

# “A Danish corner in the heart of Lebanon”

## Protestant missions, humanitarianism, and Armenian orphans, ca. 1920-1960

Inger Marie OKKENHAUG

I.M. Okkenhaug, Volda University College, Norway – imo@hivolda.no

This article investigates the role of Danish missionary and nurse Maria Jacobsen (1882-1960), working in Lebanon among Armenian refugees and orphans from ca. 1920 to 1960. The background of the Armenian-Danish relationship in the Middle East goes back to the early twentieth century with the arrival of Danish female missionaries and health workers from the organization Kvindelige Missionsarbejdere [KMA, The Female Mission Workers] in the Ottoman Empire. During the Armenian Genocide, Jacobsen and her Danish colleagues played crucial roles as relief workers and witnesses to the persecutions. After the war, the Danes continued their vocation and religious duty in the form of practical relief work among refugees and orphans in Lebanon, while at the same time promoting Protestant beliefs and values to the refugee community. The Bird's Nest, an orphanage for Armenian children in Jbeil (Byblos), north of Beirut, became KMA's main welfare project in the country. From its establishment in 1922, this large institution was headed by Maria Jacobsen until her death in 1960. The article explores the ways in which Jacobsen and the KMA situated Danish faith-based relief in the new post-WWI Middle East. It also looks at the relations to and negotiations with the local Armenian society.

Armenian refugees, Christian missions, Lebanon, faith-based relief, Denmark

### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1984, Karekin II, the Armenian Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia, left a war-torn Beirut destined for Copenhagen.<sup>2</sup> Fighting in West Beirut made it impossible to reach the airport, but Karekin went by helicopter to Cyprus and then by plane to his destination. The Catholicos traveled with a delegation of four men, among them two bishops and a priest. The only woman in the delegation was a board-member of the orphanage the Birds' Nest for Armenian children in Jbeil (Byblos),

some 35 km north of Beirut.<sup>3</sup> The orphanage had been established by the Danish organization Kvindelige Missionsarbejdere [KMA, The Female Mission Workers] in 1922, and had been handed over to the Armenian Orthodox Church in 1970, after nearly fifty years of Danish ownership. The transnational ties originating with the Birds' Nest was the moving force behind the Armenian delegation's journey in March 1984.

Besides giving lectures at several universities, Karekin was also invited to the Foreign Office to discuss the situation in Lebanon, and to a private

1. I would like to thank Åsmund Svendsen, Therese Sjøvoll and the anonymous reviewers who read and commented different stages of this article.
2. Vind 2002, p. 171. The quotation in the title of this article, “A Danish corner in the heart of Lebanon,” is from Vind 2002, p. 169.

3. Vind 1981, p. 14. Danish historian Matthias Bjørnlund is one of few scholars who has done some research on the Danish orphanage in Beirut. In his book on the Danish female missionaries and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and during World War One, he has a short chapter on the Danish KMA's Armenian orphanage in Lebanon: Bjørnlund 2015, p. 187-203.

audience with the Danish Queen, Margrethe.<sup>4</sup> This in addition to visiting the Armenian diaspora in Scandinavia. Even so, when the ecumenically oriented Catholicos held mass on Sunday March 11<sup>th</sup> in the Lutheran church St. Lukas Stiftelsen outside Copenhagen, it was the ties between the Armenians and the Danes that was at the forefront of his sermon. Karekin started by giving thanks to the Danes for their compassion and faithfulness to the Armenian people during the Genocide and for supporting Armenian refugees in its aftermath.<sup>5</sup> He especially mentioned Karen Jeppe (1876-1935) and Maria Jacobsen (1882-1960), the two Danes whom for several generations of Armenians and Danes had become female icons of Danish kindness, courage, and relief during the Genocide.

The ties that moved Karekin and his fellow travelers to undertake the journey to Denmark were formed by Jeppe and Jacobsen and several other Danish women who came to Turkish Armenia in the early 1900s to provide aid to Armenians after the Hamidian massacres.<sup>6</sup> With the exception of Jeppe, who worked for the Orient Mission, these women were employed by the Female Mission Workers [Kvindelige Missionsarbejdere, KMA], an organization with branches in all the Scandinavian countries. During its eighty years of existence, from 1900 to 1981, the Danish KMA was closely tied to humanitarian work among the Armenians, and the organization was an exponent for humanitarianism fused with Lutheran Protestantism. Financed by Danish women, headed by female Danish missionaries trained as nurses, and relying on Armenian coworkers in the day-to-day practice, the KMA's welfare work and rationale was to a large extent faith-based and depended on Armenian-Danish ties.<sup>7</sup>

As I have shown elsewhere, the Norwegian KMA's welfare projects among Armenian refugees and orphans after World War One, “exemplify the complex interaction between faith-based relief work and emerging ‘modern’ practices of relief,

which presented themselves as ‘scientific’ or based on ‘expert’ knowledge.”<sup>8</sup> This was part of a general trend during the interwar period, when the humanitarian aspect increasingly came to the forefront of Christian mission. As historian Karène Sanchez Summerer and I have pointed out, “the transition from religious to secular forms of western humanitarianism was not a one-way phenomenon”.<sup>9</sup> In Palestine during the Mandate period, for example, British and Swedish missions “continued and in some instances expanded pre-war schools and hospitals, in addition to contributing crucial relief to the poorer segments of the Muslim population in the country. Thus, redefining and accommodating their mission in relation to the interwar scene, but also answering to new international trends regarding how to interpret their agency as Christian missionaries.”<sup>10</sup> This is in line with historian Davide Rodogno, who in his recent study of international humanitarianism in the Near East, writes of both “continuities and ruptures in post-1918 international humanitarianism” in the region, while emphasizing the importance of continuity.<sup>11</sup> Individuals like Jacobsen, Jeppe, Norwegian Bodil Biørn (1861-1960) and Swedish Alma Johansson (1881-1974) embodied this continuity from the pre-war mission-based humanitarian practice to post-WWI international humanitarianism.<sup>12</sup>

This article, based on sources from the Danish and the Norwegian KMA, as well as biographical texts and memoirs,<sup>13</sup> builds on and expands

4. Vind 1981, p. 14.

5. Vind 2002, p. 172.

6. Karen Jeppe had worked for the German Orient Mission before the war. After World War One, she worked for the secular Danish relief organization “Friends of Armenia”: Bjørnlund 2008.

7. The Danish KMA also had missionaries in Syria and India.

8. Okkenhaug 2020a, p. 101.

9. The complex processes of change in humanitarian practices during the interwar period are exemplified by historian Rebecca Jinks’ work on relief and Armenian genocide survivors: Jinks 2018.

