

THE HISTORY AND THE INFLUENCE OF IRANIAN-ARMENIAN HOTELIERS SARKIES  
BROTHERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

by

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### **Abstract**

This capstone explores the history and influence of Iranian-Armenian Hoteliers Sarkies brothers in Southeast Asia from the perspective of my family members. Using qualitative research methods such as oral history and biographical narrative, this project brings a new perspective to light. Within this project, two family members were interviewed exploring the influence of the Sarkies brothers on the hotel industry and culture of Southeast Asia, the upbringing and the motivations of the Sarkies brothers. By weaving together individual memories and the historical context, this capstone shows how family stories and memories were preserved by the descendants of the Sarkies family.

*Keywords:* Sarkies brothers, heritage hotels, family narratives

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**Reclaiming Armenians' History Abroad**

As a repat diasporan child, the subject of “Armenian history” quickly became my favorite in the Armenian schools I was attending. I was always fascinated by how widespread Armenians were and was especially stunned by the extent Armenians reached around the world. Reaching high school, I thought that what I was learning, was the “final” and fully researched version of Armenian history and that there couldn't possibly be more undiscovered aspects — especially those of the 19th and 20th centuries, since they seemed closer. Until I came across Diana Abgar's animated documentary screening at the university, I would later attend: the American University of Armenia (AUA). Truly stunned by her immense influence as the first Armenian woman honorary consul to Japan during the Armenian Genocide, I kept asking myself what else is there left uncovered? (Well, at least in the Armenian history textbooks.)

The Armenian brothers from Iran, the Sarkies brothers were prominent hoteliers of the late 19th-early 20th century and were key figures in the Southeast Asian hotel industry, having founded famous hotels that are nowadays known as “Heritage Hotels.” The oldest brother Martin Sarkies also happens to be my great-great grandfather (per our family records). Despite their known legacy in Southeast Asia, there are no mentions of them in broader conversations and school textbooks in Armenia. The only time they have been mentioned is within the book *Armenian Entrepreneurship: A Visual History* by Armenian historian and former director of the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Hayk Demoyan.

As the great-great-granddaughter of the eldest brother, I find that a one-page mention of my family members does not do justice to their influence which extends to the present day. Most of the hotels that were founded by them are still operating, and some of them (“Raffles”, namely) have expanded their business outside the borders of Southeast Asia. The operating managements take a great deal in marketing the hotels’ history, while we Armenians have most probably never heard of it.

Bringing their history to their homeland is pivotal for acknowledging the influence of Armenians in even broader geographical contexts. Reclaiming them as part of our Armenian history is even more pivotal, in terms of recognizing the lesser-known Armenian diasporas and their impact on the present day. It is also a great opportunity to explore the relationship between the Armenians and the colonial powers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the hotels are also named “colonial hotels” which is odd at first glance, considering that Armenians were not part of the colonial countries.

Aiming to explore the influence of my great-great-grandfather Martin Sarkies and his brothers’ upbringing in Iran, their motivations to open their businesses in Singapore, Malaysia and Myanmar, and their influence on Southeast Asia's hotel industry and culture, this project brings a new perspective and significance to their history in Armenia. It will fill in the gaps in Armenian history in a geographical region that has been scarcely mentioned before in the Armenian context. It will also, hopefully, open up conversations about history that haven't been before.

### **Key terms and definitions**

Heritage Hotels - usually used interchangeably with the term “historic hotels”, are labels given to sites/properties that have an interesting history and are used to attract tourists who seek special experiences at historically significant places (Henderson, 2013). These heritage hotels, particularly the ones founded by the Sarkies brothers, are also of colonial origin, according to Joan C. Henderson (2018). During the colonial period, the hotels not only offered a high standard of accommodation for the European elite but also served as “contact zones” where different groups of people interacted. This represented a small part of the colonial society of the time, where the colonized and the colonizer interacted on a daily basis (Peleggi, 2012).

### **Literature Review**

Armenian entrepreneurs and hoteliers Sarkies brothers are known predominantly in the Southeast Asia region for their impact on the hospitality landscape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Originating from Iran, the brothers have made history with their establishments, such as the Raffles Hotel in Singapore, the Eastern & Oriental Hotel in Penang, and the Strand Hotel in Yangon. Having descended from the oldest brother, I find it important to set the historical context in this literature review and explore the perspective of various published studies.

### **The Sarkies Brothers and the Historical Context**

With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the trading world was revolutionized. The shortened navigable route “... saved 17 to 66 percent of the distance and 58 to 75 percent of fuel, all to the advantage of international” (Sharma, 1997, p. 9). Furthermore, commodity circulation and overall communications were largely increased (Peleggi, 2012). In Singapore specifically, Turnbull (2017) describes the opening of the Suez Canal as a “significant milestone in Singapore’s development” (Turnbull, 2017, p. 104). She further mentions the increased use of steamers as

clippers couldn't use the canal, which gave Singapore a major advantage in the region as it served as a coaling station for the steamers. The canal further grew the East-West trade and incentivised local commercial development (Turbnull, 2017).

The first of Armenian Hoteliers, Martin Sarkies was said to be the first to arrive in Singapore from Isfahan, Iran, the same year. His arrival was an accident, as he was an engineer on a steamer and was called for his duties. Seeing the potential for the hotel industry in Singapore, he returned in 1885 with his brother Tigran and founded what was later called the "Eastern and Oriental Hotel" (Wright, 2003). In 1887, the other most significant hotel, Raffles, was founded. Whether the naming of the hotel was intentionally linked to the founder of Singapore as a British colony, Sir Stamford Raffles, is unclear. One satirical guide from 1920 states, "Nobody is quite sure whether the hotel was named after the founder of the colony or he was named after the hotel... Mr. Sarkies is the hotel king of these parts. He just goes to some place and runs up a hotel, and they build a town around it" (Peleggi, 2012, p. 131). The building's lease itself was signed by Martin and Tigran Sarkies with the owner Syed Mohamed bin Alsagoff. Afterwards, Tigran remained managing the Raffles while Martin returned to Penang. Martin then retired and returned to New Julfa in the 1890s and had little contact with the region from then on. Arshak, the youngest brother, took over the Eastern and Oriental Hotel around 1893, and Aviet took over the management of Raffles when Tigran left Singapore in 1910 (Wright, 2003).

