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FROM MOUNT MUSA TO SINJAR MOUNT. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELF-DEFENSE FIGHTS

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The study of self-defense battles of victim groups during genocides is no less important than the study of the crimes themselves. The purpose of this article is to study the self-defense battles of Armenians during the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire and the Yazidi Genocide carried out by ISIS in the Iraqi province of Sinjar (Shangal). In particular, the article provides a comparative analysis between the self-defense battles of Mount Musa and Mount Sinjar (Shangal).

The study combines historical-comparative and analytical methods to achieve the stated goals and objectives. The article has used both primary and secondary sources, as well as interdisciplinary research by specialists.

As a result of the comparative analysis conducted in the article, both common features and differences were revealed between the self-defense battles of Mount Musa and Mount Sinjar during the Armenian Genocide and the Yazidi Genocide. Despite the almost century-long period separating these two cases, there are certain similarities and significant differences between the self-defense of the Armenians and the Yazidis.

To emphasize the rejection of genocides in the world, I dedicate this article to the 90th anniversary of *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*.

Keywords: *the Armenian Genocide, the Ottoman Empire, Mount Musa, the Yazidi Genocide, Iraq, Mount Sinjar (Shangal), self-defense fights.*

Introduction

After the Armenian Genocide committed by the Ottoman Empire and the Holocaust committed by Nazi Germany during World War II, the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted in 1948, did not prove an obstacle for various regimes to continue to resort to criminal policies of genocide not only in the second half of the 20th century, but also in the 21st century. The crimes committed by the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) against the Yezidi population of Sinjar (Shingal) province in Iraq, serve as an example of genocide

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in the 21st century. An example of genocide in the 21st century are the crimes committed by the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) against the Yezidi population of Sinjar (Shangal) province in Iraq. The extremist Sunni terrorist organization ISIS was formed in 2004 on the basis of some organizations of the international terrorist network Al-Qaeda, which was financed by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The organization also had internal sources of financing, provided by the sale of oil, other natural resources, valuable historical and cultural heritage sites and strategic assets in the territories under its control, as well as income from ransoms for hostages

Organization of self-defense and resistance to Genocide on Mount Musa and Mount Sinjar

As is well known, the Turkish authorities in the Ottoman Empire pursued a discriminatory policy towards Armenians and other Christian peoples, placing them outside the law and not providing even the most basic rights to life and property security (Akcham, 2015, p. 416, 551).

During the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the same policy of persecution and harassment was carried out against the Yezidis (Dinnayi, 2013, p. 5), which took on more extreme manifestations on the part of extreme Islamist, terrorist organizations that became active in the country after the overthrow of the latter's regime. The most influential of these was ISIS, which took control of some regions of Iraq and began to persecute the non-Sunni population living in these territories: Shiite Muslims, Yezidis, and Christians (Murazi, 2015, p. 46-47). It is characteristic that while the local Kurds and Muslim population actively participated in the policy of the Turkish authorities to exterminate Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (Avakyan, 1999, p. 91), part of the local Arab Sunni population in the Sinjar region of Iraq formed armed groups and joined the terrorists of the Islamic State and destroyed the Yezidis (Murazi, 2015, p. 19).

When the policy of discrimination and persecution reached its climax and developed into genocide, the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the Yezidis in Iraq were forced to resort to self-defense despite the extreme inequality in the balance of power and resources. Thanks to self-defense battles, some of the Armenian and Yezidi population managed to escape, and in doing so, thwarted the implementation of the criminal plan of their complete extermination.

During the genocide the Armenians managed to organize self-defense battles in some centers of the liberation movement: Van (A-Do, 1917, Lepsius 1919, Nogales, 1926); Musa Dag (Andreasyan, 1915, Hushamatyan, 1970, Gasparyan, 2005); Shapin-Karaisar (Ter-Harutyunyan, 1917; Sahakyan, 2005); Fetnchag (Adamyan, 1921, Poghosyan, 1988), Urfa (Sahakyan, 1955) and other settlements, thanks to which, they managed, to a certain extent, fail the policy of the Turkish authorities on carrying out the complete extermination of the Armenians of Western Armenia and other

Armenian-populated regions of the empire. Among these, the uneven resistance battles in Van and Mount Musa actually ended in victory for the Armenians.

From the end of July to August 3, 1915, Turkish authorities tried several times to deport the Armenians of the province of Suetia, located in the northeast of the Mediterranean, but the majority of residents of the Armenian villages of Kabusie, Vagf, Haji Habibli, Yoganoluk, Khdrbek and Bitias decided to disobey the order and climb the nearby Mount Musa, taking with them essentials and pets and prepared for self-defense.