10. Okkenhaug, Sanchez Summerer, *Introduction*, in Okkenhaug – Sanchez Summerer 2020, p. 4 and 6; Taithe 2012.

11. Rodogno 2021, p. 13.

12. Okkenhaug 2015; Okkenhaug 2020b.

13. This article is based on published reports and booklets from the KMA and two memoirs, one (published) by the last chairperson of the KMA, Kirsten Vind, the other by an Armenian woman, Elizabeth Melikian (b. 1945) who grew up in the Danish orphanage. Part of Melikian’s memoir is published, but I have also had access to privately owned and unpublished version of Melikian’s manuscript entitled “En barndom i Fuglereden” (A Childhood in the Birds’ Nest). I would like to thank Elizabeth Melikian for allowing me to use this text. For the published excerpts of Melikian’s memoir see Melikian 2020. For Vind’s memoir see Vind 2002. The membership journal of the Norwegian

the theme of faith-based, post-WWI humanitarianism by looking at the role of Maria Jacobsen and Danish KMA's welfare work in Lebanon from the 1920s to the 1960s. The article argues that Jacobsen and her Danish colleagues turned their vocation and religious duty into practical relief work among Armenian refugees and orphans, while at the same time promoting Protestant beliefs and values to the refugee community. This mission had to be balanced by relations to the Armenian Gregorian Church, the formal authority of Armenian society in Lebanon. Due to the nature of the sources – which are mainly Scandinavian and written by members of the KMA's leadership and missionaries – it is not possible to get a deeper sense of the relationship between these Protestant missionaries and the Gregorian Church. The Armenian leadership did, however, as will be demonstrated later, express appreciation and gratitude for the Scandinavian relief in Aleppo and Beirut.<sup>14</sup> For the providers of relief there was also deep-felt need to help. These Scandinavian women who had lived through the years of persecutions, war, and genocide, perceived relief work among surviving Armenians as the only way to create meaning in their own lives. Anthropologist Liisa Malkki argues that: "Giving is often styled as emanating from abundance," but giving might also "emerge out of stark need. [...] the ethical generosity of 'givers' and 'helpers' overlay an intent *need for attachment*."<sup>15</sup>

People who met the Scandinavian women after they had returned home from Turkey in 1919, characterized them as "forstenet" – meaning in Danish "turned into stones" – after years of witnessing persecutions and taking leading roles in illegal relief operations during the war.<sup>16</sup> "For the missionaries to meet Armenians and to be able to speak Armenian again was like 'returning to the real life.'"<sup>17</sup>

To make sense of the extreme human need caused by the genocide, Jacobsen was convinced that God had chosen her as one of few to rescue

Armenian children.<sup>18</sup> This duty to rescue included care and relief also after the genocide. To do so, Jacobsen and the other Scandinavian missionaries combined scientific training in nursing with relief work and deep knowledge of pre-genocide Armenian society, language, and culture.<sup>19</sup> Even so, in the process of nurturing and rebuilding others and their own lives, the Danish missionaries not only contributed to reconstructing Armenian society, but also to the creation of Denmark's self-image as a modern, progressive humanitarian nation.<sup>20</sup> The plight of the Armenians played a part in the Danish self-image as a nation of selfless providers of aid for those in need. According to the last leader of the KMA, deaconess Kirsten Vind (1919-2012), the Danes had grown up with stories of the KMA as providers of relief for persecuted Armenians. Vind writes that: "If we Danes might allow ourselves a tiny bit of pride in connection with the rescue operations in 1943, when our Jewish citizens were under threat, then we might allow ourselves the same pride for KMA's efforts for the Armenians. It is a good thing to belong to a people who does such deeds as KMA did."<sup>21</sup>

This article argues that while the humanitarian efforts in Lebanon were presented as a religious mission to supporters in Scandinavia, adaptation to local conditions in Lebanon was a strategy of the Danish mission. The Danes became part of a welfare system relying on religious philanthropy that dated back to the Ottoman Empire. Under French mandatory rule, the government relied heavily on religious welfare organization as providers of services. Religious welfare organizations in Lebanon were (and are still) "the leading providers of the social and humanitarian services that are typically government-provided."<sup>22</sup> Due to a lack of sufficient provision of local welfare in Lebanon, with the Bird's Nest – the only orphanage for Armenian children in the country – the Danes

KMA, *Kvartalshilsen*, from 1947 *KMA-hilsen*, was published quarterly and the journal is a frequently cited source in this article.

14. Okkenhaug 2020b, p. 65.

15. Malkki 2015, p. 164.

16. Bjørnlund 2015; Bjørnlund 2012.

17. Bockelund 1950, p. 74.

18. Maria Jacobsen retold this to Elsa Vind: Vind 2002, p. 78. Bodil Biørn also claimed that God had chosen her to work among Armenian orphans after the genocide: *Kvartalshilsen*, 2, 1922.

19. Okkenhaug 2020a.

20. On Nordic humanitarianism and colonialism, see Okkenhaug 2021.

21. Vind 1981, p. 13.

22. Haddad 2020.

played a fundamental role as a provider for the poorest Armenians for close to fifty years.<sup>23</sup>

This article starts with a discussion of the humanitarian background of the Armenian-Danish relationships, with Danish women in the roles of missionaries as well as health and relief workers before and during the Armenian Genocide. This includes Maria Jacobsen’s unique position and efforts, both as relief worker and witness during the Genocide. The article then goes on to analyze the KMA’s welfare operation, headed by Jacobsen in Lebanon during mandatory rule; including the establishment of the Bird’s Nest and its relations to the dominating humanitarian player in the region, the secular Near East Relief (NER), as well as the Armenian refugee community. Important questions are: How did Danish relief work situate itself in the new post-WWI Middle East? What characterized relations to the local Armenian society?

#### BACKGROUND: SCANDINAVIAN FEMALE MISSIONARIES AND THE ARMENIANS

The KMA was the first independent women’s mission organization in Scandinavia. Inspired by the international Holiness movement (mainly Methodism) and the English Keswick Conventions, the first branch was established in Sweden in 1894, and branches followed in Denmark and Finland in 1900, and in Norway in 1902. Missionaries and members belonged to the upper and upper-middle classes and were educated, professional women.<sup>24</sup> In Denmark, in a similar manner to Sweden, women from the nobility played a dominating role and among its founders was the earlier mentioned Kirsten Vind’s maternal grandmother, Fritze Vilhelmina Vanda Theodora Holstein Oxholm (1867-1942). For more than twenty years, from 1900 to 1923, Oxholm was also head of the organization’s Armenian work, which started up immediately after the KMA’s founding.<sup>25</sup> Kirsten Vind was a third-generation board member of the KMA. Her mother, Elsa Minna Oxholm Vind (1891-1970) was chairperson for many years, while Kirsten Vind would be the last leader of

the organization. The Vinds came from Danish nobility and Kirsten grew up on an estate in the south of Denmark. Their upper-class background was typical of the leadership and membership of the KMA.

Encouraged by missionaries from the German organization, the *Deutscher Hilfsbund*,<sup>26</sup> and their humanitarian and evangelical work with Armenian survivors from the massacres in the 1890s, the Danish KMA sent their first missionary Christa Hammer (d.1903) to Turkey in 1901.<sup>27</sup> From then on and until 1920, the Danish KMA was to send six more missionaries to work among the Armenians in Anatolia and Lebanon. Maria Jacobsen, who arrived in Harput in the fall of 1907 on her 24<sup>th</sup> birthday, was the fifth.<sup>28</sup> After graduating as a nurse in 1906, Jacobsen attended the KMA’s school for female missionaries in Copenhagen. She then spent time in London studying English and practicing nursing at a poly-clinic. In Anatolia, she worked for the American mission’s hospital in Mezereh, run by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

In a similar manner to the other missionaries working among Ottoman Armenians, Jacobsen, after some time in the field, spoke Armenian and Turkish, as well as English and German.<sup>29</sup>

A few years before Jacobsen’s arrival, in 1903, the Danish KMA had opened their orphanage Emaus (Emmaus) in Mezereh. It was housed in a beautiful spacious villa that had been bought at bargain price from an indebted local Persian consul.<sup>30</sup> The aim was to provide help for children after the Hamidian persecutions in the 1890s. The orphanage, which from 1909 until 1919 was headed by Karen Marie Petersen (b. 1881), cared for 75 children; mostly girls. In addition to elementary education, they were trained in housework and in the Protestant faith, with the aim to create “believing Christians.” During the pre-WWI years

23. Vind 1949, p. 120.

24. Okkenhaug 2020c.

25. Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925, p. 15, p. 172.

