. Armenian villages suffered heavy damages. Many Pazmashentsis were killed and houses were destroyed.

The association, like many other Armenian organizations in America, rushed financial assistance to Pazmashen to help Pazmashentsis rebuild their homes.

They first helped to construct a new school for boys and girls, and to bring both male and female teachers from Yeprad College. It turned out to be a period of renaissance. The number of students increased to 300.

This encouraging news filled Pazmashentsi expatriates with a new enthusiasm and new members enrolled in the association. Soon it established chapters in Whitensville, Watertown, Brighton, Chelsea, Lynn, and California. The association held regular annual conventions and organized income generating events.

With the introduction of the new Ottoman Constitution [in 1908], Pazmashen attracted new teachers. Although community affairs suffered a little from the political developments of the period, the association planned on building a new, larger school with an auditorium and reading hall in Pazmashen. The plan, however, could not be implemented, because of the horrible tempest that struck the Armenian nation [the Genocide].

When the Oosoomnasirats in America learned about the destruction of not only the schools, but the whole village, they resolved to assist the survivors. The Association temporarily changed its name to the "Rebuilding Association," and it helped the miserable Armenian refugees without discrimination.

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\* Later the first Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church in America.



Around 1919, the Oosoomnasirats contributed, through the AGBU, to the relocation efforts of the survivors from the Plain of Kharpert in Aleppo, and later, it allocated \$3,500 for the construction of "New Kharpert" in [Soviet] Armenia. The association also contributed to the Repatriation movement [in 1946-47] with a \$3,000 donation. Many Pazmashentsis from Aleppo [Syria] and France repatriated to Armenia and settled in New Kharpert.

Throughout the past 65 years, the association supported numerous benevolent projects, including a contribution of \$5,000 to obtain new printing machines for the press at Holy Etchmiadzin.

The association currently maintains eight chapters in America, and a chapter in Aleppo, Syria.

The members of the chapter in California are Bedros Mortanian, Harutiun Terzian, Zakar Ametjanian, Zakar Atamian, Yesav Atamian, Hovagim Ametjanian, and Donabed Hagopian.

The members of the Central Committee of the Eastern United States are: Hagop Pilibbosian, Haig Memishian, Krikor Kalayjian, and Satenig Pilibbosian.

Pazmashentsi farmers and businessmen have attained remarkable positions in America, particularly in California. Vast desolate plains have been turned into beautiful orchards and vineyards through the efforts of Armenians. In this regard, some of the famous Pazmashentsis were Paul Movsesian, Hovagim Ametjian, and Markar Shahpazian among others.

**Pazmashentsi Intellectuals-** Many Pazmashentsis, both male and female, attended Yeprad College in Kharpert and the Central College in Mezre for the purpose of returning to dedicate themselves to educating villagers. Many others came to America where they made their contributions. Noteworthy among the latter are Garabed Malkhasian, who as a writer contributed to American journalism, Hagop Khohararian, and Vartan Shahpazian. The latter actively involved himself in community affairs both in Pazmashen and in

America. His migration to America was a result of the selfless role he played during the persecution of the martyrs Hapet and Hagop. All three intellectuals were Ramgavar leaders and they passed away by natural death. Boghos Bedrosian, a graduate of Yeprad College, also played an important educational role for many years.

## POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Pazmashentsis were known for cherishing their nation and education. School, church, and national affairs were their focus.

The Hunchakist Party was the first political organization to enter Pazmashen. There were a few of them, because Hamid's tyrannical rule chased them with bloody persecutions.

Shemavon of Arapgir often visited and encouraged the Hunchaks in Pazmashen.

The massacres of 1895 brought alertness to the Plain of Kharpert. Villagers began to join political parties. Thus, Pazmashen hosted a few young Hunchaks who, although illiterate, tried to fulfill a national duty. They were incapable of great works; however, they kept the fire burning.

After 1908, in a period of comparative tolerance, the Dashnak Party established a branch with a few young followers. The Ramgavars also had a few followers and tried to give impetus to the task of self-defense, together with the other political parties. But instead of concentrating on the main goal and on self-defense, they had their shortcomings due to a misunderstood sense of competition and conflicts.