Another less famous hotel founded by the Sarkies brothers is the Crag Hotel in Penang, where the Oscar-winning French film "Indochine" was filmed in the 1990s. Up until 1977, the government had leased the hotel's building to the Uplands School (International School of Penang), but the building was neglected afterwards (Che Amat, 2006). The Strand Hotel in Yangon was also founded by the Sarkies brothers, however Peleggi (2005) mentions that advertising

material from the hotel suggests that the “glory days” of the hotel were in the late 1920s after the Sarkies brothers had sold the hotel to two fellow Armenian entrepreneurs in 1925 (Peleggi, 2005).

### **Heritage Hotels and the Colonial Past**

The hotels founded by the Sarkies brothers are now defined as either heritage or colonial hotels. But how could the hotels founded by Armenians be considered “colonial”? According to Peleggi (2012), the racial dynamics in Singapore were quite complex and closely tied to class. Because of Singapore’s diverse population, the colonial hotels rarely excluded people simply because of their race since Asian royalty visited these places. Although their stay was welcomed, subtle segregation was still present. In regards to Raffles, it is said that “Patrons in Raffles Hotel’s dining room were not racially segregated, but the exclusion of Eurasians from its ballrooms was reported” (Peleggi, 2012, p. 141). Maybe this more inclusive environment contributed to the hotel’s success as Dr. Wright mentions that in November 1910, the Pinang Gazzete highlighted the Raffles as “...more than hostelry, it is an institution - the hotel has made Singapore famous to the tourist and an abode of pleasure to the resident”(Wright, 2003, p. 120). Furthermore, it’s worth noting that the hotels were “...patronized, managed, and operated by native and immigrant Asians” (Peleggi, 2012, p. 146). Whether the Sarkies brothers as Armenians fell under the European or Asian race category is unclear, even when Peleggi (2012) classified Armenians among Jew and Arab merchants when mentioning the ownership affecting the guest policies of the hotels. (Peleggi, 2012)

Some of the hotels are still operating nowadays, namely the Raffles, East and Oriental and the Strand and are using their status as “heritage” hotels for marketing purposes. Although the hotels have been adapted to the contemporary modern accommodations, they have still retained

some of the historic architectural characteristics that attract tourists due to their special character (Henderson, 2013).

### **Lasting legacy**

The opening of the Suez Canal was a significant gateway for major development in the Southeast Asian region of Singapore. The Armenian brothers – Sarkies brothers, having founded some of the most significant hotels that operate to this day, were one of the first hoteliers to contribute to the growth of the region. The accidental arrival of Martin Sarkies in Singapore eventually gave birth to what is now called “heritage hotels” that are used to attract destination tourists nowadays.

Racial classifications and dynamics in the hotels are to be further researched, as the hotels are regarded as “colonial” hotels, while the Sarkies brothers were Armenians from the Iranian diaspora. Additionally, their significant impact on Southeast Asia’s economy and society needs to be brought to Armenia's attention and recognized for their history and, of course, their *heritage*.

### **Research questions**

In the scope of this capstone project, the research questions that I explore are: How Did The Sarkies brothers Influence The Hotel Industry And Culture Of Southeast Asia? It is followed by three sub-questions: What was the upbringing of the Sarkies brothers? What were their motivations? What was the cultural and historical context they lived in?

### **Methodology**

The methodological framework for my capstone derives from qualitative research methods, in particular the oral history and biography methods which offer ways of exploring the lived experiences of my family members. Seeking depth in the larger context through ways such

as interviews and participant observation, qualitative research methods help to make sense of the larger picture. It is well suited for narrating life histories and family processes (Ambert et al. 1995). My capstone project is a biography book that explores my family members' life history and aims to do precisely that – make sense of the lived experiences of my family members and narrate their life histories.

Since identifying my research question, I knew that qualitative research methods would be the ideal means for this project as “...qualitative research methods help to gain insight into the processes involved in co-constructions of meaning, lived experiences, cultural rituals, and oppressive practices” (Atkinson, 2017, p. 65). Oral history specifically provides the means for accessing personal stories that add depth into the written documentation of history. As Griffin (2013) notes, oral history serves as a tool for uncovering stories that are not only valuable and important but also give a voice to the voiceless (Griffin, 2013). The biography method complements this by allowing ways to give structure by synthesizing oral history narratives into one accessible story (Cole & Knowles, 2001). These methods are suited to my research question, which revolves around exploring the lives of the Sarkies brothers from my family members' perspective.

While other methods such as archival research, could have provided additional perspectives, I found that at this stage of my creative project, I aim to capture my family members' subjective interpretations of the historical events around the Sarkies brothers and their legacy in Southeast Asia.

### **Oral History**

The initial aim of this capstone project was to revisit and recover the lost history of the Sarkies brothers from my family's perspective. And most importantly, to make meaning out of the

already existing history. Written history, no doubt, serves as a reliable documentation of history. However, the oral history method can help make it more “human”. As Ingrid Winther Scobie mentions in “Family and Community History through Oral History” (1979), oral history is critical in synthesising written history and making a more meaningful analysis (Scobie, 1979).

It is important to emphasize the orality of this method. Portelli states that “the disregard of the orality of oral sources has a direct bearing on interpretative theory” (Portelli, 1981, p. 97). While oral history can help us make meaning out of historical events, it may not always align with written history. Subjectivity and individual perception are key factors in the interviews, and the oral historian’s goal is not merely documenting the interviewee's take on history, but it is “... the reconstruction of the historical reality” (Okihiro, 1981, p. 36).

Going into the oral history interviews with an open mind, but with a set of guiding questions, allowed me to explore the subjective and individual perceptions of my interviewees which uncovered a new reality of my family history.

## **Biography**

The biography method in the capstone serves as a tool for combining the oral history interviews into one cohesive project that would tell a life story from a new perspective. This is why I chose this method, as it allowed me to represent my family members’ lives through oral history interviews while contextualizing their experiences.

While writing life stories, it is essential to recognize the author’s intention while writing life stories and their own experiences or “dramatic shifts” (Goodley et al, 2004). Biographies are “...a structured account of a life written by another...” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p.15). Bringing the example of writing a particular biographical narrative — “The Death Story of David Hope” — which reveals an individual’s tragic story after a spinal cord injury, Michelle Moore (2004)

highlights how she narrated his story differently when she became a mother and adds how the “theoretical framework” for making sense of stories is not fixed (Goodley et. al, 2004).