26. The full name of the organization is “*Deutscher Hilfsbund für Christliches Liebeswerk im Orient.*”

27. Bjørnlund 2006; Okkenhaug 2020c.

28. In addition, Alma Johansson who worked for the Swedish KMA and Bodil Biørn from KMA in Norway: Småberg 2014; Småberg 2017; Okkenhaug 2020c.

29. Dickran 2004.

30. Bjørnlund 2012.

educated girls from Emmaus became sought after as brides for local young men.<sup>31</sup>

#### DANISH-ARMENIAN RELIEF IN ANATOLIA, 1915-1919

When the Ottoman Empire joined the side of Germany and Austria in war in 1914, the Scandinavian missionaries, coming from neutral countries, were able to stay in Anatolia. Several of them joined the illegal resistance that provided relief to deported and persecuted Armenians.<sup>32</sup> Among these were Maria Jacobsen and Karen Marie Petersen. Based at the American and Danish missions in Harput and Mezereh, they stayed on as relief workers until 1919.<sup>33</sup>

The United States joined the war in the spring of 1917, and American missionaries had to leave the Ottoman Empire. Jacobsen, who worked as a nurse in the American hospital was left in charge of the American mission establishment in Harput.<sup>34</sup> Petersen, on the other hand, managed to hide many Armenian children in Emmaus in Mezereh, and consequently the Danish orphanage was over-filled from cellar to attic by children fleeing the deportations. The Turkish military turned all large buildings in the area into barracks, but for some reason never confiscated Emmaus. All the children in the orphanage were saved and eventually brought to safety in Syria.<sup>35</sup>

In Harput, despite being seriously sick from typhoid fever and meningitis, Jacobsen managed to organize what seems like an impossible rescue operation. The Turks had destroyed the Armenian part of the city, and most families were persecuted and killed. Even so, many children had escaped to the mountains nearby the city, hiding in caves and empty wells. Starving, some children came to the hospital for help, while Jacobsen found some others hiding in the ruins. In addition, frightened, wounded, and starving women came to her door at night. Jacobsen let as many as possible stay in the mission compound, while the ruins of the

Armenian part of the city became a large hiding ground for Armenian children. The Turks never went there. Jacobsen managed to admit more than 2000 children into the city of ruins; many only to die from hunger and illness. When Jacobsen later narrated her story to Elsa Vind, she estimated that around ten children died every day.<sup>36</sup>

In a similar manner to the Armenian underground operations in Aleppo,<sup>37</sup> Armenian women saved by Jacobsen in Harput became relief workers. The women were in a dreadful state; many had witnessed the killings of their husbands and children. They had managed to escape but had lost their will to live. Devastated and deeply traumatized, they gradually “came back to life” by sensing the enormous need of the surviving children around them. These female survivors joined Jacobsen in her clandestine efforts to look after the children. Operating at night, they would bring warm soup to the survivors.<sup>38</sup> Before the War, Jacobsen had gathered a large amount of wool and now Armenian women helped her card, spin, and knit warm clothes for the children.<sup>39</sup> Rescue on such a scale would not have been possible without access to the money that the American missionaries had left Jacobsen. This enabled her to buy food for the children from a Turkish administrator, who did not betray her rescue operation.<sup>40</sup>

In 1919, when the American missionaries returned to Harput, they found Maria Jacobsen and Armenian co-workers taking care of around 1400 children.<sup>41</sup> The humanitarian work was taken over by the Near East Relief. Both Maria Jacobsen and Karen Marie Petersen were exhausted and returned to Denmark for longer stays of recovery.

#### MARIA JACOBSEN'S DIARIES FROM HARPOT

During the war and the genocide, and in their aftermath, Maria Jacobsen managed to keep a diary that she started upon her arrival in Harput in 1907. She continued writing until her

31. Okkenhaug 2020c.

32. Okkenhaug 2010; Bjørnlund 2012.

33. Karen Jeppe became head of a large rescue operation in Urfa: Bjørnlund 2015; Småberg 2017; Okkenhaug 2010.

34. Bjørnlund 2012.

35. Vind 2002, p. 7.

36. Maria Jacobsen recounted this to Elsa Vind: Vind 1949, p. 7-8.

37. Kaiser 2001.

38. Vind 1949, p. 8.

39. Vind 1949, p. 10.

40. Vind 1949, p. 12.

41. Jinks 2020.

departure in 1919. After the genocide Petersen also wrote detailed witness accounts of what had happened to individual Armenians. According to historian Matthias Bjørnlund, who has translated these accounts into English and published them, Petersen most probably kept a personal journal during the war years which did not survive.<sup>42</sup> Even so, Jacobsen’s many detailed diaries do exist, and her personal accounts play an exceptional role as a witness to the events in Harput and Mezereh during the genocide. The history of the publishing of Jacobsen’s diaries testifies to the transnational relationship between religious Danes and Armenians. The Armenian Church wanted the diaries translated into Armenian. In 1980 this translation was published by the Armenian Patriarch’s publishing house in Lebanon.<sup>43</sup> The 1380 pages long book included, besides the translation of the diaries into Armenian, a thorough introduction and a facsimile of the diaries. The Armenian Church asked the KMA to provide an English translation of the diaries, and Kirsten Vind, the former leader of the organization, translated them herself. The Armenian Church wanted the younger generation, many of whom lived in North America and did not know the Armenian language, to get to know this part of the genocide story. The English translation was printed in the Armenian Church’s publishing house in Antelias, Lebanon, and published by Gomidas Institute Books in 2001.<sup>44</sup> This is the most influential example of how a Scandinavian Lutheran missionary, as one of few foreign witnesses, contributed to first-hand knowledge on the Armenian genocide.<sup>45</sup> Jacobsen’s diaries from the years 1914-1919 are considered “one of the most detailed primary accounts of the Genocide ever written”.<sup>46</sup>

Jacobsen’s diaries were not published until after her death, yet as an older woman she had felt a deep urge to impart knowledge of her experiences during the war to the children in the Birds’ Nest. Karekin Dickran, who grew up in the Birds’ Nest, recounts that he as a young boy in the late

1950s listened when Maria Jacobsen, then in her seventies, recounted her life story to the children every Sunday:

I was eleven years old then and still remember her telling us the vivid and emotional stories that are now documented in her diary. She felt compelled to explain to us why she wrote so intensely in her diary. The diary functioned as her only sanctuary to take refuge from the daily inhumanity practiced by the Turks and Kurds against Armenians. The atrocities she witnessed during the Armenian massacres had so appalled her that she could only talk about them in her diary.<sup>47</sup>

#### MARIA JACOBSEN AND THE POST-WWI INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN SCENE

Of the 500,000 Armenians who survived the Genocide, 400,000 became refugees; the majority were women.<sup>48</sup> The gendered dimension that characterized this refugee community was a result of the Ottoman genocidal policy of targeting men first. Thus, approximately 80 percent of the Armenian survivors of the massacres and deportations were women and children.<sup>49</sup> The humanitarian challenges were enormous and private organizations were still the main actors in relief work. Both religious and secular relief organizations and individuals attempted to relieve suffering, among these were several of the seasoned Danish workers.<sup>50</sup> From 1920 Karen Jeppe played a crucial role in refugee aid in Aleppo, Syria, working for the secular organization Armenien Vennen [Friends of Armenia]. In 1921 she joined the League of Nations’ committee for the release of abducted Armenian women and children.<sup>51</sup> Even so, Jeppe was not the only Dane who became a prominent

42. Bjørnlund 2012; Småberg 2014; Okkenhaug 2015.

43. Dickran 2004.

44. Vind 1981, p.16. The translation was done by a young man who had grown up in the Bird’s Nest and later studied in Denmark.