Although guns were brought into the village in a limited quantity, as it was done in many other villages, the political parties lacked true cooperation requiring more than words, and the Armenians of Pazmashen were deported and massacred like sheep sacrificed to the hideous Turkish plans.

A famous personality in the 1890s was Apraham Varjabed (Teacher). He lectured and opened the minds of the Armenians in Pazmashen, Khokh, and other villages with regard to the necessity of self-defense without involving himself in partisan conflicts.

### **Heroes Hapet-Hagop Take Refuge in Pazmashen**

In 1904, two heroes, Hapet and Hagop were martyred in Kharpert. Prior to their capture, they found refuge in both Soursouri and Pazmashen. Vartan Shahpazian, the teacher of the village, met them in the cemetery. With the help of some friends, he arranged a secure shelter for the two revolutionaries for three months. They would come out of their shelter only at night for fresh air. Shahpazian guided and provided them with every possible assistance. After spending three months there, the two men, now feeling safe, secretly moved to Soursouri where, unfortunately, they were soon discovered by the authorities, captured, and beheaded in Mezre's square.

### **LUMINOUS PAZMASHEN**

Pazmashen had an exceptional reputation in the Plain of Kharpert and in the remote areas as a luminous village. Before Thomas Edison discovering the electric lamp and before the popularization of kerosene, Pazmashentsis produced a special kind of oil used for light. The oil was prepared from flaxseed by crushing and pressing it with a special technique. Throughout the nineteenth century, this oil was the main source of illumination in the Plain of Kharpert. It was used at a time when kerosene lamps were still unavailable. The oil was poured into earthen pots the size of a hand and was lit by a wick made of yarn. Once burned, it spread light in the houses and large rooms. The oil was used also to lit the lanterns of the churches.

**The Oil Press-** A young man from the house of Menchigian, who was a carpenter by profession, succeeded in making a wooden machine to press the oil. There was no way for them to use iron, therefore, the invention of the machinery by using only durable wood was like a blessing for the whole Plain of Kharpert. Villagers produced oil also from a plant called "Genegertcheg." However, it required for the wick to be continuously moved back and forth to keep it burning regularly, because the oil did not flow smoothly

and the flame often spread all over. The gifted inventor found the remedy. He first roasted the seeds of the plant and then pressed the oil.

In a short time, this oil press, built by the unique talent of the Armenian, was manufactured and used by many.

Pazmashentsis were called *Tsitzdzhakh*; that is, oil-sellers, because many wandered villages and towns shouting "Oil, ey oil!" and selling their products. The name "Tsitzdzhakh" became synonymous to Pazmashen, as the cabbage was a synonym to Kesirig, and the mulberry to Parchenj.

As kerosene lamps replaced other kinds of lamps, the oil industry subsided. However, poor families and churches used the oil lamps until recently. Oil sellers usually filled two huge pumpkins with oil, hung the pumpkins from the two sides of a donkey and toured the villages and towns to sell their oil. Oil production helped advance the cultivation of flax and cotton as a major income source for many families.

Thus, Pazmashentsis can be considered a miniature of the Standard Oil Company for the Plain of Kharpert. Moreover, for the villages of a country as dark and backward as Turkey, Pazmashen's oil provided ten fold the service the Standard Oil Company rendered to mankind.

**Sesame Oil-** Pazmashentsis were also skillful in the production of sesame oil. This healthy oil was used in food preparation, especially Lenten food. They first roasted the sesame, then crushed it in mortars, and made many different foods. They called the sesame oil "Shirig."

Pazmashen had more than forty different oil presses prior to 1895.

**Agriculture-** The majority of Pazmashentsis were attached to the land. Major crops were wheat, barley, flex, and grapes. Every household had at least someone who worked in the fields or in trade. There were famous merchants skilled in selling agricultural products and in export and import of goods. Export was usually conducted by piling the goods on

mules and traveling to Cilicia, Aleppo, Samson, Girason, Tocat, Sepasdia [Sivas], Trabizond, Garin [Erzrum], Dikranagerd [Diarbekir], etc.