Of the 6,311 inhabitants of the six Armenian villages of Suetia, 4,231 people climbed Mount Musa (Gasparyan, 2005, p. 126). Only 8-10 families of Kessab and a small part of the residents of the villages of Bitias and Haji Habibli were deported, deceived by the empty promises of the authorities. Subsequently, the Austro-Hungarian consul in Aleppo Dandini reported that Ottoman troops massacred about 3 thousand Armenians from the mentioned settlements (Hovannisian, 1991, p. 255).

Almost 100 years after the heroic self-defense of Mount Musa, on August 3, 2014, more than 140 thousand Yezidis, faced with the threat of genocide as a result of an attack by the terrorist organization ISIS, following the example of the Armenian villages of Suetia, climbed Mount Sinjar (Shingal) for the purpose of salvation. The attacks and massacres of the Yezidis were aimed at exterminating or assimilating the Yezidis through Islamization. ISIS killed all Yezidis who refused to convert to Islam (Kochoi & Khasan, 2017, p. 118).

The number of the defenders of the population who took refuge in Mount Musa totalled 600, while the weapons and ammunition was limited. Under the leadership of Yesai Yagubyan, Tigran Andreasyan, Movses Ter-Galustyan, Petros Tmlakyan and Petros Tutaglyan a special military body was created, which divided the mountain into four defensive regions in which self-defense units were stationed (Shemmassian, 2020, pp. 333-340).

The protection of the Yezidis in Sinjar was complicated by the fact that about 5,000 Kurdish fighters from the Peshmerga formation of the Autonomous Region of Iraqi Kurdistan, who invaded the region on June 11, 2014, under the pretext of protecting the Yezidis, disarmed the Yezidi self-defense units and, a few hours before the attack by ISIS terrorists, retreated from Sinjar, leaving the Yezidi population completely defenseless (Kochoi & Khasan, 2017, pp. 120-121). In May 2016, this fact was also recognized by the Speaker of the Parliament of Iraqi Kurdistan, Yu. Sadiq, who confirmed that the commanders of the Peshmerga detachments not only knew about the impending terrorist attack on Shingal, but actually became accomplices in the genocide of the Yezidis. The head of the Kurdish parliament believes that the leaders of the Kurdish forces should be held accountable for allowing ISIS to infiltrate Shingal, take control of the territory and take thousands of women and girls hostage (*"Glava Parlamenta Kurdistan obvinil"*, 2016).

In these difficult conditions certain Yezidi self-defense units - "Shingal Self-Defense forces" and "Shingal Self-Defense Unit" were formed, the number of fighters

of which reached 6,000. Later, a female Yezidi detachment of about 1,000 people was also formed (Murazi, 2015, p. 84-85).

After the decision on the disobedience of the Armenians of Suetia, the officers of the Ottoman army announced that those who had climbed Mount Musa would be disposed of within 24 hours. On August 7, without proper reconnaissance, about 200 Turkish soldiers tried to advance towards the Armenian positions, but suffered losses and were driven back. The Armenians of Mount Musa not only repelled the Turkish attack on August 10, but also launched a counterattack, forcing the enemy to retreat. On August 19, already with the support of artillery fire, the enemy launched a large-scale offensive in several directions. However, after long, fierce battles, the enemy suffered significant losses and was forced to stop the offensive (Andreasyan, 1915, p. 38).

The Yezidi self-defense forces of Sinjar initially tried to repel the attack by ISIS, but due to the lack of weapons and ammunition they were forced to retreat into the mountains, as a result of which the southern part of the Yezidi-populated region came under the control of the terrorists (Grigoryan, 2016, p. 167). Limited forces were sufficient only for the protection of the Yezidis, who were hiding on Mount Sinjar and for the defense of the Sharfadin temple.

Despite the military success it was getting harder and harder for the Armenians who had taken refuge on Mount Musa, since, on the one hand, the food supplies were running out, and on the other hand, the enemy was concentrating additional forces increasing the number of troops to 15 thousand (Gasparyan, 2005, p. 136).

Tens of thousands of Yezidis besieged on Mount Sinjar found themselves in practically the same situation, and the same fate awaited them as the Armenians of Mount Musa. On the one hand, they were threatened with starvation due to the lack of food, and on the other hand, the terrorists were constantly attacking, trying to break through the resistance of the Yezidi self-defense forces stationed on Mount Sinjar, trying to climb the mountain and exterminate the population hiding there (Arango, 2014).