Within this scope, I intended to acknowledge my own experiences that would affect the writing of the biography book. Given my close relation to the interviewees I expected to be challenged in knowing “...how best to proceed and ... not tidy emotionality out of the process” as Michelle Moore highlights in *Lives in Context* (2004, p. 63) mentioning that the author’s life elements can be reflected in the narration of biographies.

### **Research Design**

In designing my research project, I incorporated the collection of data through oral history interviews, structuring them into a biographical narrative. The primary method, which is the oral history method, included interviews through online platforms “WhatsApp” and “ViberOut” with my senior family members who knew the Sarkies brothers. The reason for having the interviews conducted via these digital tools was that both my interviewees resided in different countries, and it would simply be impossible to have met with them face to face during this capstone project. I specifically chose WhatsApp and ViberOut as my tools, as WhatsApp offered a free and high-quality video call option, while ViberOut was convenient in calling a mobile or landline number at a low cost while providing a high-quality connection.

Having my previous experience of oral history interviews during the time I had taken an oral history course in mind, I then decided to prepare for a structured interview with a thoroughly thought-out set of questions (Atkinson, 2017). However, the questions were formed in an open-ended way, leaving the interviewees to recall their stories in a conversational manner (Cole & Knowles, 2001). The information gathered from interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis in order to organize and focus on the recurring themes related to the Sarkies brothers’ descendants.

The capstone project was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, I conducted oral history interviews with my family members who are distant cousins of mine – Gwen Johannes and Arby Ovanessian. During the second phase, I transcribed the interviews, and after a thorough analysis, I wrote the biographical narrative, which will serve as a foundation for the biography book that will be a continuous project outside of the scope of this capstone.

### **Narrators**

When choosing narrators for this project, I first consulted with my father – the one connected to all this history. Based on the information we had prior to this project, my father contacted the relatives that he assumed would have the most information on this matter. Numerous phone calls with several relatives later, the narrators who were chosen for this capstone project were distant cousins of mine.

**Gwendolyn Gemma Johannes** is the great-granddaughter of Johannes (Johnny) Sarkies who — according to the family tree my research is based on — is the son of Martyrose Sarkies. She was born in Jakarta, Indonesia, and resides in the Netherlands.

She — like me — to my surprise, had long been researching our family history and was as passionate about it. Initially, my father and I had contacted Gwen's first cousin and our distant cousin, Rosette Sarkies, as I had remembered having heard of her at some point years ago about how she might know a lot about our family history. During our call, when I personally talked to her for the first time, we not only got acquainted with each other, but I also discovered a new family member I had not heard of before — Gwendolyn Gemma Johannes, and how she had set out her own research about our family history. Rosette then suggested that it would be more

suitable for me to interview Gwendolyn, as she was not as invested in our family history as Gwendolyn was. This is how I ended up interviewing my newly discovered cousin.

**Arby Ovanessian** is an Iranian-Armenian film and stage director living in Paris. He — again according to the family tree my research started out from (see Appendix E)— is the grandson of Martyrose Sarkies’ daughter Sandoeckht.

The choice of having him as one of my narrators was a suggestion of my father, as he personally knew him and was in contact with him. After reading more into his life story through “The Theatre and Cinema of Arby Ovanessian” (2021) by Majid Lashkari, I was interested in learning more about him, but this time as a descendant of the Sarkies brothers and as a distant cousin of mine.

### **Prologue**

Every family has its own story. Some are buried in forgotten archives and photographs, and some are passed down through generations at dinner tables. I found myself somewhere in between, trying to make connections between the endless conversations and the photographs my family’s story was rooted in.

This book is about one of those stories. A story that is not just a family history, but one that impacted the hotel industry of the Southeast Asian region. It’s the story of my relatives who happened to be the Sarkies brothers — the brothers who left their hometown, in order to earn a living, and ended up founding some of the most famous hotels in the Southeast Asian region that are known nowadays as heritage hotels.

## **The Sarkies Legacy: A Family Story**

### **Sarkies, Sarkissian or Der Sarkies?**

Throughout the last two or three centuries, Armenian surnames have almost always ended with the suffix “yan” or “ian.” Naturally, questions about what happened to the “ian” in this case arise. What contributed to the removal of the “ian”? Was it more common to have Armenian surnames without the traditional “ian” during the late 19th and early 20th century New Julfa? Or were the Sarkies brothers originally not Armenian at all?

The surname “Sarkies” may have derived from the surname Sarkissian, suggests Gwendolyn Johannes as her own surname “Johannes” had originally been Hovhannissian. Arby Ovanessian adds, however, that Armenians didn’t particularly use the “ian” suffix and were usually referred to with the suffix “ents” earlier. In this case, the Sarkies family would have been referred to as “Sarksents”. But this wasn’t all. Ovanessian recalls the family’s relation to a priest, thus having the initial surname as “Der Sarkies” rather than just Sarkies. It was only after the 19th century that the “ian” suffix came into use.

### **Ancestor or Cousin?**

There’s an undeniable relation between the five siblings: Johnny, Mariam, Sandukht, Lucas, Arathoon, and the Sarkies brothers. And the relation with the Sarkies brothers doesn’t come as a surprise since the population of New Julfa didn’t exceed five-six thousand throughout the course of Armenians’ history there. It was only natural for so many families to have been related, Arby states.

Arby’s grandfather, who is set to be the grandson of the oldest brother Martyrose, was also called Martyrose and was born the same year Martyrose Sarkies had passed away in 1912. It was

a common practice for the New Julfa Armenians to name the firstborn grandson after their grandfather. That was how the family line was kept, according to Arby.

Great-granddaughter of Johnny Sarkies – Gwendolyn Gemma Johannes, however, mentions that the great-grandparents of the siblings were not Merjan and Martyrose Sarkies, but Nana Jan Johannes and John Shahnazar Sarkies. The Sarkies brothers had different parents, she says, and the Sarkies brothers were the cousins of the siblings.

### **Family Memories**

In New Julfa, families didn't talk about specifically being related to certain people, in this case, the Sarkies brothers. "You just know", says Arby.

Having inherited the red ribbon of the "red and green" ribbons that Martin Sarkies wore during his wedding ceremony with Merjan Sarkies, Ovanessian mentions that the year 1912 — which marked one Martyrose's death and the other's birth — had been later weaved with golden thread onto the bottom of the red ribbon and passed down from Martyrose Sarkies to his father. It was the tradition that the red ribbon would be passed down to the male descendants while the green would be shared with the female descendants. He also adds that the women of the Sarkies family were particularly known for their golden threaded weave in New Julfa. Their work was so recognizable that the locals would know that it was a "Der Sarkies golden thread" just by looking at the woven material.