**Trades-** The village had almost all the trades it needed. All tradesmen were Armenian— butchers, carpenters, barbers, grocery owners, shoemakers, blacksmiths, painters, sugar makers, etc. The muleteers were famous for the quantities of mules they possessed. They were also known for their courage and for never taking a single step unarmed. Travel in Turkey was an adventure, because Turkish and Kurdish outlaws and robbers often hid along major roads and attack passengers to rob and kill them. They made their living by robbery. Muleteers carrying goods and wealth, were obvious targets to such attacks. Haji\* Zadour Maghakian was particularly famous in this field. His major destination was Adana where he transported goods in huge quantities. Robbers were familiar with his strikes and feared him. His adventures earned him a heroic reputation, and the descriptions of his confrontations were retold like novels. Turkish and Kurd bandits bowed before his exceptional courage in respect. Zadour transported not only goods, but also money filled cases. In recent years, when many obstacles were placed in front of young Armenians willing to migrate, Haji Zadour managed to take them to Adana and from there to a seaport, enabling them to achieve their goal. Haji Zadour, together with a few others, is considered a national hero for Pazmashentsis. He was generous, a protector of the oppressed, and a faithful friend.

Another famous and cunning muleteer was Khara Khacho. Once, while transporting goods to a remote city, Khacho was caught and brought before the governor, accused of traveling without a permit.

The governor asked him: "Where are you coming from?"

"From Khara Pert (Kharpert)," replied Khacho.

"Where are you going?"

"To Khara Hisar."

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\* A title attached to the name of a person who visited the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

"What do you have with you?"

"Khara sakez (gum)."

"What is your name?"

"Khara Khacho."

The governor ordered the gendarmes to set Khacho free, saying: "Everything is black, let him go."

The word "khara" in Turkish meant "black."

**Architects-** The village had its own architects who built houses and churches. Mahdesi [Haji] Khayo was considered the master of greatest skill. He built the church and its magnificent pillars. He had also built the police station of Mezre and other churches in many villages.

**Bailiffs\*** - All beiliffs were Armenian. Among those were Mahdesi Hagop of the Shahbazians, Mahdesi Abdal of the Samelians, Mahdesi Boghos of the Mooradians, Mahdesi Minas of the Dervishians. The latter particularly left a good memory in the village.

**Paper and Cracked Wheat Factory-** The village had a machine to cut cigarette paper. In interior provinces cigarette rolling paper was rare. Garabed Mantashigian was a small-sized, gifted person who cut cigarette papers with his machine and exported them as far as to Dikranagerd. This self-made mechanic also invented a machine that was extremely useful for tillers to sharpen their sickles, as well as an unusual cart driven by a horse. Skillful villagers also managed to establish a factory for cracked wheat.

**A Mill Operating With Gas-** It was a blessing for the village to have a mill which was imported by Aved Najarian and Moorad Jigerjian in 1910 and operated with gas. Perhaps this was the first machine in the entire province that relied on gas and not water for operation. With the arrival of the machine, villagers began to take their wheat to the new

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\* Understand as head of a village.

mill. Many traveled from remote villages to see the machine. The mill operated until 1915, when the savages [Turks] came and ruined everything.

**Winnowing Machine-** Armenians introduced winnowing machines to the entire region. In doing so they liberated the villagers from the caprices of the wind. The machine separated the grain from the hay perfectly and with ease.

**Cotton Weaving-** Cotton weaving was one of the primary trades. Each house weaved its own cotton, although there were men and women who specialized in the trade. They wove belts from wool and flax, towels, bags made of hair, carpets, etc.

**Wine Production-** Almost every house possessed its own vineyard and grapes. Families prepared their own wine and many sweets to be eaten during the winter.

Pazmashen also produced vegetables for each season, such as bitter and sweet cress, and their likes.