Rescue of the self-defenders of Musa Dag and Mount Sinjar from Genocide

The only possible salvation for the Armenians of Mount Musa was the Mediterranean Sea, where British and French warships were patrolling. To attract their attention, the Armenians prepared two flags. The first had a large red cross embroidered on it, while the other bore the English words "Christians in danger". On September 5, the French cruiser "Guichen" suddenly appeared in the coastal waters of Mount Musa. The captain of the French warship promised to help the Armenians (Kevorkyan, 2015, p. 83).

On September 7, the enemy launched another large-scale attack, which continued until the evening, but did not bring any significant results (Lepsius, 1919, p. 467). On September 10, the long-awaited help finally arrived. Captain Bristol of the cruiser Guichen ordered the bombardment of the Ottoman troops and arsenal in Kabusiye (Kevorkyan, 2015, p. 91).

Over the course of two days, women, children and the elderly were transferred to the ships, while the men remained in position to ensure their safe evacuation. In total, 4201 Armenians from Mount Musa were saved and moved to the settlement of Port Said in Egypt (Shemmassian, 2020, p. 375).

If the French fleet came to the aid of the Armenians of Mount Musa at the last moment, the silence around the plight of tens of thousands of Yezidis who had taken refuge on Mount Sinjar was broken on August 7, when US President Barack Obama made a special statement regarding the situation around the Yezidis in Iraq. Obama said that at the request of the Iraqi government, the United States took measures to rescue civilians remaining in the mountains. The US President noted that, as necessary, precision airstrikes on terrorist positions have been authorized so that Iraqi forces can lift the siege of Mount Sinjar (Shangal) and protect the civilian population there (Statement by the President, 2014). In order to provide humanitarian aid to the besieged population, American military aircraft delivered 130 thousand liters of drinking water and 114 thousand food packages to Mount Sinjar. British warplanes also provided humanitarian aid to the Yezidis, and air forces from France, Germany and Australia joined in later (Kochoi, 2014, p. 68).

Although on August 14 the US President announced the release of the Yezidis from blockade of Mount Sinjar, the latter claim that after the end of the military operation the international community showed criminal inaction in the matter of freeing thousands of their compatriots who were held hostage by ISIS terrorists (Kochoi & Khasan, 2016, p. 104).

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However, the support of the US and its allies alone could not save the tens of thousands of Yezidis who had found shelter on Mount Sinjar. The units of the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) came to the aid of the Yezidi self-defense forces, first providing the Yezidi forces with weapons and ammunition, and then, conducting a joint military operation, opening a corridor to Syria for Yezidi refugees who were left to die of starvation on Mount Sinjar (Grigoryan, 2016, p. 167-168). More than 120,000 Yezidi refugees moved to Syria through this corridor, 80,000 of whom settled in the Nowrz refugee camp and other settlements established by the Syrian branch of the PKK, about 30,000 crossed the Turkish border, and about 20,000 refused to leave their homelands and continued to remain in the mountains ("Chislennost' ezidskikh bezhencev dostigaet", 2014).

Following this success, the Shangal Self-Defense Unit command managed to establish relations with the Iraqi government, and the Yezidi unit was officially recognized as a unit of the Iraqi army. On September 14, 2014, a temporary Yezidi parliament consisting of 27 people was formed in Shangal, announcing that a

legitimate government would be formed through democratic elections after the complete liberation of Shangal, (Murazi, 2015, p. 84). Later, on December 19, by the order of the leader of Iraqi Kurdistan, M. Barzani, the Peshmerga units returned to Sinjar, creating the impression that they were liberating the region, although most of it continued to remain under the control of ISIS. The commanders of the Yezidi forces were compelled to join the Peshmerga, thus trying to cover up the criminal withdrawal of the Kurdish formations from Sinjar and to create a false appearance that they were fighting against ISIS. Realizing the background of these processes, the commanders of the Yezidi forces refused to fulfill this demand (Murazi, 2015, p. 85).

Conclusions

Summarizing the comparative analysis of the self-defense battles on Mount Musa and Mount Sinjar during the Armenian Genocide and the Yezidi Genocide in Iraq, it can be stated that, in addition to the presented similarities, some differences are also noted, of which the following can be highlighted:

1. If during the First World War the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire fought unequal self-defense battles to resist the genocidal policy of the Turkish government, as a result of the weakening of the central government in Iraq, the Yezidis were forced to defend themselves from the attacks of the terrorist organization ISIS, whose goal was their Islamization or annihilation;

2. The 40-day heroic self-defense of Mount Musa was just one of the self-defense battles that took place during the Armenian Genocide, while the 10-day self-defense of Mount Sinjar was a collective struggle to save tens of thousands of Yezidis from being exterminated by terrorists.