45. See also Johansson 1979.

46. Dickran 2004.

47. Dickran 2004.

48. Migliorini 2008, p. 31.

49. Kaprielian-Churchill 1993, p. 8. See also Maksudyan 2020.

50. Several of the Scandinavian relief workers made wide-ranging contributions to the rebuilding of the Armenian nation, including Bodil Biørn and Alma Johansson: Okkenhaug 2020a.

51. Vejlager 1936; Lous 2003. While Alma Johansson worked with Armenian female refugees in Greece, Bodil Biørn’s relief operation in Aleppo included a small orphanage, as well as healthcare and social work financed by the Norwegian KMA: Småberg 2017; Småberg 2014; Okkenhaug 2015.



Fig. 1 – This photograph is taken at Hotel Nyborg Strand, Denmark, during the early mission conference held shortly after Maria Jacobsen (nr. 7) and Karen Marie Petersen (nr. 3) had returned to Denmark in 1919. Included in the picture are also Alma Johansson (nr. 1) and Bodil Bjørn (nr. 8) (Photograph courtesy of the National Archives of Norway, Oslo).

part of the post-WWI international humanitarian scene. With Jeppe working to engage the international community in Geneva, Maria Jacobsen moved American audiences by her lecture tour in the United States.

Jacobsen's long-time connections to the American Board and her enormous rescue operation in Harput led to an invitation to a lecture tour in the United States to fundraise for American aid for Armenian refugees. Arriving in the United States in October 1920, Jacobsen became part of the grand-scale funding machinery of modern humanitarianism. In hotel lobbies she encountered posters with photos of herself and the headline "heroine." Her sober Lutheran missionary wardrobe, however, did not live up to the American standards for a female public speaker. The organizers bought her a beautiful silk dress and large hat. But Jacobsen resisted this attempt to be streamlined into a modern humanitarian representative. She assured supporters back home that she did not think that a modern, beautiful outfit was appropriate for her message of relief for Armenian refugees. Not accepting of the American chorography, Jacobsen bought herself a plain dress and hat which she used during her lecture tour. As we shall see, Jacobsen's refusal to accept the expectations of the American relief culture would be repeated a few years later in Lebanon.

Jacobsen in her anonymous dress and non-glamorous hat was a success. She stayed in the United States until the spring of 1921, drawing large crowds who rewarded her powerful retelling of Armenian suffering with generous donations. The Danish missionary's personal story became part of the international humanitarian narrative at the time.<sup>52</sup>

The accounts of Armenian refugees and the need for funding, inspired people not only in the United States, but became a world-wide movement.

In Denmark the KMA expanded their "Armenian Committee" with two influential members, both from the Danish parliament. These well-connected men became an important resource in the KMA's work.<sup>53</sup> The fact that two members of parliament joined forces with the KMA also provides an indication of the high awareness of the Armenian issue in Denmark. In addition, KMA's Armenia Committee was likewise active outside Denmark, by joining a transnational Armenian-aid network and by sending delegates to international conferences.<sup>54</sup>

52. Bockelund 1950, p. 70.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

ORPHANS IN LEBANON, THE KMA  
AND THE NEAR EAST RELIEF

At the end of World War I, the largest numbers of Armenian refugees were in Syria.<sup>55</sup> It is estimated that by 1922 there were almost 67,000 Armenian refugees in Syria and 31,000 in Lebanon, both French mandate areas by then. In addition, there were 10,000 orphans who were being taken care of by the Near East Relief in Lebanon and Syria. In the early 1920s, as the nationalist regime in Turkey continued persecuting Armenians, the number of refugees arriving in Syria and Lebanon rose.

Armenian refugees lived under severe conditions in camps concentrated close to Aleppo and Beirut. While the Orthodox Armenian Church, the Lebanese chapter of the French Red Cross (founded in 1920), other private organizations, and the French mandate government contributed significantly to humanitarian relief, the Armenian refugees also depended heavily on foreign aid, dominated by the Near East Relief (NER). Even so, from early on French mandate authorities looked upon American and British relief with suspicion. According to Rodogno, the French rulers "increasingly marginalized US and British humanitarians. [...] French authorities saw themselves wrestling with foreign, particularly US institutions that had been based in the region for many years and had rich resources and powerful financial means."<sup>56</sup> But the NER was not ready to give up relief work in Lebanon or Syria. Under these circumstances the NER depended on cooperating with existing Protestant missions in the region. With their knowledge of local conditions and modern health facilities, these Protestant mission stations became crucial in facilitating relief for refugees.

One of these missions, the Danish Østerlandsmissionen [Mission to Eastern Countries] was centrally located with stations in Qalamoun (in

Arabic Jabāl al-Qalamūn, in Danish Kalamun), a desert region north of Damascus. These Danes had been working in Nebk (al-Nabk) and other cities in Qalamoun since 1905, establishing schools and a hospital. The organization had close connections to the KMA: in the 1920s, the KMA financed four of their missionaries, including the educational pioneer Johanne Svanenskjold (1879-1965).<sup>57</sup> During the war the Danes had been forced to go back to Denmark. Returning to the region already in 1919, Svanenskjold joined the American relief work in Lebanon. It was Svanenskjold who recommended Maria Jacobsen and Karen Marie Petersen to the NER as persons exceptionally capable and experienced for aid work among Armenian refugees.<sup>58</sup> Thus, with an invitation from the NER, the two KMA missionaries were able to join the American relief work. In mid-January 1922, Jacobsen and Petersen left Denmark, arriving Beirut by ship three weeks later.<sup>59</sup>

Jacobsen and Petersen came well prepared with 23 boxes of used clothes and a substantial sum of money donated by Danish supporters. The two women began their work among the numerous children without parents or guardians, suffering from starvation, lacking clothing and sleeping on the streets. The aim was to establish an orphanage. Jacobsen started in July with 208 children from Cilicia housed in buildings in the town of Zuq Mikhā'il, outside Beirut. A year later, in 1923, the NER was able to rent a beautiful, large villa in Sidon with a view of the Mediterranean. Jacobsen named the property, owned by a Druse family, "Our Danish Home", where she supervised 400 children and many Armenian co-workers.<sup>60</sup> Petersen, on the other hand, was working with orphaned boys in the coastal town of Jbeil, 35 km north-east of Beirut, in the building that later became the Birds' Nest.<sup>61</sup>

Jacobsen and Petersen were now working under the supervision of the local American leader, Howard Bailey McAfee, stationed in Beirut, and the war veteran Ray P. Davis who headed the NER orphanage in Jbeil. The cooperation

55. In addition to more than 100,000 refugees spread across the region in Palestine and Jordan, Iraq, Iran and Egypt: Migliorini 2008. It is estimated that 100,000 Armenians remained in Eastern Anatolia: See Bjørnlund 2015, p. 187. The number of native Armenians in Lebanon was 1550 and in Syria ca. 35,000. The Armenian communities of Lebanon and Syria were formed as a direct consequence of the inflow of refugees, as pointed out by Migliorini: Migliorini 2008, p. 32.