**Pazmashen's Mountains-** Pazmashen had four mountains in its neighborhood.\* Mount Mariam, quite high, was in the middle of Tadem and Khoulpank. Mount Sourou extended from the fields of the village to Hntsor and Hnakarag. Mount Vorpug was between Pazmashen and Mezre or Khan Aghpir. This mountain had a cave named St. Zakharia, and a subterranean passage named Tsakouts Hor. It was said that a man required twenty minutes to pass through the passage and to come out of the village. Teenagers often went there with lamps to take a short walk. It was dark and windy. It was also said by the elderly that the passage was used for communication with the outside world during enemy attacks. This passage and its likes are historic relics and await archaeological studies.

**Caves-** Whether natural or man made, the caves had the seal of antiquity. Among those were the cave of Srpanots, Kalpon (Wolf's hide-out), and Moughara. This latter was like a large hall that could hold hundreds of sheep. In addition to its entrance, it had many secret passages often used to escape the cave.

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\* Although the text says four mountains, it names only three.

**Springs-** On the north, there were the springs called Nor Aghpir, Bidag Aghpir, and Eroyé Aghpir. To the west: Gatnaghpiur and Osgayents Aghpir. To the south: Dap Aghpir, Bzdi Dap Aghpir, Mikayelents, and Ghazarents. To the east: Kiughin Aghpir, Narjonts Aghpir, Khayoyi Aghpir, Piloyents Aghpir, etc. There was also a spring called Agh Aghpir which flowed from underneath rocks. It was salty mineral water. The name was derived from the salt.

**Pumice Stone-** Near the village, on a mountain, there was a mine of pumice stone—a black, light but almost unbreakable stone with holes in it. It was used for constructions of buildings and arches.

**Red Soil-** On the slope of the same mountain, there was red soil used by the potters for preparation of pottery for houses and kitchens. This red soil had its peculiarities. Potters took it, made it into a dough, and prepared all kinds of pots, vessels, and casks which villagers filled with wine and food for the winter.

*Tonirs*\* for baking bread were also made of this red soil. Each house had its own tonir room, which was a large hall, the most used part of a house. The objects used in houses—common for almost all villages and towns—were pots and pans of different sizes to either cook or wash hands and clothes in them, jars and pitchers for drinking water, cups, plates, and trays. The largest of the trays filled with different foods was placed on a chair and people sat around it to have their lunch or dinner. Each house was required to have also handles and hooks for the *tonir*, and many other objects made of copper.

**The Cross Stone-** On top of a hill to the west of Pazmashen there was a big one-piece white rock. On it was carved a cross from the Christian era of course, and most probably prior to the Turkish invasion of the region. It was perhaps used for worship; therefore, it was a holy place for the villagers.

**The Massacres of 1895-** Pazmashen, like other villages, tasted the calamities of 1895. Danger was imminent and the youth were organized under Apraham Varjabed's guidance

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\* Ovens dug in the ground for baking purposes.



to resist. The leaders of the youth were Kasbar Memishian, Boghos Shahpazian, Hekim Kevork, and Donabed Ghazarian. They first obtained guns and then guarded the village and its surroundings in order to prevent the Turkish and Kurd mob from entering the village. The attack began on a Saturday, and the youth responded. Both sides fired their guns for hours. When the Armenians noticed that they were left with a few bullets only, many villagers managed to get out of the village to the plain of Mezre where thousands of Armenians seeking salvation gathered.

Pazmashen was looted, but only a few were killed. Among those was Kasbar Memishian who selflessly defended the village.

A few days later, orders came for peace and the villagers returned to their destroyed and looted village to find corpses on the streets.

The survivors worked hard to remedy their losses. It did not take them long to rebuild and normalize their lives. Stories of the horrible massacres were told to the younger generation as a sad experience left behind.

#### THE GENOCIDE OF 1915

In the spring of 1915, Pazmashen, like all other villages of the Plain of Kharpert, received orders to send all males between the ages of 18 and 50 to the army either as soldiers or laborers. Soon those were driven to the army. The villagers were naive and they did not sense the extent of the catastrophe.

Soon after the departure of the men, authorities came to collect all of the guns. Mr. Ehman, the head of a German establishment, came with the Turks and encouraged the population to give up their guns in order to avoid complications.

The villagers gathered for a consultation. The youth was gone. The village was full of aged people, women, and children left alone. There was no way to obtain information from nearby villages and they had no hope for any assistance.