After the self-defense of Mount Musa, the withdrawal of the Armenians to Port Said, and then the continuation of the policy of genocide by the Kemalists, who in 1921 organized new mass pogroms in Cilicia, the Armenians of Suetia were finally deprived of the opportunity to return to their homes, since the Turkish authorities limited the return of Ottoman Armenians to their native lands. In contrast, after the retreat of ISIS units, the Yezidis who had remained on Mount Sinjar were given the opportunity to gradually return to their native lands

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflict of interests in this research.

Ethical standards

The author affirms this research does not involve human subjects.

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ՄՈՒՍԱ ԼԵՈՒՑ ՄԻՆՉԵՎ ՄԻՆՋԱՐ ԼԵՈ. ԻՆՔՆԱՊԱՇՏՊԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՄԱՐՏԵՐԻ ՀԱՄԵՄՏԱԿԱՆ ՎԵՐԼՈՒԾՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ

Արմեն Մարություն

Ցեղասպանությունների ժամանակ զոհված խմբերի ինքնապաշտպանական մարտերի ուսումնասիրությունը ոչ պակաս կարևոր է, քան հենց հանցագործությունների ուսումնասիրությունը: Այս հոդվածի նպատակն է ուսումնասիրել թուրքական իշխանությունների կողմից Օսմանյան կայսրությունում Հայոց ցեղասպանության ժամանակ ինքնապաշտպանական մարտերը և Իրաքի Սինջար (Շանգալ) նահանգում ԴԱԻՇ-ի կողմից իրականացված եզդիների ցեղասպանությունը: Հոդվածում, մասնավորապես, համեմատական վերլուծություն է տրվում Մուսա լեռան և Սինջար լեռան (Շանգալ) ինքնապաշտպանական մարտերի միջև:

Ուսումնասիրությունը համատեղում է պատմական, համեմատական և վերլուծական մեթոդները՝ իր նպատակներին և խնդիրներին հասնելու համար: Հոդվածում օգտագործվել են ինչպես առաջնային, այնպես էլ երկրորդական աղբյուրներ, ինչպես նաև մասնագետների միջառարկայական հետազոտություններ:

Հոդվածում կատարված համեմատական վերլուծության արդյունքում բացահայտվել են ինչպես ընդհանրություններ, այնպես էլ տարբերություններ Մուսա լեռան և Սինջար լեռան ինքնապաշտպանական մարտերի միջև: Հայոց ցեղասպանության և եզդիների ցեղասպանության ժամանակ: Չնայած այս երկու դեպքերն իրարից բաժանող գրեթե հարյուրամյա շրջանին, հայերի և եզդիների ինքնապաշտպանության միջև կան որոշակի նմանություններ և էական տարբերություններ:

Շեշտադրելով աշխարհում բոլոր ցեղասպանությունների մերժումը՝ այս հոդվածը նվիրում է «Մուսա լեռան քառասուն օրը» վեպի 90-ամյակին:

Բանալի բառեր՝ Հայոց ցեղասպանություն, Օսմանյան կայսրություն, Մուսա լեռ, եզդիների ցեղասպանություն, Իրաք, Սինջար (Շանգալ) լեռ, ինքնապաշտպանական մարտեր:

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THE HEROIC BATTLE OF MOUNT MUSA AND THE VALIANT DEEDS OF THE ARMENIAN WOMEN

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This article, dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Franz Werfel's heroic novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, presents the valiant deeds and heroism of Armenian women during the self-defense of Mount Musa, when Mount Musa of Suetia province became one of the prominent self-defense centers of Armenians. Our analysis of this heroic episode of Armenian history presents the reader with a new genocidal policy adopted and elaborated against the Armenians by the government of the Ottoman Empire in 1915. In our study, we have used works published in Armenia and abroad, some of which are primary sources.