When it comes to the hotels, Ovanessian remarks on an interesting detail about the Sarkies brothers' Hotels. The old china that has been passed on to him, which was used for the famous "tea and sandwich" reception in a Sarkies hotel in Surabaya, has an emblem with the HSMJ on it, which refers to the founders – the Sarkies brothers.

Gwendolyn's experience is different. She recalls that the Sarkies brothers and the hotels were always being discussed within her family. "I have known that from a very young age, that my family was from a very important and famous hotel business", she says. In Hotel Kartika Vijay in Batu, Indonesia, which used to be the holiday house of the Sarkies Family – particularly for Johnny and Lucas Sarkies families – would usually be occupied by them during the weekends. The sisters Mariam and Sandukht had most probably never left New Julfa. It was also likely that the holiday house was used by the cousins Sarkies brothers, as well, she suggested.

## **Legacy**

The Hovnjan quarter of New Julfa was the Sarkies family residence. Ovanessian says that the Sarkieses didn't initially live a prosperous life as they had descended from a priest, which naturally played a role in their financial status. On top of this, the Persians had also taken their house as collateral. The economic state of the family later became the reason why Martiros and the brothers went on a journey to the East and started their renowned businesses.

Arby mentions that there may now be two or three artefacts of the Der Sarkies in the Armenian museum, but not necessarily of the Sarkies brothers. He doesn't think that the hotels of the Sarkies brothers have been recorded as anything more than just businesses. Only if the brothers had done charity work –which was common for the expat Armenians at the time— only in these cases would the Sarkies brothers have been recorded in the history of New Julfa.

Gwendolyn, on the other hand, thinks that the Sarkies brothers' move to the east influenced the brothers Johnny and Lucas to move to Indonesia. Johnny Sarkies — Gwendolyn's great-grandfather was running the Sarkies Hotel in East Jaffa, Surabaya, while Lucas ended up founding the Oranje Hotel (now Majapahit).

Unlike New Julfa, the Sarkies brothers' legacy has been well-kept in the hotels. When Gwendolyn and her family had visited the hotels, for example, the holiday home of the Sarkies family, which is now Hotel Kartika Vijay, she recalls that the staff were very excited to see them, especially when she had mentioned her great-grandfather. "... all the personnel working there, they want to be in the picture, like if we are famous", says Johannes.

### **Looking back**

The Sarkies family history highlights how multilayered and subjective history can be perceived and experienced by family members. While for one narrator, the family relation has been identified as a direct relation— it is another case for the other descendant. One thing remains in common, however — there's always a story to experience, preserve, and pass on.

### **Reflection on Process**

I always knew since my freshman year at AUA that my capstone project would be about my family's history; therefore, entering into this journey felt very exciting and motivating. However, there is nothing in this world without its challenges— this one included. Throughout the process, I quickly realized that since this project involved not just me as a researcher but also my interviewees as active participants, I faced many challenges and limitations.

Firstly, it was the distance. As a daughter of repatriated Armenians, apart from my cousin, unfortunately, every single one of my family members lives abroad. During the scope of the project, I found that while the digital tools can assist in creating the space for the oral history interviews to happen, I realized that I would have much preferred if I could have done these interviews face to face because nothing can compare to the real-life interactions to the digital ones.

Secondly, my participants were all of a much older age. While this didn't prove to be a limitation with two of my narrators, sadly, it became the very reason for me not being able to interview my third interviewee, even through multiple attempts. During these moments, I became both stressed and emotional because it was the moment I realized why some stories haven't made it through generations. I kept wondering if I was too late in life to record them.

Thirdly, time restrictions. It was truly challenging to schedule my interviews in a timely order that was suitable for the semester's pace. This also affected the rest of my capstone processes and caused me to fall behind deadlines. I always remember my supervisor telling me that it's natural if something doesn't go according to plan and that "you're working with people". Anytime I would stress about meeting deadlines, I would remember this, and the realization would hit that this project isn't any other course. And that I needed to have a different approach than the rest of my classes. An approach that is more flexible and patient.

Another limitation I faced was with constructing my narrative. While coding my interviews, I realized that it was simply impossible for me to include every single detail in the capstone. Additionally, there were also some details that needed to be clarified through a revisited interview, which, due to time constraints, I didn't manage to do. As a result, I had to carefully pick and choose the themes that would make the most sense to include.

I hadn't realized, but I had certain expectations prior to starting this journey, which were at one point let down. However, I had yet to discover the purpose of these research projects. And that is to go through it with an open mind and flexibility, since the purpose of research is to discover, and not satisfy certain expectations.

Despite the challenges and limitations, I'm happy to have gone through this experience. I got to meet and talk to so many of my relatives that the challenges of this capstone didn't look as

big at one point. Because the reward was bigger than the challenge— I didn't just gain knowledge and experience, I gained new relationships with my family members, which is the biggest and most important accomplishment for me.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Consent Form 1

#### CONSENT FORM

Consent to participate in a capstone project conducted at the American University of Armenia (AUA). This is to state that I agree to participate in the capstone project conducted by Maneh Petrosian. The capstone director is Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: [hourig.attarian@aua.am](mailto:hourig.attarian@aua.am)).

**PURPOSE:** I have been informed that the purpose of the project is to analyze and explore the Sarkies brothers' life stories and legacy within the framework of Maneh Petrosian's capstone project at AUA. Within the bigger context of the project, the interview conducted by Maneh Petrosian is meant to focus on the Sarkies brothers' story through a family narrative's lens.

**PROCEDURES:** I understand that the interview will be conducted in participants' homes or another appropriate place, and might be recorded on video. Alternatively, the interview may be conducted on Zoom or another online platform. As a participant, I will be asked to explore my life story and my family members' Sarkies brothers' life stories. The interview will last from one to two hours, however, as a participant I am free to stop at any time, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the project at any given point. I understand that if I wish to extend the interview for more than two hours, I will be provided that opportunity.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** I understand that the interview involves the sharing of my personal views and opinions, which will be treated with the utmost care and consideration. I have been informed that I am free to stop, take a break or discontinue at any time. There are no risks involved in partaking in this interview.

**CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION:** As a participant, I will have access to all the recorded material for verification purposes. Throughout the project, if and when the material produced is in Armenian, I will have the opportunity to review and verify the English translations.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that the data from this project may be published in print or digital format for academic purposes.

In terms of **identification and reproduction** of my participation:

I agree to **disclose my identity**. I understand that my identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

\_\_\_ I agree to the reproduction of sound and images from this interview by any method and in any media for academic purposes (which may include webpages, documentary clips, etc.)

**OR**

\_\_\_ I understand that my participation in this study is **confidential**. My identity will be concealed. I will be given a pseudonym in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

\_\_\_ I agree that while data from my interview may be published, no sound or images from it may be reproduced.

**When photographs, artifacts or documents are scanned or photographed**

\_\_\_ I agree to let the student researcher copy family photographs and documents for use in the student project.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

INTERVIEWEE:

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

INTERVIEWER:

NAME (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a capstone project participant, please contact Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: [hourig.attarian@aua.am](mailto:hourig.attarian@aua.am)).

## Appendix B Consent Form 2

### **Համաձայնության հավաստագիր**

Համաձայնագիր մասնակցելու դիպլոմային ծրագրի իրականացման Հայաստանի ամերիկյան համալսարանում: Սույնով հավաստում եմ, որ համաձայն եմ մասնակցել ՀԱՀ Հումանիտար և հասարակական գիտությունների ֆակուլտետի դասախոս դոկտոր Հուրիկ Ադդարեանի (հեռ.՝ 060 612769, էլ. հասցե՝ [hourig.attarian@aua.am](mailto:hourig.attarian@aua.am)) ղեկավարությամբ Մանե Պետրոսյանի կողմից դիպլոմային աշխատանքի նախագծի հարցազրույցին:

### **Նախագծի նպատակը**

Տեղյակ եմ, որ այս նախագծի նպատակն է հասկանալ, վերլուծել և ուսումնասիրել Սարգիս Եղբայրների կենսապատումներն ու ժառանգությունը: Մանե Պետրոսյանի անցկացրած հարցազրույցի նպատակը Սարգիս Եղբայրներին պատմությունը ընտանեկան պատումների տեսանկյունից լուսաբանելն է ընդհանուր նախագծի համատեքստում:

### **Ընթացակարգը**

Հասկանում եմ, որ հարցազրույցը անցկացվելու է մասնակցի տանը կամ մեկ այլ պատշաճ վայրում, և տեսագրվելու և/կամ ձայնագրվելու է: Որպես մասնակից ես պատմելու եմ իմ ընտանիքի անդամների՝ Սարգիս Եղբայրների կյանքի պատմությունները: Տեղյակ եմ, որ հարցազրույցները տևելու են մոտ մեկ ժամ, բայց այդուհանդերձ մասնակիցները կարող են որևէ պահի դադարեցնել հարցազրույցը, հրաժարվել պատասխանել որևէ հարցի, կամ որևէ պահի դուրս գալ նախագծից: Հասկանում եմ, որ եթե ցանկանամ հարցազրույցը երկու ժամից ավելի երկարաձգել, ինձ այդ հնարավորությունը կընձեռվի:

### **Ռիսկեր և օգուտներ**

Հասկանում եմ, որ այս հարցազրույցը իր մեջ ներառում է իմ անձնական արժեքների և կարծիքի կիսում, որին կվերաբերվեն առավելագույն խնամքով և հոգատարությամբ: Տեղյակ եմ, որ ազատ եմ կանգնելու, դադար տալու և չչարունակելու ցանկացած պահի: հարցազրույցին մասնակցելը չի ներառում որևէ ռիսկեր:

### **Մասնակցության պայմանները**

Որպես մասնակից ինձ հասանելի կլինեն ձայնագրված և գրի առնված տվյալները՝ դրանք ստուգելու նպատակով: Նախագծի ամբողջ տևողության ընթացքում, ես հնարավորություն կունենամ վերանայել ու հաստատել անգլերեն թարգմանությունը, եթե նյութը հայերեն է:

\_\_\_ Հասկանում եմ, որ որևէ պահի կարող եմ հետ վերցնել համաձայնությունս ու հրաժարվել մասնակցել նախագծին՝ առանց բացասական հետևանքների:

\_\_\_ Հասկանում եմ, որ այս նախագծի տվյալները գիտաուսումնական նպատակներով կարող են հրատարակվել՝ տպագիր կամ թվային տարբերակներով:

**Իմ հարցազրույցի ինքնության բացահայտման և վերարտադրման առումով**

— համաձայն եմ **բացահայտելու իմ ինքնությունը**: Հասկանում եմ, որ իմ ինքնությունը կարող է բացահայտվել այս հարցազրույցի արդյունքում հրատարակված նյութերում կամ ելույթներում:

— Համաձայն եմ գիտաուսումնական նպատակներով այս հարցազրույցի նկարների ու ձայնագրությունների վերարտադրմանը որևէ հաղորդամիջոցով (վեբ կայքեր, վավերագրական ֆիլմեր, և այլն):

**ԿԱՄ**

\_\_\_ Հասկանում եմ, որ իմ մասնակցությունն այս ուսումնասիրությանը **գաղտնի** է: Հասկանում եմ, որ իմ ինքնությունը չի բացահայտվի, այլ ցանկացած հրապարակման կամ ներկայացման մեջ, կօգտագործվի ծածկանուն:

\_\_\_ Համաձայն եմ, որ չնայած իմ հարցազրույցից որոշ նյութեր կարող են հրատարակվել, սակայն ոչ մի ձայնագրություն կամ պատկեր չի կարող վերարտադրվել:

**Այն դեպքում, երբ ընտանեկան լուսանկարներ կամ փաստաթղթեր են նկարվել կամ սկանավորվել**

\_\_\_ Համաձայն եմ, որ ուսումնասիրություն անող ուսանողը պատճենահանի ընտանեկան լուսանկարներ ու փաստաթղթեր նախագծի շրջանակներում օգտագործելու համար:

ՈՒՇԱԴԻՐ ԿԱՐԴԱՑԵԼ ԵՄ ՎԵՐԸ ՇԱՐԱԴԻՎԱԾԸ և ՀԱՍԿԱՆՈՒՄ ԵՄ ԱՅՍ  
ՀԱՄԱՁԱՅՆԱԳՐԻ ԿԵՏԵՐԸ: ՀՈԺԱՐԱԿԱՄ ՀԱՄԱՁԱՅՆՈՒՄ ԵՄ ՄԱՍՆԱԿՑԵԼ ԱՅՍ  
ՈՒՍՈՒՄՆԱՍԻՐՈՒԹՅԱՆԸ:

Մասնակից՝

Անուն ազգանուն (խնդրում ենք գրել տպատառ) \_\_\_\_\_

Ստորագրություն \_\_\_\_\_ Ամսաթիվ \_\_\_\_\_

Հարցազրույց վարող՝

Անուն ազգանուն (խնդրում ենք գրել տպատառ) \_\_\_\_\_

Ստորագրություն \_\_\_\_\_ Ամսաթիվ

Եթե որևէ պահի հարցեր կունենաք ձեր իրավունքների վերաբերյալ, որպես  
դիպլոմային ծրագրի մասնակից, կարող եք կապվել ՀԱՀ Հումանիտար և  
հասարակական գիտությունների ֆակուլտետի դասախոս դոկտոր Հուրիկ  
Ադդարեանի հետ (հեռ.՝ 060 612769, Էլ.հասցե՝ [hourig.attarian@aua.am](mailto:hourig.attarian@aua.am)):

## Appendix C Interview Guidelines 1

### Biographical Information

1. What is your full name?
2. When/Where were you born?
3. What is your ethnicity and religion?
  - What importance does it play in your life?
4. What was your father/mother's full name?
5. What were your grandparents' full names?
6. Do you have any siblings?
  - What is their name?
  - What is their age?
  - Where are they now?

### Family

1. Can we talk about your parents and grandparents?
  - Were they from the same town/region as you?
  - How had they ended up there?
  - Can you tell me how they met/got married?
2. Can you tell me about where they got their education?
3. How did they earn a living?
4. Was either of them a strong influence on you?
  - Any significant memories?
5. What was your relationship with them?
6. What do you remember your parents/grandparents telling you about their lives and upbringings?
7. Did you have any frequent visitors in your house? Who were they?
8. Did you and your family take vacations together? If yes, where?
9. Can you share any remarkable achievements or milestones your family experienced?
10. Can you recall any particular family traditions that were unique to your household or were passed down through generations?
  - Are there aspects of your family's history or traditions that you feel are particularly important to preserve or pass on to future generations?
11. Were there any stories within your family that were frequently shared? What were they about?
12. Are there any family inside jokes or sayings that you remember?
13. Do you remember any other relatives of the older generations in your family?
  - How had they ended up in that region?
  - What was your relationship with them?

### Sarkies Brothers

1. What is your relation to the Sarkies Brothers?

2. How did you find out that you are a descendant of Martin (Martyrose) Sarkies?
3. What do you remember your parents/grandparents telling you about Sarkies Brothers?
4. What was their upbringing like?
5. Do you know who their parents were? If yes, who were they?
6. Why was Martin's name changed from Martyrose?
7. Why the last name 'Sarkies'?
8. What was the Sarkies Brothers' childhood like?
9. What professions did they initially pursue? (Before moving to SouthEast Asia)
10. What was the relationship like between the brothers?
11. Who was Merjan Sarkies? (maiden name?)
12. What was Martin and Merjan's marriage and relationship like?
13. How, when and where did they marry?
14. Why did Martin leave Merjan?
15. How many kids did they have?
  - What were their names?
  - Where did they end up?
16. How would you describe Martin's and the Brothers' personalities?
17. How would you describe Merjan's personality?
18. What was the relationship between Martin, Merjan and the children after he left?
19. How did Merjan Sarkies live with the kids after Martin?
20. Were they in touch with the new family of Martin Sarkies?
21. What was the reason for Martin Sarkies' and the Brothers' immigration to SouthEast Asia?
22. What do you know about the hotels they have founded?
  - What impact did they have on the hotel industry in SouthEast Asia?
  - What is the relation of the family with the hotels right now?
23. Was it common for the Iranian-Armenians at the time to immigrate to SouthEast Asia?
24. Were the Sarkies brothers popular in Isfahan, Iran?
25. What happened after Martin returned back to Iran?
26. How is the Sarkies brothers legacy kept in Iran?
27. How is the Sarkies brothers legacy kept in the family?
28. How would you like to have Sarkies brothers remembered?
29. Are there any family traditions that have derived from the Sarkies family?
30. Are you in touch with any other descendants of the Sarkies brothers?
31. Is there anything you would like to add?

## **Childhood**

1. What do you remember about your home?
  - Who lived there?
2. What was a typical day in your childhood home like?
3. Can you describe your childhood neighborhood to me?
4. What did you do as a family during your free time?

5. Can you tell me about some of your earliest memories from there?
6. How did your family engage with the broader community, both within the Armenian community and with other cultural groups?
7. Were there any significant cultural or religious events that your family regularly celebrated or participated in?
8. Can you describe any memorable cultural events or festivals that were celebrated in your household during your childhood?
9. Were there any significant historical or cultural artifacts or items in your household that held special meaning for your family?
10. What was your experience like during your teenage years?
11. What were you passionate about during your adolescence?
12. Who were your close friends growing up, and what were those friendships like?

### **Identity**

1. What was your first language?
2. What importance does/did your ethnicity and religion play in your and your family's life?
3. Were there any challenges or benefits to having a multicultural upbringing?
4. Have there been any moments in your life where you felt a strong connection or resonance with your cultural heritage or family history? Could you share those experiences?

### **Community**

1. What was the Armenian community there like?
  - Any Infrastructures?
  - Events?
  - Schools?
  - Gathering spaces?
2. Where did the Armenians socialize?
3. How frequently did you participate in community gatherings?
4. Can you recall any community leaders or influential figures within the Iranian-Armenian community? How did they contribute to community life?
5. Were there any distinct societal norms or traditions within the Iranian-Armenian community that you found particularly interesting or meaningful?
6. What role did the Armenian church play in the community?

### **Education/Career**

1. When did you start school?
  - What schools did you go to?
2. What profession did you pursue?
3. Did your cultural background or gender influence your choice of career or educational path in any way?
4. How did you decide on your career path, and what motivated you to pursue it?
5. What were your first jobs?

6. Were there any mentors or people who had a significant impact on your professional life?
7. How did your work affect your personal life and relationships?
8. Looking back, are there any career choices you would have made differently?