These assembled took into consideration the fact that the village was unable to resist by force. Therefore, they decided to give up the guns and put their faith in the hands of God.

At that time they did not know that those Armenians called for army service had been treacherously killed.

So they implemented the decision and handed over to the authorities what they had—a few Greek guns, about ten German guns, pistols, and bullets.

The day after the guns were collected, Turkish gendarmes and police entered the village and began to implement their unspeakable acts. Old men and boys less than twelve years old were beaten, tortured, and taken to Mezre. At consequent nights, the Turks tied these Armenians to each other and took them either towards the mountains of Nar Oghli or Dzovk, and killed them ruthlessly.

Here is a tragic incident of those days. Arshag—the son of Harutiun Khugoyan, a long time teacher in Pazmashen—had just graduated the college and was hiding in the village until the guns were collected. The Turks discovered him. Beating and smashing his head and arms, they took him away. Arshag's mother, all in pain, in order to save her son, went from her house to the church on her knees and hands, asking God for His protection. At the church she fell dead on the ground.

The elderly and the women were still full of hope that they would remain in the village and survive. They soon witnessed women and children from Garin, Erzinjan, and other places passing through the plain. Hungry, thirsty, and dead beaten, the deportees left their children in the fields or on the edges of the roads. Many of the children died right at the spot with sighs that made the heavens shiver.

Some Pazmashentsi women, despite the hardship, went and picked some of those children to take care of them like their own, not knowing that soon their own children would suffer the same fate at the hands of Turkish savages.

In the beginning of July, the Turks ordered the villagers to ready themselves for deportation within three days. Since Pazmashen did not have Turkish or Kurdish villages in its neighborhood, many thought of traveling to Mezre to sell their valuables in order to have money for the road. On the morning of deportation, villagers opened the doors of

their houses and barns and stables to set their animals free to graze on their own. They could have yoked the oxen to the carts to travel more comfortably had the Turks allowed it. Villagers were able to take with them only little provisions piled on donkeys or mules. The first night they spent in the mountains near Khan village. Many were robbed there and many of the women were raped. The following morning, terrified, on their way to the Euphrates they saw the sides of the road lined with corpses. Before crossing the river, all animals were taken away. Soon the Kurds of the region attacked them, robbed them, and kidnapped the pretty girls. Only a few Kurds familiar to certain Pazmashentsis sheltered women and children they knew without touching them.

The deportees crossed the river deprived of their animals and belongings. Mardig Samuelian, an educated teenager was sick. He and his nineteen year-old wife threw themselves in the river only to immediately die from the bullets fired on them. The rest of the deportees suffered a horrible fate.

About ten Pazmashentsis who had escaped the army were hiding in the village. Another ten old people also had managed to find a hiding place and avoid deportation. After a short period of time, the Turks declared a false amnesty which encouraged some of those in hiding to surrender themselves and thereupon to be killed. The few survivors were secretly fed throughout winter by Armenian girls staying with Turks. When the Turks found out about the food, they threatened the girls to stop feeding the hidden Armenians. Consequently, the men were left hungry. They made a final attempt to go to Kurds they were familiar with asking for their support. All were immediately put to death. The only survivor of this group, Ohan Vosgian, later went to the Caucasus. Krikor Maghakian and his son-in-law Garabed Eoksuzian also were among the survivors, but they were sheltered by the American counsel. It was said that Chelmoyan Mikayel, a seven feet tall, red-haired giant, and his nephew Moushegh were the only men left in the village with their families. They enjoyed the protection of a Turkish officer from Mezre. Shortly after deportation, Mikayel and Moushegh were forcibly Turkified and their possessions were

taken away by Turks. Later, when Armenian volunteers from the Caucasus reached Keghi, the Chelmoyans were killed by the hands of the subordinates of the same Turkish officer. In addition to the above mentioned survivors, Felix Horoyan, Yeghia Malkhasian, and Kasbar Hovhannesian were the only 13 and 14 year-old teenagers who survived by hiding in the village or in its neighborhood. They later managed to go to Dersim and join the Armenian volunteers.