Keywords: *Ottoman Empire, genocidal politics, Suetia region, Mount Musa, heroic battle, heroic Armenian women, cruiser "Guishen".*

Introduction

On July 26, 1915, the Armenian population of Kessap received an order to evacuate. Some naive people, believing the government's false promises, thought their departure was temporary. They made up a third of the population, and the rest, more than four thousand people, decided to resist the bloodthirsty enemy. About 800 of them were able to bear arms. And they faced the lack of armory: only one Greek "Kra" rifle, 7 Mausers, 450 antique and hunting rifles were at their disposal. 80-100 bullets were available for each rifle (Pursalean, 2004, p. 13.). In addition, there was enough gunpowder and lead (Plumbum) to produce 30.000 bullets.

The question of choosing a base for self-defense was extremely important. Some proposed to gather all the people in the best-situated village and turn it into a fortress. Finally, at the suggestion of reverend Tigran Andreasyan and Movses Ter-Galustyan, it was decided to settle on the top of Musa Mountain, the height of which was 1800 meters, the area - 70-80 square kilometers ("Medz yegherni herosapatum", 1982, p. 30).

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The Beginning of the operation of self-defense

On July 31, 1915, the operation to climb the mountain began, which lasted three days. For centuries, the Armenian community lived at the foot of Mount Musa with 6 villages, among which were Bitias, Haji-Habibli, Yoghunoluk, Khdrbek, Vagif and Kebusie. The mentioned Armenian villages were administratively part of the Antioch County of the Alexandret District of Aleppo Province, forming a part of Suetia village group (Nahiye).

The ascent of the mountain was accomplished with great difficulty, as during the war the Government had confiscated all means of transport and traction. Crowds of people loaded with sacks came from every village, and the shepherds drove away the cows, goats and sheep. The ascent became increasingly difficult. On August 1, most of the people reached the plateau called Tatar Alan, far below the top of the mountain. Those who came later were accommodated in Gychlchai, Guzchighaz, Tamlachyg, Gaplan, Tuzagh (“Medz yegherni herosapatum”, 1982, p. 31). The movement of the people did not go unnoticed, and the mayor of Suetia demanded more than once from the Armenians to give up their intention, but his appeals remained unanswered.

The heights of Mount Musa had an unfavorable climate. If the sun was scorching below, above it was a lingering ice and thick fog. From a strategic point of view, fog had its advantages and disadvantages. The men immediately set to work making tree shelters.

On August 5, Mudir sent a delegation to Musaler residents with a letter in which he tried to convince the rebels to give up the “adventure” and entrust their fate to the “benevolent” government, but Mudir’s attempt was not successful either.

On August 7, the general meeting of Tatar Alan was held. 15 representatives from each district participated. However, the meeting had just started when they learnt that 200 Turkish soldiers were moving towards the positions of the Armenians. And the first battle began. The enemy had underestimated the military potential of the Armenians, so after a six-hour standoff, the Turks retreated, leaving ten dead and twenty wounded. This victory had a great psychological significance.

The battle, which started at dawn on August 10, lasted 12 hours, the enemy lost 100 soldiers, and the Armenians lost 3. Petros Galustyan and Hakob Garakyozyan were distinguished for their courage. The first killed four gunners with five shots, while the second fought to the last bullet and died of his wounds the next day.

The local governing bodies of the three districts convened a meeting in Tamlachyg to coordinate their activities. A Central Administrative Assembly and a Military Department were established, and 21-year-old Movses Ter-Galustyan was appointed its supervisor. Reverend Tigran Andreasyan was the chairman of the Central Administrative Assembly. The first task of Movses Ter-Galustyan was the organization of combat forces.

At the top of the Musa Mountain, he formed a general administrative body to regulate the daily life of the people. The youth were divided into groups and group leaders were appointed, as well as combat leaders-assistants.

On August 19, on the occasion of the feast of the Mother of God, a solemn liturgy was held near the main barracks, which was attended by almost the entire population. The liturgy had not yet ended when it became known that the enemy was moving towards the mountain with large forces. About 4,000 soldiers with dozens of cannons attacked the Armenians. The Turks concentrated their forces in the direction of Tatar Alan, from where it would be easy to capture other positions. At night, the enemy managed to seize Tatar Alan and appeared barely 200 meters away from the last positions of the Armenians. At dawn, Armenians fought one against ten with the following slogan: "Resist, do not retreat and die" ("Medz yegherni herosapatum", 1982, pp. 57-58).

In the afternoon, the main attack began. A barrage of shells from the occupied Tatar Alan fell on the settlements and barracks, and the people had to flee in panic to the nearby forests. The military operations were mainly around a hill named "Death Hill".