### **Reasons for Leaving/Migration**

1. What were the events that led to your leaving?
2. What major changes did you face?
3. What were the emotions and thoughts around the decision to leave Iran and move to Canada/France?
4. How did your family feel about leaving Iran? Was it a difficult decision, and what were the primary reasons for the move?
5. How did the transition to a new country impact your family's sense of identity and belonging?
6. How was the Canadian-Armenian/French-Armenian community different from the Iranian-Armenian community?
7. Is there something you miss about Iran?

### **Marriage and Children**

1. Can you tell me how you and your partner first met?
  - Can you tell me about his/her country of origin, social background, job, and personality?
2. Can you tell me about your kids?
  - What is their name?
  - What is their age?
  - Where are they now?
3. What was it like starting a family? How did your life change once you became a parent?
4. What values did you try to instill in your children or the next generation?
5. How did your relationships with family members evolve over time?
6. What did you learn about love, marriage, and family through your own experiences?
7. How did you balance your career, personal life, and family responsibilities?
8. How do you maintain your relationship with your relatives?

### **Reflections**

1. What are some things you would want future generations of the family to know about you?
2. When you look back on your life, what do you want your legacy to be?
3. What would people be surprised to know about you?

- ❖ Is there anything you wish to add or share that we might not have covered in this interview?

## Appendix D Interview Guideline 2

### Կենսագրական տվյալներ

1. Ի՞նչ է Ձեր ամբողջական անունը:
2. Ե՞րբ/որտեղ եք ծնվել:
3. Ո՞րն է Ձեր ազգությունը և կրոնը:
4. Ի՞նչ է Ձեր հայրիկի/մայրիկի ամբողջական անունը:
5. Ի՞նչ էին ձեր տատիկների և պապիկների ամբողջական անունները:
6. Դուք ունե՞ք քույրեր և եղբայրներ:
  - Ի՞նչ են նրանց անունները:
  - Զա՞նի տարեկան են նրանք::
  - Որտե՞ղ են նրանք հիմա:

### Ընտանիք

1. Կարո՞ղ եմք խոսել ձեր ծնողների և տատիկների ու պապիկների մասին:
  - Նրանք նույն քաղաքից/տարածքից է՞ին, ինչ դուք:
  - Ինչպե՞ս են նրանք այնտեղ հայտնվել:
2. Կպատմե՞ք, թե որտեղ են նրանք կրթություն ստացել:
3. Ի՞նչ եք հիշում, որ ձեր ծնողները/տատիկներն ու պապիկները ձեզ պատմում էին իրենց կյանքի և դաստիարակության մասին:
4. Կարո՞ղ եք կիսվել ձեր ընտանիքի ապրած ուշագրավ ձեռքբերումներով կամ կարևոր իրադարձություններով:
5. Կարո՞ղ եք հիշել որևէ հատուկ ընտանեկան ավանդույթ, որը յուրահատուկ է եղել ձեր ընտանիքի համար կամ փոխանցվել է սերունդների միջով:
  - Ձեր ընտանիքի պատմության կամ ավանդույթների մեջ կա՞ն այնպիսի կողմեր, որոնք, ըստ ձեզ, հատկապես կարևոր են պահպանել կամ փոխանցել ապագա սերունդներին:
6. Ձեր ընտանիքում եղե՞լ են պատմություններ, որոնցով հաճախ են կիսվել: Ինչի՞ մասին էին նրանք:
7. Ինչպե՞ս էր Ձեր ընտանիքը ներգրավված ավելի լայն համայնքներում՝ ինչպես հայկական, այնպես էլ մշակութային այլ խմբերում:
8. Ձեր ընտանիքում ավագ սերնդի այլ հարազատների հիշու՞մ եք:
  - Ինչպե՞ս են նրանք հայտնվել այդ տարածաշրջանում:
  - Ի՞նչ հարաբերություններ ունեիք նրանց հետ:

### Սարգիս եղբայրներ

1. Ի՞նչ կապ ունեք Սարգիս եղբայրների հետ:
2. Ինչպե՞ս իմացաք, որ Մարտին (Մարտիրոս) Սարգիսի ժառանգ եք:
3. Հիշո՞ւմ եք ինչ էին պատմում ձեր ծնողները/տատիկներն ու պապերը ձեզ Սարգիս եղբայրների մասին:
4. Ինչպիսի՞ն է եղել նրանց դաստիարակությունը:
5. Գիտե՞ք ովքեր են եղել նրանց ծնողները: Եթե այո, ապա ովքե՞ր էին նրանք:
6. Ինչո՞ւ է Մարտինի անունը փոխվել Մարտիրոսից:
7. Ինչու՞ հենց «Սարգիս» ազգանունը:

8. Ինչպիսի՞ն է եղել Սարգիս եղբայրների մանկությունը:
9. Ի՞նչ մասնագիտություններով են նրանք ի սկզբանե զբաղվել: (Նախքան Յարավարկեյան Ասիա տեղափոխվելը)
10. Ինչպիսի՞ն էին հարաբերությունները եղբայրների միջև:
11. Ո՞վ էր Մերջան Սարգիսը: (օրհորդական ազգանուն?)
12. Ինչպիսի՞ն էր Մարտինի և Մերջանի ամուսնությունն ու հարաբերությունները:
13. Ե՞րբ, որտե՞ղ և ինչպե՞ս են նրանք ամուսնացել:
14. Ինչո՞ւ Մարտինը լքեց Մերջանին:
15. Քանի՞ տրեխա ունեին:
  - Ի՞նչ էին նրանց անունները:
  - Որտե՞ղ հայտնվեցին նրանք:
16. Ինչպե՞ս կբնութագրեք Մարտինի և եղբայրների բնավորությունները:
17. Ինչպե՞ս կբնութագրեք Մերջանի բնավորությունը:
18. Ի՞նչ հարաբերություններ ունեին Մարտինը, Մերջանը և երեխաները Մարտինի հեռանալուց հետո:
19. Ինչպե՞ս էր Մերջան Սարգիսն ապրում երեխաների հետ Մարտինի հեռանալուց հետո:
20. Արդյո՞ք նրանք կապի մեջ են եղել Մարտին Սարգիսի նոր ընտանիքի հետ:
21. Ո՞րն էր Մարտին Սարգիսի և եղբայրների՝ Յարավարկեյան Ասիա արտագաղթի պատճառը:
22. Ի՞նչ գիտեք նրանց հիմնած հյուրանոցների մասին:
  - Ի՞նչ ազդեցություն են ունեցել դրանք Յարավարկեյան Ասիայի հյուրանոցային ոլորտի վրա:
  - Ինչպիսի՞ն է ընտանիքի կապը հյուրանոցների հետ այս պահին:
23. Արդյո՞ք ժամանակին իրանահայերի համար սովորական էր արտագաղթել Յարավարկեյան Ասիա:
24. Արդյո՞ք Սարգիս եղբայրները հայտնի են եղել Իրանի Սպահան քաղաքում:
25. Ի՞նչ տեղի ունեցավ այն բանից հետո, երբ Մարտինը վերադարձավ Իրան:
26. Ինչպե՞ս է Իրանում պահվում Սարգիս եղբայրների ժառանգությունը:
27. Ինչպե՞ս է Սարգիս եղբայրների ժառանգությունը պահպանվում ընտանիքում:
28. Ինչպե՞ս կցանկանայիք Սարգիս եղբայրներին հիշեն:
29. Կա՞ն արդյոք ընտանեկան ավանդույթներ, որոնք գալիս են Սարգիսների ընտանիքից:
30. Այս պահին որևէ կապ պահու՞մ եք Սարգիս եղբայրների այլ ժառանգների հետ:
31. Կա՞ որևէ բան, որը կցանկանայիք ավելացնել:

## **Ինքնություն**

1. Ի՞նչ կարևորություն է ունեցել/ձեր ազգային պատկանելությունը և կրոնը ձեր և ձեր ընտանիքի կյանքում:
2. Ձեր կյանքում եղե՞լ են պահեր, երբ դուք ուժեղ կապ կամ ռեզոնանս եք զգացել ձեր մշակութային ժառանգության կամ ընտանեկան պատմության հետ: Կարո՞ղ եք կիսվել այդ փորձառություններով:

## **Յամայնք**

1. Ինչպիսի՞ն էր այնտեղի հայ համայնքը:

2. Ի՞նչ կառույցներ կային:
  - Իրադարձություններ
  - Դպրոցներ
  - Հավաքատեղիներ
3. Որտե՞ղ էին հայերը իրար հանդիպում:
4. Հիշո՞ւմ եք իրանահայ համայնքի որևէ համայնքի ղեկավար կամ ազդեցիկ դեմքի: Ինչպե՞ս են նրանք նպաստել համայնքային կյանքին:
5. Իրանահայ համայնքում կա՞ն որևէ հստակ հասարակական նորմեր կամ ավանդույթներ, որոնք ձեզ առանձնապես հետաքրքիր կամ բովանդակալից էին թվում:

### **Կրթություն/Կարիերա**

1. Ե՞րբ եք սկսել դպրոցը:
  - Ի՞նչ դպրոցներում եք սովորել:
2. Ի՞նչ մասնագիտությամբ եք զբաղվել:

### **Մեկնելու/միգրացիայի պատճառները**

1. Ի՞նչ իրադարձություններ հանգեցրին ձեր արտագաղթին:
2. Ինչո՞վ էր ֆրանսահայ համայնքը տարբերվում իրանահայ համայնքից:

### **Ընտանիք**

1. Ինչպե՞ս եք պահպանում ձեր հարաբերությունները ձեր հարազատների հետ:

### **Մտորումներ**

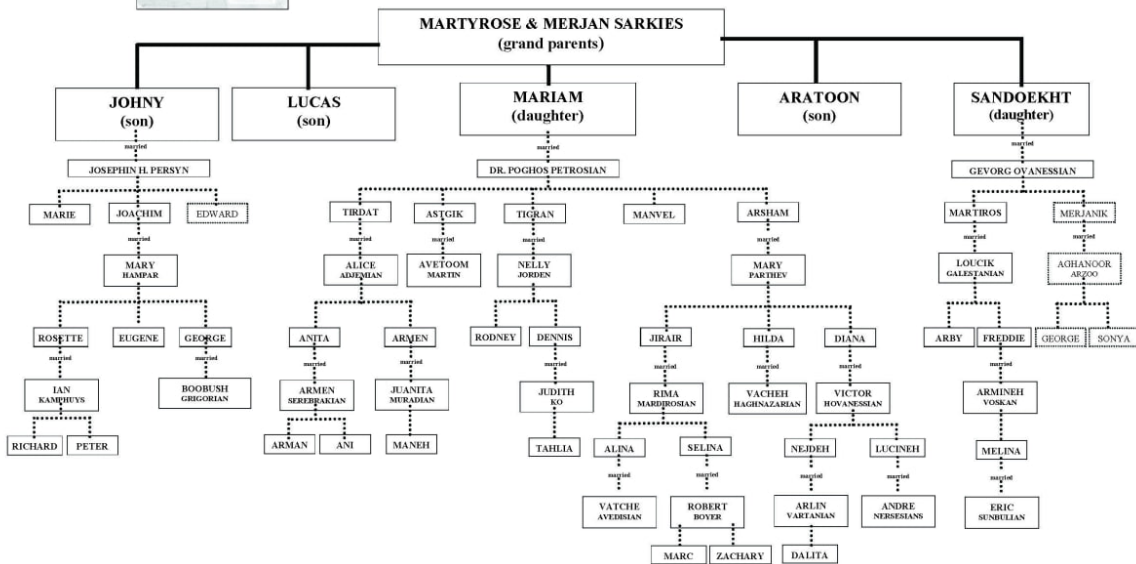
1. Ի՞նչ կցանկանայիք, որ ընտանիքի ապագա սերունդներն իմանան ձեր մասին:
2. Երբ հետ եք նայում ձեր կյանքին, ինչպիսի՞ն եք ուզում, որ լինի ձեր ժառանգությունը:
3. Ձեր մասին ո՞ր փաստը կգարմացներ մարդկանց:

- ❖ Կա՞ որևէ բան, որ ցանկանում եք ավելացնել կամ կիսվել, որին չանդրադարձանք այս հարցազրույցում:

## Appendix E Family Tree



- **SARKIES BROTHERS - FOUNDERS OF THE RAFFLES**
- Martyrose (Martin Sarkies (1852–1912)
- Tigran Sarkies (1861–1912)
- Aviet Sarkies (1862–1923)
- Arshak Sarkies (1868–1931)



*Note. Family Tree by Jirair Paul Peter*