Here is the story of Mrs. Khatchkhatoun Ghazarian, a survivor who now lives in Tulare, California.

"When we crossed the Euphrates and approached Malatia, a Turkish mob surrounded us guided by Turkish officials. Their poisonous eyes and their curses and threats were unspeakable. First, they separated the old men, took them two hundred feet away, and killed them. Then, they discovered men and boys hiding in women's dresses. These were stripped of their dresses, taken a little farther, and shot to death. A group of young and old women and children remained. They were joined by a similar crowd brought from other places. The following day we were driven towards the south crossing hills and mountain slopes. We were surrounded by savage Turkish officers and horsemen. The presence of ordinary Turks around us kept us in constant fear. Around noon we were tired and thirsty. Suddenly we saw fire and smoke all around us. Those who were left behind rushed ahead, while those who were ahead, retreated back. The more the crowd stuck together, the more the fire approached us. Luckily, the dry grass was not thick and the fire was not strong enough, therefore we managed to come out of the fire with little harm. Meanwhile, outside the circle of fire, Turks sat laughing on their horses.

A few days later, old women were no longer able to walk. They fell in desolate places calling for death. When we were passing by a rivulet, my mother-in-law, Mother Ghazarian, who always encouraged us, fell down unable to breathe. We, a group of women, approached to help her. She refused and said: "My darlings, I don't want food. Just leave me with a little of water. God be with you. I would not say that had God

existed, we would not have been in such a situation. We were deceived once again. There are many Armenians in America, Egypt, and Persia. You know what to do with the Turks."

We tearfully left the tortured and near-death mother behind and joined the procession of death.

There were days, when mothers with three or four children, tortured and exhausted, would leave their youngest child under a bush or next to a rock to be able to care for the rest. And as misery intensified and desperation grew, mothers abandoned their three or four year old children, telling them: "My darling, you sit here; don't be afraid. I'll bring you bread and water. Don't cry; I'll bring you candy and syrup." The children would seat next to a rock or a bush tired and scared.

The procession of death moved on decreasing gradually in number. There were mothers who lost their sanity after abandoning their children. Crazy, they ran out of the procession. The gendarmes killed these unfortunate creatures with the butts of their guns. We forgot the days and months. We were told that we had arrived near Urfa. We heard that our countrymen in Urfa had courageously fought the Turks, killed many of them, but finally were killed. We blessed them and felt proud for the fact that there were brave Armenians who fought back, not victims of deceit like us.

One day we found ourselves in the desert. Another day, when we woke up, we saw neither horses, nor horsemen. The horizon was the same everywhere. Where did we come from and where should we go? No one knew the answer. The crowd divided itself into groups and moved ahead aimlessly. We were surrounded by fierce desert people who stripped us naked. It was difficult to recognize one another without our dresses and I lost my relatives. I continued my way with only my little daughter and Hratch, the son of my sister-in-law. Wherever I noticed human beings, I approached them hoping to find a relative. The extreme heat of the day would faint us from thirst, but the cool of nights would help us recover. We ate wild plants and roots. The sun burnt and cracked our skins

and they were filled with worms. We were so powerless that we could not even scratch the worms away from the backs of one another. One day, I noticed men resembling us gathered in a place. Expecting to find water, I went there with my two children. I saw a hole in the likeness of a well. People were coming out of it with muddy mouths. I went down, cooled my mouth with the mud, and brought some mud with me for my Nvart and Hratch. Then I was caught by a maddening desperation. I thought to myself, others willfully abandoned their children, if I manage to save my Nvart, it would be great. I can no longer keep Hratch. Then I turned to five-years-old Hratch and told him: "Hratch, darling, you stay here. We'll fetch water to you." The child stood there stunned. Then, when we were about thirty feet away, he cried and shouted: "Harso\*! Harso! I am scared. Don't leave me here."

The voice of the child has never left me, nor will it for as long as I live. Later, although my little daughter was taken away from me, and it caused me great grievance, what I did to Hratch tortures me to date."

Many Hratches were sacrificed to the burning deserts.

Thus, unlimited number of Pazmashentsis and others perished on mountain roads and in the deserts of Arabia. Only three hundred orphans and widows survived from our village of 4500-5000 inhabitants. The life of each survivor was a Calvary by itself.