Even the seriously wounded did not leave the positions. The enemy tried to encircle the "Death Hill" like a seven-headed demon. And at that moment something incredible happened. Many of the fighters who had left the positions returned. One of them suggested forming a group of 50 people and attacking the enemy from behind. That was done. The enemy's right flank began to retreat in panic. The defenders of the hill, taking advantage of this, came out of their positions and attacked them, displaying success. And after a short time, the result was evident. The Armenians had 10, the enemy - more than 500 victims. At dawn, the entire Musa Mountain was under the control of the Armenians. The Armenian trophies were several mules, 9 Mausers and 1000 bullets ("M"edz yegherni herosapatum, 1982, p. 73).

In the important battle of August 19-20, Petros Galustyan, Manuk Gelchyan, Martiros Chanszyan, Grigor Ngruryan, Hakob Khechonyan, Sargis Shannagyan, Poghos Gppuryan and many others stood out for their bravery. Armenian women and girls were active alongside the men, among whom Shushanik Gapayan was distinguished (she was by her husband's side in all battles), as well as Manushak Manukyan-Yaghupyan, Varder Zeitlyan, Yeghisabet Sgayan and others (Tadevosyan, 2012, p. 233).

On the morning of August 20, when the enemy had achieved maximum success and penetrated the depths of the Armenian defense, and it seemed that he was close to the final victory, the people of Musaler launched a counterattack. It was completely unexpected for the Turks, and the battle ended with their crushing defeat. T. Andreasyan presented the counterattack that decided the outcome of the two-day battle as follows: "Thus, the fire from the rear and the sides, from different points, created the impression of a perfect siege on the enemy. The hour-long assault, carried out in semi-darkness, completely routed the enemy army and threw it into disarray in the woods. Finally, they ran away, helpless and desperate in the deep darkness" (Tadevosyan, 2012, p. 233).

After the defeat, the Turks changed their strategy. They decided to besiege Mount

Musa and starve the people. Not a single warship was seen during this entire period. It was therefore decided to send men again to Alexandret to search for a warship, and also to build a small sailing vessel to reach Cyprus.

This is how the whole August passed. Not only the food situation worsened day by day, but the autumn cold approached, which would make it impossible to survive at such an altitude.

Examples of courage of Armenian women during Suetia's struggle for existence

For about a month and a half of Suetia's struggle for existence, women were worthy assistants to men. They bravely and patiently endured the heat of the day, the cold of the night, hunger, the steppe climate and the lack of security. Although the women fought with a small force against a well-armed army, they did not despair, nor did they create panic (Zeitlian, 1992, p. 127). On the contrary, the fighters were encouraged and, ignoring the enemy bullets, carried water and food to the front line.

The selflessness and courage of Suetia Armenian women really increased the vigor and courage of men. Movses Ter-Galustyan, the organizer of the first Battle of Mt. Musa, as well as one of the leaders of the heroic battle, cites unparalleled examples of their fearlessness and courage in his article "The Suetia Woman".

Tsagher Ter-Movsisyan was one of the unique, brave and fearless Armenian women who were not afraid of a Turkish bullet. She constantly went around the positions, encouraging the fighters and repeating that Armenian weapons should always be ready to shoot (Der-Galustian, 1916).

Those women were courageous. They had complete contempt for the enemy, convinced that relying on their weapons and impregnable mountains, they would eventually be able to emerge victorious from this bloody life-and-death struggle. When the jug of Varder (Varduhi) Zeitlian, who was carrying water to the positions, was shot by an enemy bullet, instead of throwing the jug out of her hand and looking for shelter, she shouted in the direction of the enemies: "Damn, your bullets can't even break a jug!" Varder, armed with a hunting rifle, took part in the struggle for survival on Musa Mountain.

Senior priest Movses Shrigyan gives the following witness testimony about Varder Zeitlian. The main Armenian positions in Tamlachy were threatened. A group of brave warriors was determined to help. While looking for a short and safe way to reach the place, Varder Zeitlian called her messenger Tovmas, assuring him that she knew the way they wanted. The fighters looked admiringly at the mother, and the group leader said: "Sister, as long as there are Armenian mothers like you, our nation will remain strong" (Der-Galustian, 1916).

The group of brave fighters reached the place on time and caused heavy losses and forced the enemy to retreat.

When the supply of the people sheltering on the mountain was over, a group of women, accompanied by fighters, came out of the enemy's encirclement ring under constant fire and brought millet, wheat and other necessary food from the surrounding villages (Zeitlian, 1992, p. 130).

Shushan Gapayan stood out among the Suetian Armenian women who fought alongside their brothers and husbands, a selfless and noble woman, who knew what dignity was (Zeitlian, 1992, p. 130).

