KESSAB AND THE KESSABTSIS

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Vahe H. Apelian, 20 November 2011
Book review

The Kessab Educational Association (K.E,A) of Los Angeles held a banquet on Saturday October 29, 2011 to celebrate the centennial of the founding of the Kessab Educational Association - Kessab Ousumnasirats - in 1910. During the banquet Missak Apelian, the editor, unveiled the centennial commemorative book titled *Kessab and the Kessabtsis* and then ceremoniously presented the first signed copy to Mrs. Sarah, Vahan Churukian's widow.

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The book is a labor of love and is the culmination of over two years of efforts to archive the centennial of Ousumnasirats Association and is dedicated to its founding members who had the vision to establish it in 1910 at the aftermath of the 1909 progrom. Likewise it is dedicated to Mr. Vahan Churukian who is the founding member of the K.E.A. of LA in 1957. *Kessab and the Kessabtsis* will provide, especially to the English speaking Kessabtsis (People of Kessab), a glimpse of history of Kessab and its traditional way of life.

The Book is in 8x10 inches white page with color imprint. It is hard cover and is 314 pages long. The artwork of the cover is designed and gifted by Richard Taminossian. It contains 87 articles of which 40 are in English and the rest in Armenian. The first section is devoted to the English articles that are presented in a columnar layout. The next section is devoted to Armenian articles that are presented in a textual layout. Forty-five authors from Australia, Canada, Italy, Lebanon, Syria, United Arab Emirates and United States of America have contributed articles. It contains 207 black and white and colored pictures depicting Kessab and the Kessabtsis through the past century. Two editorials, one in English the other in Armenian precede the rest of the contents of this beautifully rendered centennial commemorative book.

Both the English and Armenian articles are presented in 8 sections that are titled as follows: Kessab and its History, Kessab Ousoumnasirats Association and the Kessabtsis in Kessab, Kessabtsis in the Diaspora, K.E.A. of LA, We Remember With Gratitude, Kessab and its surrounding Villages, Articles about Kessab and Kessabtsis, Kessabtsis Celebrating their 100th Birthday, Pictures of Bygone Days.

This centennial commemorative book is the first bilingual book about Kessab and its people. Its purpose is to bridge the big divide and to acquaint Kessab's past and present to a new generation, who do not read Armenian, especially to those born to Kessabtsi parents in the Western Hemisphere. However, it is not an exhaustive study, but a rendering of a sentimental journey at this junction of crossroad where so much has changed in Kessab especially during the last two decades. A way of life the Kessabtsis knew is now relegated to memory or at best within covers

of books such as this one. As the English editorial notes that the once secluded Armenian enclave that is a remnant of the historical Cilicia, has become a bustling summer resort that attracts tens of thousands visitors during summer. Its cherished dialect is endangered as fewer and fewer people speak it nowadays. However, Kessab still maintains a sizable all year around Armenians who constitute the majority of its non-transient population.

Anatole France is quoted to have said, "All changes, even the most longed for, has its melancholy; for what we leave behind is part of ourselves". This centennial book is a very readable, picturesque coffee table book presentation to capture what is now left behind in the annals of Kessab history and a way of life that is no more. It makes for a very informative and entertaining leisurely reading. It is a must especially to those born to Kessabtsi parents who left their village behind to start a new life elsewhere and provide further opportunities for their children. The book may be purchased from K.E.A. of LA by requesting a copy or copies through the address: K.E.A. of LA, P.O. Box 1507, Reseda, CA 91335. The book retails for $35.