56. Rodogno 2021, p. 171.

57. Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925, p. 32.

58. Bockelund 1950, p. 73.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925, p. 20.

61. Bockelund 1950, p. 74.



between the experienced female relief workers and the male NER representatives proved to be difficult, however. While there were many former missionaries working for the NER, it was a secular organization and employees were not to evangelize. This did not sit well with the KMA's religious base.<sup>62</sup> In addition, according to Bjørnlund, from the KMA's perspective, there were several other difficulties with the NER. Not only was it a huge and bureaucratic, but it was also, despite female relief workers, to a large extent dominated by men. The latter was a problem, since the KMA was a women-only organization where men had no access.<sup>63</sup>

Having established, financed, and run an orphanage in Mezereh for fourteen years, the KMA was used to be in full control over their welfare operations. This was not to be in chaotic postwar Lebanon. Jacobsen and Petersen despaired over the fact that the NER had the authority to dismiss all the boys in the Bird's Nest who had been nursed back to health, in order to make room for a new group of boys suffering from malaria and other illnesses. While the NER prioritized rescue and relief based on "expert knowledge" of efficient relief, the KMA wanted to imitate their pre-WWI humanitarianism as seen in Emmaus, keeping the children for a longer period to influence their upbringing. This included schooling, teaching them manners, and giving them regular exposure to Bible reading. Petersen's daily prayer meetings for the boys probably created tensions with the local NER leadership.<sup>64</sup> Despite all the negative aspects the Danes decided that it was necessary to be part of the American relief organization and in the first few years worked closely with the NER. This was not by any means an easy decision and it required the presence of the chairperson and secretary of the KMA board to reach an acceptable agreement with the American organization.

62. Okkenhaug 2015.

63. Bjørnlund 2015, p. 192. An additional difficulty was the Americans' refusal to cooperate with any missionary who had worked in German organizations before the war. This created large problems for several of the Danes who had been employed by the Deutscher Hilfsbund, as the Americans were not willing to compromise and hire missionaries with long experience. German organizations like the Orient Mission, another of KMA's former cooperation partners were excluded from the area. *Ibid.*

64. Bockelund 1950, p. 75.

In the spring of 1924, the head of the KMA, Baroness Olga Schaffalitzky and the secretary for the KMA Armenia Committee Inger Christensen, travelled to Beirut to negotiate with the NER.<sup>65</sup> This was highly unusual, as the KMA believed that in general the organization's funds should not be used for anything but relief. Schaffalitzky and Christensen were to "judge the conditions and negotiate a deal with the NER, and later report to the home audience".<sup>66</sup> The elite background of the KMA chairperson must have been an asset in the negotiations, which turned out to be a success for the KMA. The result was a deal that made the Bird's Nest a Danish home run without interference from the NER. The fact that the KMA was able to finance their relief work with funding from Danish supporters might have helped vis-à-vis the Near East Relief. By 1928, however, it had become clear to the Danes that they wanted to be totally independent of the American organization.

The same year the lease on the villa in Sidon was not renewed. This led the KMA to buy NER's large orphanage for boys in Jbeil, where Petersen was head. Financially this was a large undertaking for a small organization, but at the same time it secured independence as all cooperation with the American organization was now ended.<sup>67</sup> In June 1928, the new orphanage was consecrated in the presence of the Armenian bishop, while two Danish guests, who later became members of the KMA's Armenian committee, represented the ties to headquarters in Denmark.<sup>68</sup>

At the time there were around 300 children in the Bird's Nest. Despite the large number, the aim was to create a "family feeling" in the orphanage. To achieve this, the children were divided into eleven small "families", each with one of the older girls given the role and title of "sister."<sup>69</sup> The idea of family was strengthened by the fact that Maria Jacobsen was called "Mama-" while her sister Anna Jacobsen who from the early 1930s managed most of the practical day-to-day-work,

65. Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925, p. 20.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 82-83. Petersen took part in local religious awakening meetings.

was called “auntie” (Anna Jacobsen worked in the Birds’ Nest alongside her sister after their mother died in 1931). The female KMA-supporters and funders in Denmark, who played an essential part in this transnational family, were called “fathers.” While Danish women were given the male role of “breadwinners”,<sup>70</sup> Armenian female helpers were known as “mayriks” (մայրիկ) – Armenian for “mothers.”

The important networks linking pre-genocide society with the post-WWI Armenians and the Scandinavian humanitarians had manifested itself with the arrival of eight young Armenian women in 1922-1923. They, together with more than 20,000 other Christian Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians – mostly women and children – had been forced to leave Anatolia by Kemal Atatürk’s regime. As orphans they had grown up in Emmaus, the Danish orphanage in Mezreh and had been among the children Petersen had saved by keeping them hidden in the orphanage. Arriving in Beirut as refugees, these young women were employed by their Danish “mayrik.”<sup>71</sup>

The mayriks played a crucial role in the daily life of the 300 children residing in the orphanage. They were responsible for the daily (and nightly) care of the children, together with Anna Jacobsen, while Maria Jacobsen was “the captain” in charge.<sup>72</sup> This was not an easy position. Jacobsen was running a large operation that besides the children and a large Armenian staff – comprised of caretakers, teachers, cooks, cleaners, farm-helpers and gardeners – included a number of buildings, fruit gardens, and a farm. The KMA also bought a plot high in the mountains in the village of Terzaya, 27 km from Jbeil, where they built a summer school for the children and a place for the healing of sick orphans.<sup>73</sup> This property allowed teachers and children to be up in healthy and cooler mountains for three long summer months. Both adults and children appreciated the time they spent in the mountains, free of the hot and humid air of Jbeil. The older children lived in tents and some young adults, whom in childhood had grown up

in the Bird’s Nest and now were studying outside Lebanon, came back and taught at the summer school.<sup>74</sup>

#### FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

The global financial hardships of the 1930s also hit the Bird’s Nest. Funding from Denmark was reduced when the Danish currency dropped 50 percent.<sup>75</sup> As a result, the Bird’s Nest had to reduce the number of children in the home. Even so, they managed to keep the orphanage going, not least because local Armenian organizations contributed with both financial and practical support. The Armenian School Committee, for example, financed a group of children in the Bird’s Nest school (that also included children who did not live in the orphanage). These children, however, left Lebanon with their families and emigrated to Soviet Armenia.<sup>76</sup> The fact that Armenian families emigrated, in addition to the KMA’s financial hardship, led the KMA to contemplate ending their work in Lebanon. This was not an easy decision and KMA leaders in Denmark (and supporters in Norway) rallied, emphasizing that welfare work among Armenians still ought to be a priority for the Danish KMA. Humanitarianism for Armenians had been the driving force when the KMA was established in 1900. Since there were still Armenian refugees living in dire conditions with children on the verge of starvation, Scandinavian supporters found the necessary funds to keep the Birds’ Nest going.

#### HUMANITARIANISM AND SAVING SOULS

While donations created the necessary base to continue KMA’s humanitarian work, the Protestant Christian faith was the organization’s rationale. Thus, when writing about their work in Lebanon, Maria Jacobsen also drew on the fact that the KMA now actually was stationed in the “Land of the Bible.” She referred to the geography of the Bible, quoting verses from the New

70. Dickran 2004.

71. Bjørnlund 2015, p. 193.

72. Naguib 2008.

73. Bockelund 1950, p. 84; Melikian 2020, p. 246.

74. Bockelund 1950, p. 84.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Testament of Jesus visiting the ancient cities of Sidon and Tyre.<sup>77</sup> This was a way of making the geography of contemporary Lebanon familiar to Danish readers who knew the stories of the New Testament. Even so, Jacobsen's texts published for Danish supporters also exemplify how, in the words of Rodogno, "secular and religious visions of humanitarianism conflated in a number of operations on behalf of the 'worthy' victims".<sup>78</sup> While Rodogno here refers to the "worthy" poor among the Ottoman Armenians, this mix of secular and religious visions of humanitarianism was also present in the KMA's work among Armenians in the context of French Mandate rule.