During the last battle, when the Turkish army threatened to exterminate the people, Manushak Manukyan- Yaghupyan showed examples of devotion and courage. She attacked the enemy armed with stones, filled with centuries-old hatred. On this occasion, Yeghisabet Sgayan and her daughter are also worthy of mention (Zeitlian, 1992, p. 130).

Even the mothers from the village were not left out of the struggle for existence of the rebellious mountaineers. Tovmas Hapeshyan gave the following touching testimony: "Priest Ter-Harutyun, the embodiment of justice on the hill of Tamlachyg, was looking at the sky in front of the altar built of rough mountain stones, asking God for help. Before him were a small number of mothers and children, who prayed." (Zeitlian, 1992, p. 130).

The heroic battle of Mount Musa was a unique reality because there was no discrimination between the old and the young, the man and the woman. The danger threatened everyone indiscriminately, and realizing the greatness of that danger, the Armenian women of Suetia fought steadfastly until the end. When the Turks captured many Armenian positions, the women turned to the sea, preferring an honorable death to violence and dishonor. Fortunately, the warlords had foreseen the enemy's invasion, so both the center, and the villages of the people were well protected. They not only repulsed the attacks of the Turks and stopped the panic, but also took advantage of the thick fog to get behind the enemy and start shooting. This time, the enemy, thinking he was besieged, panicked (Zeitlian, 1992, p. 132).

Eventually the Highlanders saw a giant cruiser near the seashore. Immediately the Armenians lit bonfires on the heights and spread out white flags made of sheets. The white sheet for the flag was provided by Mrs. Zaruhi Tonikyan (Miss Nikoghosyan). Her husband was serving in the Turkish army; he could not escape and get free. The "Red Cross" flag was sewn by the women gathered there, on the advice of the reverend Tigran Andreasyan, from the clothes of a girl (Fista) from Yoghanolak and the aprons of school-age girls. It was placed in front of the sea under the supervision of a group of boys. On another sheet, the reverend had written in large letters in English: "We are Christians, help us." It was also raised in front of the sea. One day, 150 women and girls from Tamlachyg went down to the fields with the help of 4 armed boys to fill sacks of millet from the fields near Kapusi and take to the mountain. The enemy started firing, the confused girls fled in different directions. Knowing this, 50 boys went down to the field to find them and followed them up the mountain. However, unfortunately, two of those heroic girls, Sima Abrahamyan (from Khtrbek) and Arshaluys Taslagyan

(from Hajihabiblets), got a nerve disorder, and both of them died (Sherpejian, 2010, pp. 78-80).

Finally, on September 5, in the blue waters of the sea, a gray object was noticed, from which plumes of smoke were rising. The people ran as one man to the “Mountain of Liberty”, on which both flags were already hoisted. The cruiser approached at high speed. It anchored a few kilometers off the coast. A boat was detached from it, which came and stopped in a small bay.

The final denouement. Help from the French side

The fate of the Armenians on Mount Musa was to be decided after eight days. The Armenians informed the commander of the warship that the Turks had accumulated a large amount of weapons and munitions in the church of Kebusie village, and the village was full of Armenian immigrants. The warship had landed a few kilometers to the south and had begun shelling Turkish military depots. “Guishen” was missing for two days after that.

On the morning of September 7, large Turkish forces moved towards the mountain, led by Sheikh Ordo. The battle lasted 10 hours. Eventually the enemy suffered great losses. On September 10, the last and decisive battle of Mount Musa took place. The defenders of the mountain were guarded by the French cruisers “Guishen” and “Desaix”.

Many bodies of enemy soldiers were on the ground. After losing hundreds of fighters, Turks gave way and began to retreat, and finally the retreat turned into an escape. Two Armenians were killed and several were injured. By the end of the battle, both warships had started shelling the Turkish military bases and villages.

The people of Musaler surpassed each other. Yesayi Yaghubyan was distinguished here. The latter was in the most dangerous position. His determination and military skill contributed greatly to the victory. In those days, Armenian heroine women were equal to the men in their courage.