In 1918, after the end of the war, some survivors went back to their nest, to Pazmashen, like birds with broken wings. They found their village in ruins. Except for a few houses around a spring, all other houses and stores were leveled and even trees and orchards were uprooted. The few remaining houses were occupied by Turkish and Kurdish refugees. In those days two brave young Pazmashentsis arrived in the village. They had served the French army and upon the decision of the French to abandoned Cilicia, they chose to travel to their home village. These two brave Pazmashentsis were Minas Dervishian and Avak Goshgarian.

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\* Bride.

When Minas and Avak saw the orphans and widows living in the open, while Turks resided in Armenian houses, they not only threatened the Turks as French soldiers, but also managed to move them away from the village. Consequently, they placed some survivors in the freed houses, and took the rest to Khoulavank and other places. Today, Pazmashentsi survivors live in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, America, and Armenia. Fifteen families still live in Pazmashen. Prior to 1914, more than three hundred Pazmashentsis came to America. Their numbers have multiplied thrice. Had we been able to gather all living Pazmashentsis with their sons in the paternal land and accommodate them, we would have had a more glorious village, with more buildings filled with the precious memories and traditions of the old village.

#### PECULIARITIES OF THE LANGUAGE

The dialect of Pazmashen, of course, was similar to that of the Plain of Kharpert. However, it had its minor differences, mostly the result of nuances in pronunciation. Words were slightly distorted, as was the case in other villages. The abbreviation of proper names was very common throughout the plain, as if to save time and reduce lip movements to their minimum. Thus, they said Mko instead of Mikayel, Koko instead of Krikor, Ago for Hagop, Dipan for Sdepan, etc.

Villagers changed also the plural form of proper names. For example, the Mahdesiank became Mkhsonk, the Ghazarians Kharzonk, the Derderians Derdrank. These abridged plural forms were common to the region and not particular to Pazmashen.

<.....>

**Peasant Songs-** There were peasant songs common to the villages of Kharpert. These songs were performed with minor changes in one village or another. Pazmashentsis brought some of the songs to America.

While dressing the groom, they sang:

Take off the hat, take off the hat,

Congratulate him, for the youngster has flourished,

Take off the jacket, take off the jacket,

Congratulate him, for the youngster has flourished.

After taking off the clothes of the groom and putting new ones on him, they sang:

Our incense tree has flourished,

Our incense tree has flourished,

Like the crown of a flower,

Hey man, hey man, hey man!

Even the queen is not like you,

Even the queen is not like you,

Is not like your green sun,

Hey man, hey man, hey man!

Go get the handsome grandfather,

To come to see the tree flourish,

Like the crown of a flower,

Hey man, hey man, hey man!

Then singers would repeat one by one:

Go and get the beautiful mother...

Go and get the beautiful sister...

Go and get my little brother...

Then on behalf of the groom, they would sing:

Grandpa, you are lawful

Grandpa, you are lawful

I beseech you,

Make it lawful to me.

Then they would sing repetitively: mother, you are lawful, then sister, then brother, etc.

**Song and Dance-** Pazmashen, like other villages in Kharpert, had its own songs and dances which have charmed generations and made their lives joyful. Many of the songs



were authored by unknown Armenian troubadours, and their music, like the sounds of nature, lived on the lips of the villagers.

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## PROVERBS

Lentil cannot get wet in his mouth - He cannot keep even the slightest secret.

The cotton is above the spring - The person is insane.

I am not the Arab of your father - I don't work for free.

A man with his clothes; a donkey with its saddle - Clothes are important.

There is no salt in our bread - We are not appreciated.

If you speak, you're bad, if not, you're an ass.

God looks at the mountain and sends the storm - A person deserves his state.

No matter how high a mountain you are, someday a road will be built on you - Don't be arrogant.

Thousands of bells and much ado aren't worth a spoon of soup - irrelevant matters.

He swims in a waterless place - He is insane.

It can't be eaten even with a pan full of oil - A person is ugly, or something is tasteless.

He who hits a dog, looks at the owner - A person should respect the elderly.