When the KMA established a polyclinic among refugees in Beirut, headed by a Danish nurse,<sup>79</sup> the emphasis was on professional health services and practical relief work aimed at help to self-help, but also "zealous work for the saving of souls".<sup>80</sup> In other words, evangelization with the aim to instigate personal awakenings in the Protestant tradition.<sup>81</sup> The KMA also hired Armenian women to evangelize among their fellow (female) refugees. These "Bible women" were educated and some of them were former teachers. One example of teachers choosing to reinvent themselves as Bible women is found in the 1930s, when the French authorities tore down the refugee barracks and closed the Armenian schools in the camps. Female teachers, who now were unemployed, were hired by the KMA to do social work, adult teaching, and

evangelizing among refugees.<sup>82</sup> In an extremely difficult job market, a position as a Bible woman came with a much-needed salary for Armenian women; many of whom were single providers of their families.<sup>83</sup>

Armenian children and staff participated in sermons and communions in the Lutheran church. Even so, the Danes had to be considerate in their religious practice as not to offend the Armenian Orthodox Church. In the Protestant faith, the confirmation that takes place at the age of fifteen marks the entrance into the adult world. Despite the crucial importance of this ritual, the Danes did not want to alienate the local Armenians and they did not practice confirmation in the Birds' Nest. As a substitute, the Lutheran minister arranged a short preparation for the children's first communion.<sup>84</sup> The Lutheran church was also used by Protestant Armenians. A group of young men from the Armenian Protestant "Brethren" society, for example, when visiting the Birds' Nest, gathered in the church hall where they sang, played, and held mass.<sup>85</sup> Even so, to Danish supporters the Birds' Nest was described as a mission station. The Danes hoped that by exposing the young children to daily prayers and Bible reading, they would succeed in installing Protestant virtues. This religious aspect was very visible: every day started with prayers and a short sermon, and the children were expected to learn extracts from the Bible by heart.<sup>86</sup>

#### THE BIRDS' NEST DURING WORLD WAR II AND IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD

With the German occupation of Denmark in April 1940, the orphanage in Jbeil was cut off from Scandinavian support. The transfer of money became impossible and contact with Denmark was in general very restricted for the duration of the war. Financial rescue came from

77. Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925, p. 44. Jacobsen quotes the Gospel of Mark "From there He [Jesus] arose and went to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And He entered a house and wanted no one to know *it*, but He could not be hidden [Mark 7:24]. Pray that it might be known that Jesus has entered our home and dwells among us, so it also will happen now, as at that time, that 'Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him [Mark 3:8].'" Quoted in Danish in Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925 The title of the KMA's 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee book (Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925) also quotes scripture: "*Libanons Herligheder*" [*The Glory of Lebanon*] is taken from Isa. 60:13.

78. Rodogno 2014, p. 674.

79. Svanenskjold – Fugl 1925, p. 20. Another polyclinic was started in Sidon by Maria Jacobsen. The Dane Dorthea Kulager Pedersen from the KMA also ran a small relief operation in Aleppo. Bjørnlund 2015, p. 193.

80. Bockelund 1950, p. 77.

81. Okkenhaug 2020b.

82. Bockelund 1950, p. 82 and p. 85. The Armenians had established schools in bad housing, but they provided excellent education. The Danish KMA supporters funded education for around 500 Armenian children. Bockelund 1950, p. 82.

83. Okkenhaug 2015; Okkenhaug 2020b.

84. *KMA-hilsen* 3, no. 47, 1954, p. 4.

85. *KMA-hilsen* 4, no. 43, 1950, p. 3. These young men also contributed with donations of trousers for older boys.

86. Melikian, unpublished manuscript.

Scandinavian-American networks and American Lutheran Church organizations. Former residents of the Bird's Nest also contributed financially and by downscaling from 275 children in April 1940 to 148 in January 1942, the orphanage was able to remain open throughout the war.<sup>87</sup>

After 1945, as an adaption to local needs and home-base funding, the Danes discontinued relief work and evangelization in the refugee camps, and prioritized welfare for children.<sup>88</sup> By the late 1940s, Maria Jacobsen reported that the cost of living in Lebanon was very high, in fact as high as in Denmark. The situation in the country was made more difficult with the arrival of 120,000 Palestinian refugees after the Palestinian-Israeli war.<sup>89</sup> The Birds' Nest felt the impact of the refugees since some of them were Armenian and there were instances of Palestinian Armenian children admitted to the Danish orphanage.<sup>90</sup>

By the mid-1950s, with more than 200 children, the Birds' Nest was still the only institution that accepted Armenian children of parents who for some reason were not able to look after them.<sup>91</sup> Still, there was an acceptance in the community that the Birds' Nest was a place for the poorest children to grow up. This manifested in the willingness of Armenian priests and medical doctors to write letters for mothers who came to the Jacobsen sisters, recommending these women and their children as worthy recipients of Danish aid.<sup>92</sup> Thus, by the 1950s, the Bird's Nest was more of a boarding school for children from poor families than an orphanage.<sup>93</sup>

The Birds' Nest school taught the same subjects as at public schools in Lebanon, included reading and writing not only in Armenian, but

also in Arabic, English, and French, as well as mathematics and gymnastics.<sup>94</sup> This in addition to different crafts.<sup>95</sup> The children graduated after seventh grade. From here on, the boys left to learn a trade or continue their education, while the girls stayed on for two years to help in the orphanage before joining relatives. Every year a few of the top students, including boys and girls, were given the opportunity to continue their education outside Lebanon, oftentimes at the Melkionian Educational Institute in Cyprus.<sup>96</sup> A good student would be able to have four years of higher education, graduating as a teacher, for example. As a form of repayment, these students taught at the Bird's Nest summer school in Terzaya.<sup>97</sup>

While the Danish staff consisted of a small minority of four to five missionaries, including the Jacobsen sisters, most of the employees were Armenian. In the mid-1950s, 25 local Armenians were employed: there were teachers and nurses, some women helpers, five male workers, and an Armenian finance person.<sup>98</sup> Armenian was the language spoken in the orphanage and school. Even so, it was considered a Danish school and on events outside the school's premises, the children represented Denmark.<sup>99</sup> Pupils from the Birds' Nest also attended the yearly Folkdance Festival at the American University of Beirut (AUB). In front of thousands of dancers and thousands of spectators the girls from the Birds' Nest marched in under the Danish flag, wearing Danish national customs and dancing Danish folkdances. Elisabeth Melikian, who grew up in the Bird's Nest in the 1950s writes of the ambivalence of being a young Armenian child expected to represent Denmark in public events.<sup>100</sup>

87. *Kvartalshilsen* 2, no. 35, 1942, p. 4.

88. Bockelund 1950, p. 117.

89. Harris 2012, p. 195.

90. *KMA-hilsen* 4, no. 44, 1951.

91. *KMA-hilsen* 1, no. 48, 1955, p. 3.

92. *KMA-hilsen* 1, no. 41, 1948, p. 6-7.