After the bombardment ended, a boat from “Guishen” approached the coast. Armenians were informed of the French government’s decision that it is impossible to send auxiliary troops ashore and continue the resistance. An order was received to transport the Armenians of Mount Musa to a safe place in Cyprus or Egypt. It was ordered to gather the people on the beach without wasting time, from where they would be transported by boats to warships. Leaving a small number of forces in their positions, the people went down to the seashore. That operation lasted two days. Later, the Armenian (Eastern) Legion was created within the French army, the first recruits of which were the warriors of Mount Musa (Gasparyan, 1996, Garamanukyan, 1996). The Legion distinguished itself at the Battle of Arara in 1918 and was highly praised by the British General Allenby, the Allied Commander in Palestine. In 1919-1920, the Armenians of Suetia returned to their villages with the allied troops.

On September 18, 1932, a glorious monument dedicated to the heroic battle of

1915 was opened with great solemnity on Musa Mountain in Tamlachyg, where the remains of 18 Musaler warriors who died during self-defense were buried. In the following 7 years, it became a place of pilgrimage. After the Franco-Turkish agreement of June 23, 1939, Suetia was also annexed to Turkey as part of Alexandret province. Turkish vandals blew up the monument, destroying that stone-made testimony of the unbreakable will of Armenians.

Later, in the 1939-1940s, Musaler residents built a beautiful and well-developed new settlement, Anjar, in the hospitable Lebanese land, which soon became the pride of not only Musaler residents, but also the entire Lebanese Armenian community. However, during the Great Repatriation of 1946-1947, a significant part of Musaler residents immigrated to Armenia, connecting their future with their motherland. Here, near the monument dedicated to the heroic battle at the height of the Musa mountain settlement, not far from Yerevan, every year in September the glorious victory of the 1915 Musa mountain heroic battle is celebrated.

The immortal novel entitled *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* written by the Austrian writer Franz Werfel (Werfel, 1964) is dedicated to the heroic battle of Mount Musa. The novel was published in German in 1933. It has been translated into 36 languages, including Armenian.

In 1938, the Turks burned thousands of copies of the “cursed novel” in Constantinople. In 1961, a second English edition was published with two million copies and quickly sold out. The novel was highly appreciated by the famous writer William Saroyan.

During World War II, Slovenian partisans called Rog Mountain “Slovenian Musa Mountain”.

All the participants of the heroic battle of Mount Musa remember with gratitude the courageous deeds of the Armenian women of Suetia, their will and bravery, mental strength and ability to endure. It is this soul of an Armenian woman that has kept us alive throughout the centuries, and despite years of the absence of statehood, she has continuously transmitted the feelings of devotion and courage from generation to generation.

Conclusion

The heroic self-defense battles of Mount Musa once again speak about the bravery of the Armenian people. Armenian women and girls fought side by side with men during all operation and distinguished themselves with courage in various episodes. The image of courageous Armenian woman has been shaped for centuries, as we have faced many hardships throughout our history. This brilliant page of the history of Armenian people is worth cognition and appreciation, as coming generations should study this example of patriotism. The altruism of Armenian women has always increased the vigor and courage of our men. The mentality of Armenian women has kept us alive throughout the centuries, and despite years of the absence of statehood, they have constantly transmitted the devotion and courage from generation to generation.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflict of interests in this research.

Ethical standards

The author affirms this research does not involve human subjects.

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**ՄՈՒՍԱ ԼԵՌԱՆ ՀԵՐՈՍԱՄԱՐՏԸ ԵՎ ՄԱՍՆԱԿԻՑ ՀԱՅՈՒՀԻՆԵՐԻ
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Էդիկ Մինասյան

Հոդվածը, որը նվիրվում է «Մուսա լեռան քառասուն օրը» վեպի 90-ամյակին, ներկայացնում է հայ կանանց սխրանքներն ու հերոսությունները Մուսա լեռան ինքնապաշտպանության ժամանակ, երբ հայերի ինքնապաշտպանական նշանավոր կենտրոններից մեկը դարձավ Մուետիա գավառակի Մուսա լեռը: Մեր՝ հայոց պատմության այս հերոսական դրվագի մասին իրականացրած վերլուծությունը նորովի է ներկայացնում ընթերցողին 1915թ. Օսմանյան Կայսրության կառավարության հայության նկատմամբ վաղուց որդեգրած ու մշակած ցեղասպան քաղաքականությունը: Ոսումնասիրության ժամանակ օգտվել ենք Հայաստանում և արտերկրում հրատարակված աշխատություններից, որոնց մի մասը սկզբնաղբյուրներ են:

Բանալի բառեր՝ Օսմանյան Կայսրություն, ցեղասպան քաղաքականություն, Մուետայի շրջան, Մուսա լեռ, հերոսամարտ, հերոսուհի հայուհիներ, «Գիշեն» ռազմանավ: