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MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL
FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM

AUDIO TAPE LOG

Accession No.: MH-02-12-C Date(s): November 21, 2002

Fieldworker(s): Maggie Holtzberg

Interviewee(s): Anahid Kazazian and Nairi Havan

Event: Documentation of Apprenticeship in Armenian Marash embroidery

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Related Accession Numbers: MH-02-12-FN

Brief summary of tape contents:

Counter no./ABS	Contents
	AK: ...and they are showing them, they live like you and me. Some are cowards, some are not cowards. Why is it that they are saying their country is in trouble and they are embarrassed, but they are normal people. So it's inevitable that they wouldn't feel, not jealous, but like outcasts. And they are mother and father and children just like me and you.
	NH: Is it possible that...Armenians are a nation in space somewhat, and everything we do is like that. We are annexed everywhere and somehow connected to Armenia, but is it possible that the way the world is going that it is a more global... (pause)
	AK: ...can you believe all this...
	MH: What is the needle...?
	NH: ...the entire construction...

AK: No this is, I mean she has done it. The work's name is [?] work, like this is Marash work, you have any map?

NH: I have a map in the room.

AK: So this is the next city. It's so beautiful.

MH: It's gorgeous.

AK: You know what they do? They pull the threads.

MH: Oh, they remove?

AK: They remove, yeah.

MH: Oh, it's gorgeous.

AK: After the massacre, when all these young orphans, young girls are fifteen, sixteen, fourteen, whatever...they have worked. The Marash orphans, [?] orphans, or orpha [?] or all the orphans in all orphanages, especially Aleppo. There is a very famous picture that [?] all these girls are working. So they have worked...and they have exported to America or Europe and they have sold, some Armenian ministers, or American or English ministers or social workers, and they have survived these two works. The Marash work and Tabor [?] Marash work.

MH: What is this again called?

AK: This is Aintab, Aintab is again a city. Which is...

That is found in Syberia, up up up in...here...and this is where Armenia...This author is proving that it is Armenia, because then the Mongols were horsemen and did not settle, they were moving, and burning and raping and...to make a rug you need wood, you have to be settled and you need wood.

MH: For the frame?

AK: For the loom. And you need sheep for the wool, and you have to be settled to dye it. To dye it you need the dyes which is from the plants and this and that. So you have to be...then the Armenians are four thousand year old people. They already had all these things and this is what they have traveled. Because from Armenia they have traveled to India. And we had a big community of Armenians in India, for merchants, and this is how the Marash work has spread in India. And I had the Indian friend, I was working, she said, "Oh my god, you know? You know? The Khach work?" I said, "What did you call it?" She said, "Khach work." I said, "Do you know what you said now? You said, we call it touch work and how does it write?" She said, "K-h-a-c-h." And I said, "That means khach, means cross."

MH: How do you spell it?

AK: We spell, in English, we spell k-h-a-c-h. But it means cross, because when you say cross-work, this is it, it's not the cross-stitch. And it has many other names, like the [?] is the flat weave, which is flat. So, and then, there is all these things that is kind of the repetition of our Marash

works, which I have, which I exhibit. You know about that. Where are my things? My works? Oh, oh up.

MH: They're up away?

AK: (pause)...that I thought of it and to donate to the state house, not to me. If they want it.

NH: Well, to Jay Kaufman's office, we were thinking.

AK: Office, I mean, yeah.

MH: Did he win, by the way?

NH: Oh, I don't know what happened!

AK: Yeah, what happened?

NH: We've been so busy!

MH: I don't know.

NH: We'll find out for you.

AK: And then what happens if he didn't?

MH: We should find out if he won, he was up for re-election.

AK: What do we do?

MH: Just call, call his office.

AK: If he doesn't, I mean.

MH: What was your plan for this flag.

AK: Oh, I would frame it...and then, me, I was thinking of this and then on her part she had thought something else. And then I said, "Oh my god!" So we will do the Minutemen of Lexington logo, you know is the Minuteman with the...