93. Bockelund 1950, p. 119; Melikian, unpublished manuscript. Many children came from poor families; often with a single parent. This was the case with Elizabeth Melikian, whose single mother worked as a nurse, but was not able to earn enough to support her family. Elizabeth and her brother enrolled at the Birds' Nest around 1950, when Elizabeth was four years old. Their mother came to see them often as possible, but parents and family were invited to visit only one Sunday a month.

94. Melikian 2020.

95. Bockelund 1950, p. 119.

96. Melikian, unpublished manuscript.

97. *Ibid.*

98. *KMA-hilsen* 3, no. 47, 1954, p. 4. In the 1950s the Danish missionaries were Maria Jacobsen, Anna Jacobsen, Magda Sørensen and the Lutheran minister Oluf Paaske and his wife Kirsten.

99. *KMA-hilsen* 4, no. 46, 1953, p. 6. On the annual field day, the children marched in a procession headed by two children carrying a Lebanese and a Danish flag in front of an audience of parents and other family members.

100. Melikian, unpublished manuscript.

## MARIA JACOBSEN AND DANISH-ARMENIAN TIES

In 1950, the Danish government made an official recognition of Maria Jacobsen's humanitarian work and her transnational carrier by honoring and awarding her, as the first woman ever, with the Danish state's gold medal. Five years later – more than thirty years after Jacobsen and Karen Marie Petersen first arrived in Beirut, and almost fifty years after Jacobsen started her work in Anatolia – both the Lebanese state and the Armenian community in Beirut recognized Maria Jacobsen's unique role as provider of welfare.<sup>101</sup> In December 1955, in the church of the American University in Beirut, the Lebanese minister of social affairs awarded Jacobsen the Medal of Honor, while the Archbishop of Antelias, on behalf of the Armenian Orthodox Church, gave her a heavy gold chain with a large cross with an inscription that expressed gratitude to the KMA for their work among the Armenians. During the ceremony the Protestant Churches in Lebanon also awarded Jacobsen with a gold medal.<sup>102</sup> With this public ceremony the Lebanese government and the Armenian Church communities publicly recognized Maria Jacobsen and the KMA as vital providers of social and humanitarian services during both Mandate rule and in independent Lebanon.

Maria Jacobsen never returned to Denmark, but died in Beirut in April 1960, almost eighty years old. After her own wish she was buried in the courtyard of the Birds' Nest.<sup>103</sup>

## CONCLUSION

When the KMA handed over the Birds' Nest to the Orthodox Armenian Church in 1970, it was the end of a process that had started in the early 1960s. At the time the head of the KMA, Kirsten Vind, became involved in the ecumenical Church

movement, which made her strongly aware of changes in global Christianity. All over the world former mission fields were gaining independence and control over their churches. This was also the future for the Birds' Nest and by 1970, after a long and at times difficult development, the remaining Danes had left Jbeil and the institution became Armenian. After the takeover, relations between the Armenian Church and the KMA improved and to some extent intensified.<sup>104</sup> In 1981, on one of his several unofficial visits to Denmark, Catholicos Karekin II was quoted in the Danish press saying: "We have a deep and strong love for the Danish people and the Danish Church for what it has accomplished for us."<sup>105</sup>

The foundation for this deep relationship was the KMA's international, humanitarian orientation combined with several exceptional humanitarian agents; Maria Jacobsen being the first among them. With her 53 years of working with relief, aid, and long-term welfare – always backed financially, organizationally, and spiritually by the KMA board and supporters in Denmark – Jacobsen contributed to Armenian welfare, survival, and reconstruction in the Ottoman Empire, during French Mandatory rule in Lebanon, and in the independent Lebanese state. Arriving in Anatolia in 1907, she had followed her calling as a Protestant missionary and her religious visions of humanitarianism for the Armenians. In the field, local and international developments influenced and shaped her vocation, transforming a Lutheran nurse into a relief worker, an illegal rescue worker during war, a provider of aid for refugees, and an institutional welfare builder. Backed by the KMA, Jacobsen's humanitarian project was closely linked to the spreading of Danish Lutheran beliefs and values. She balanced religious calling, however, with the necessity of acceptance and respect from the Orthodox Armenian Church for her role as provider of welfare for the community's children.

In 2015, the Armenian Genocide Orphans' Aram Bezikian Museum opened on the facilities of the Birds' Nest. Commemorating the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, this museum was created by the Armenian Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia. The Armenian Orthodox Church leadership

101. *KMA-hilsen 2*, no. 48, 1955, p. 3.

102. *Ibid.*

103. Twenty-five years earlier, in 1935, Karen Jeppe had died in Aleppo. She was buried in an Armenian church by the Armenian archbishop of Syria and her grave is in the Armenian Cemetery in Aleppo. *Find a grave*, accessed September 26, 2022: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/198334457/karen-jeppe>.

104. Vind 1981, p. 15.

105. *Ibid.*

not only accepted the Danish missionary, but also deeply appreciated her, as evidenced by one of the permanent exhibits in the museum. In the exhibit

addressing the resettling of orphans in Lebanon, there is an entire section dedicated to the life of Maria Jacobsen.<sup>106</sup>



Fig. 2 - The placket at the entry to the Aram Bezikian Museum (Photograph: Arsog1985”, Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 4.0).

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

#### Unpublished:

Melikian, unpublished manuscript = E. Melikian, *En barndom i Fuglereden*, unpublished manuscript, in the private ownership of Elizabeth Melikian, Denmark.

#### Published:

Bockelund 1950 = E. Bockelund, *Høsten er stor. KMAs historie gennem 50 år* [The harvest is great. 50 years of Female Mission Workers’ history], Copenhagen, 1950.

Johansson 1979 = A. Johansson, *Ett folk i landsflykt: ett år ur armeniernas historia* [A people in exile: one year of the Armenian people’s history], Stockholm, 1979 (1930, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.).

*Kvartalshilsen*, KMA [Female mission workers’ quarterly greetings], from 1947 *KMA-hilsen*.

Melikian 2020 = E. Melikian, *Vi skulle lære at flyve... Minder fra en barndom i Fuglereden* [We were to learn to fly... Memories from a childhood in The Bird’s Nest], in S. Lundgren, I. M. Okkenhaug, K. Røyster, M. Småberg (ed.), *Folkemord, flyktningar och fortlevnad*, Stockholm, 2020, p. 231-254.

Svanenskjold & Fugl 1925 = J. Svanenskjold, U. Fugl (ed.), *“Libanons Herligheder.” Soli deo gloria. K.M.A. Kvinnelige missions arbejdere gennem femogtyve aar, 1900-25* [“The glories of Lebanon.” The Female Mission Workers through twenty-five years, 1900-1925], Copenhagen, 1925.

Vind 2002 = K. Vind, *Aldrig færdig- altid på vej* [Never finished – always on the way], Valby, 2002.

106. The Armenian Genocide Orphans’ Aram Bezikian Museum is the first Armenian Genocide Museum in the diaspora. “The Armenian Genocide Orphans’ Aram Bezikian

Museum,” Museums of the World, accessed September 21, 2022, <https://museu.ms/museum/details/16942/armenian-genocide-orphans-aram-bezikian-museum>.