I have finished riddling and have hung the riddle on the wall - I am done with my project.

By the time the thick gets thin, the thin perishes.

Who admits that his yogurt drink is sour?

A dog does not bark from one village against another - know your limits.

I know both the place you fly to and the place you rest in - I know your secret.

House keeper, be righteous; otherwise you'll be black-faced on the day of judgment - be righteous.

Until the wise thinks, the crazy crosses the bridge - Don't be shy.

The cover rolled and found the pot - perfect marriage [match].

He preaches to others and cheats himself - unreliable.

He grew up late, but learned fast - A wheeler-dealer.

I am a lord, you are a lord; who will grind our flour? - Don't be lazy.

In the absence of the lady, the broom has become a lady - There is no head in the house.

Riding a donkey is one insult, stepping down is another - when you begin a project, finish it; don't leave it incomplete.\*

Note:

a. <.....> is an indication of omitted sections. Translation of such sections either is meaningless or will require time-consuming effort because of the use of dialect.

b. One proverb is omitted as meaningless.

*Translated from the book, "Kharpert and Her Golden Plain," edited by Vahe Haig, New York, 1959, pp. 836-855.*

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\* Mr. Zakar Ghazarian was a great help in the preparation of this section and the collection of the material.

1- St. Asdvadzadzin (Holy Mother of God) Church of Pazmashen

2- Mourad Ghazarian, the only surviving founding member of the Oosoomnasirats Association of Pazmashen; an Armenian dedicated to community affairs for long years.

3- The Central Committee of California of the Oosoomnasirats Association of Pazmashen  
Front row, left to right: Harutiun Terzian, Donabed Hagopian, and Hovagim Ametjanian.  
Second row, left to right: Yesav Atamian, Zakar Ametjanian, Bedros Mortanian, and Zakar Atamian.

4- Boghos Jigerjian, founder of the Apostolic Oosoomnasirats Association of Pazmashen.

5- V. Shahbazian

6- Grandfather Maghak the brave.

7- [Maghak's] grandson and son Haji Zadour Maghakian.

8- Moushegh Ajemian when he was young. A Pazmashentsi active in community affairs and for years Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Pan-Kharpetsi Union.

9- Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hovagim Ametjian of Tulare city near Fresno. A graduate from Stanford University in the fields of Social and Economic Sciences. Currently superintendent of the elementary schools of the District of Tulare.

10- Five brothers in the service of the American army

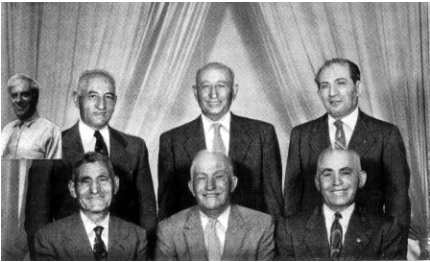
The five sons of Mr. and Mrs. Nshan and Anna Ametjanian of Pazmashen. Left to right: Vahe (Vernon), the youngest who serves in Korea; Leut. Colonel Mikayel, graduated in 1940 from the Military Academy of West Point and now serving in Germany; Arshavir who has served the army as mechanic and Captain; Azad who has served in the air force as first Corporal; and Harutiun (Harry) who has served as mechanic and Major.



*Saint Asdvazdadzin (Holy Mother of God) Church of Pazmashen*



*Mourad Ghazarian*



*Central Committee of California of the Oosoomsirats Association of Pazmashen*



*Boghos Jigerjian*



*V. Shahbazian*



*Grandfather Magak the Brave*



*Maghak's grandson and son  
Haji Zadour Maghakian*



*Moushegh Ajemian*



*..... Ametjian*



*Five brothers in the service of the American Army*

*The five are the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Nishan and Anna Ametjanian of Pazmashen. Left to right: Vahe, the youngest who serves in Korea; Lt. Colonel Mikayel, graduated in 1940 from the Military Academy of West Point and now serving in Germany; Arshavir who has served the army as a mechanic and Captain; Azad who has served in the Air Force as First Corporal; and Harutiun (Harry) who has served as mechanic and Major.*