## Secondary Sources

- Bjørnlund 2006 = M. Bjørnlund, *Before the Armenian Genocide: Danish Missionary and Rescue Operations in the Ottoman Empire, 1900-1914*, in *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 26, 2006, p. 141-156.
- Bjørnlund 2008 = M. Bjørnlund, *Karen Jeppe, Aage Meyer Benedicsten, and the Ottoman Armenians: National Survival in Imperial and Colonial Settings*, in *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 28, 2008, p. 9-43.
- Bjørnlund 2012 = M. Bjørnlund, *Recording Death and Survival: Karen Marie Petersen, Missionary Witness to Genocide*, in *Haigazian Armenological Review*, 32, 2012, p. 321-340.
- Bjørnlund 2015 = M. Bjørnlund, *På Herrens mark. Nødhjælp, mission og kvindekamp under det armenske folkedrab* [On the Lord's soil. Relief, mission and female struggle during the Armenian Genocide], Copenhagen, 2015.
- Dickran 2004 = K. Dickran, *Maria Jacobsen and the Genocide in Armenia*, in *The Danish Peace Academy*, 2004, <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/karekin/ukmaria.htm>, accessed 20.10.2022.
- Haddad 2020 = T. Haddad, *Religious Welfare Organizations, Citizenship, and the State in Lebanon*, in *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 11-3, 2020, p. 1-13.
- Harris 2012 = W. Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*, Oxford, 2012.
- Jinks 2018 = R. Jinks, "Marks Hard to Erase": *The Troubled Reclamation of "Absorbed" Armenian Women, 1919-1927*, in *The American Historical Review*, 123-1, 2018, p. 86-123.
- Jinks 2020 = R. Jinks, "Making good" in the Near East: *The Smith College Relief Unit, Near East Relief and visions of Armenian reconstruction, 1919-21*, in L. Laycock, F. Piana (ed.), *Aid to Armenia. Humanitarianism and Intervention from 1890s to the present*, Manchester, 2020, p. 66-82.
- Kaiser 2001 = H. Kaiser, L. Eskijian, N. Eskijian, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor. Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915-1917*, Princeton, 2001.
- Kaprielian-Churchill 1993 = I. Kaprielian-Churchill, *Armenian Refugee Women: The Picture Brides, 1920-1930*, in *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12-3, 1993, p. 3-29.
- Lous 2003 = E. Lous, *Karen Jeppe, Denmark's First Peace Philosopher*, in *Det danske fredsakademi*, 2003, <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/jeppe.htm>, accessed 20.10.2022.
- Lundgren et. al. 2020 = S. Lundgren, I. M. Okkenhaug, K. Røyster, M. Småberg (ed.), *Folkemord, flyktingar och fortlevnad* [Genocide, refugees, and survival], Stockholm, 2020.
- Maksudyan 2020 = N. Maksudyan, *The Orphan Nation: Gendered Humanitarianism for Armenian Survivor Children in Istanbul, 1919-1922*, in J. Paulmann, E. Möller, K. Stornig (ed.), *Gendering Humanitarianism: Politics, Practice, and Empowerment during the Twentieth Century*, London, 2020, p. 117-142.
- Malkki 2015 = L. Malkki, *The Need to Help. The Domestic Arts of International Humanitarianism*, Durham-London, 2015.
- Migliorini 2008 = N. Migliorini, *(Re)constructing Armenia in Lebanon and Syria. Ethno-Cultural Diversity and the State in the Aftermath of a Refugee Crisis*, New York-Oxford, 2008.
- Naguib 2008 = N. Naguib, *A Nation of Widows and Orphans: Armenian Memories of Relief in Jerusalem*, in N. Naguib, I.M. Okkenhaug (ed.), *Interpreting Welfare and Relief in the Middle East*, Leiden, 2008, p. 35-56.
- Okkenhaug 2010 = I.M. Okkenhaug, *Scandinavian Missionaries, Gender, and Armenian Refugees during World War I. Crisis and Reshaping of Vocation*, in *Social Sciences and Missions*, 23-1, 2010, p. 63-93.
- Okkenhaug 2015 = I.M. Okkenhaug, *Religion, Relief, and Humanitarian Work among Armenian Women Refugees in Mandatory Syria, 1927-1934*, in *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 40-3, 2015, p. 432-454.
- Okkenhaug 2020a = I.M. Okkenhaug, *Orphans, Refugees and Relief in the Armenian Republic, 1922-1925*, in J. Laycock, F. Piana (ed.), *Aid to Armenia. Humanitarianism and Intervention from 1890s to the present*, Manchester, 2020, p. 100-114.
- Okkenhaug 2020b = I.M. Okkenhaug, *Protestant Missionaries, Armenian Refugees and Local Relief: Gendered Humanitarianism in Aleppo, 1920-1939*, in J. Paulmann, E. Möller, K. Stornig (ed.), *Gendering Humanitarianism: Politics, Practice, and Empowerment during the Twentieth Century*, London, 2020, p. 61-84.
- Okkenhaug 2020c = I.M. Okkenhaug, *Spiritual Reformation and Engagement with the World: Mission and Humanitarianism in the Ottoman Empire, 1905-1914*, in K. Sanchez Summerer, I.M. Okkenhaug (ed.), *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in the Middle East, 1850-1970: Ideologies, Rhetoric, and Practices*, Leiden, 2020, p. 90-109.
- Okkenhaug 2021 = I.M. Okkenhaug, *A "significant Swedish outpost": The Swedish School and Arab Christians in Jerusalem, 1920-1930*, in K. Sanchez Summerer, S. Zananiri (ed.), *Between Contention and Connection. European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine (1918-1948)*, London, 2021, p. 381-410.
- Okkenhaug – Sanchez Summerer 2020 = I.M. Okkenhaug, K. Sanchez Summerer (ed.), *Christian Missions and Humanitarianism in the Middle East, 1850-1970: Ideologies, Rhetoric, and Practices*, Leiden, 2020.
- Rodogno 2014 = D. Rodogno, *Reviewed Work: Smyrna's Ashes: Humanitarianism, Genocide, and the Birth of the Middle East by Michelle Tusan*, in *The Journal of Modern History*, 86-3, 2014, p. 673-675.
- Rodogno 2021 = D. Rodogno, *Night on Earth. A History of International Humanitarianism in the Near East, 1918-1930*, Cambridge, 2021.
- Småberg 2014 = M. Småberg, *Witness Narratives as Resistance and Recovery: Alma Johansson and the 1915*

- Armenian Genocide*, in A. Ahlbäck, F. Sundevall (ed.), *Gender, War and Peace, Breaking up the Borderlines*, Joensuu, 2014, p. 136-163.
- Småberg 2017 = M. Småberg, *Mission and Cosmopolitan Mothering. Saving Armenian Mothers and Orphans, 1902-1947*, in *Social Science and Missions*, 30, 2017, p. 44-73.
- Taithe 2012 = B. Taithe, *Pyrrhic Victories? French Catholic Missionaries, Modern Expertise and Secularizing Technologies*, in M. Barnett, J. Gross Stein (ed.), *Sacred Aid. Faith and Humanitarianism*, Oxford, 2012, p. 166-182.
- Vejlager 1936 = J. Vejlager, *Karen Jeppe, 32 aars opofrende arbejde blandt armenierne* [Karen Jeppe 32 years of self-sacrificing work among Armenians], Copenhagen, 1936.
- Vind 1949 = E. Vind, Elsa. *Armeniske Børn: fra Harput til Libanon* [Armenian children: from Harput to Lebanon], Copenhagen, 1949.
- Vind 1981 = K. Vind, *Alt har sin tid... Libanon* [To everything there is a season... Lebanon], in *Dansk Missionsblad*, 12, 1981, p. 13-15.