MH: Yes, the Minuteman.

AK: And the hat of Massachusetts and you know to Lexington...

NH: And then tell us what the stitch is here (?)

AK: I don't think we can write that much. So this will be given to Lexington, and as I said, you are the first one to know that we will do this, you see. And then, if they don't want it.

MH: That would be bad.

AK: We'll bring it back home.

MH: Is this Marash?

AK: Yeah, this is too, you see? So, this she has done, and I have sat and worked, that she does. I'm not going to do this.

MH: But you are doing this one, the flag.

AK: I am doing this one, yeah.

MH: It's beautiful.

AK: Now your questions.

MH: Ok, well one thing I wanted to...while she's not in the room...can you just, even though I know this a little bit, can you tell me a little bit about how you learned this from your mother? And how old you were.

AK: My mother...as I said, when I was eleven. Eleven is what age? What grade?

NH: Seventh? Something like seventh?

AK: I broke my leg, my bones, I broke, there are two bones, both of them—broke. I was running and I hit my leg to a big rock. So I had to be in bed. Not hospital but at the house. You don't stay in bed for that bone... So I was reading and my friends would come in and talk and brought me the school homework too. But that was not enough, it's not easy at eleven year old to be in bed. So I insisted that I learn something, not only learn, I want to make money I said. This is so long ago. My mother said, "Well, anybody can make money in bed, at eleven years old." Because I had heard that there were women that worked Marash work and they would export it to America, Europe, whatever—I want to make money too because all these women that some of them used to come and visit my mother and I saw them doing it. People one day visited each other, they did not do like this, they did a cup of drink in their hand. They always worked, something. So I want to make money, it's not really learning Marash, I want to make money. So my mother went crazy, I really drove her crazy, those two months that I was in bed. And it was school time too. So my mother started to teach me and I right away got it, right away. My first work...

NH: But your aunt too, you said that your aunt was encouraging her mom to teach her, because the mother was taking it like, oh she's not going to get it.

AK: And they used to come and sit and work and at the same time, this aunt was very good in everything. I learned to knit too from her the most. I learned from her to knit. All the two months, I did a lot of things. I darned my family's socks. Because socks were cotton and was not cheap, you had to darn it.

NH: That's an interesting point, I don't know if I can intervene for a second, as I was learning, because I don't have all those other sewing techniques, for me, learning everything was really hard. I had to learn how to pick out thread, she was trying to explain the different thickness according to material. I think while you are doing Marash and learning all the other stuff at the same time, maybe that's...it was a good thing though...I can see that being an issue.

AK: Like artists or actors, the very very talented ones I mean, I mean when they'll do their biography, they paint, they dance, they sing, they act. Some of them really do a lot. And their paintings are really good, some of them are famous.

NH: I forget his name now...

AK: Anthony...

NH: Anthony Quinn.

AK: And some politicians too, they are in one thing, they can be in many things too. And my first work, I made fifteen piasters (?), fifteen meaning...money. That's a french word.

NH: Like coins or amount.

AK: You could say piaster is the smallest money which is cent, which is fifteen cent. With fifteen cent then, maybe they made fun of me, gave me something...so this is how I learn, and from that day on I just fell in it, I loved it. Now when I am in the car, this is with me.

MH: You do it all the time.

AK: The only place I don't take with me, like the doctor's office, I don't want to talk about it—what's that, what's this? They wouldn't understand. So this is it.

MH: If you were to tell me what you got from your mother, now that she's gone...well, there are many things.

AK: Many things, many things. To do something out of something else. I wasn't going to talk about this- the fabric.

NH: I said you don't have to mention it, you can if you'd like.

MH: That's exactly what she's asking...for instance if you can reuse this, do something else. And this really is a napkin, I don't know from where it's in our house. So here, it's cotton, it's good, so I have kept this half done. So that every time that I speak about it...

NH: That's something you picked up from your mother.

MH: You mean re-using things.

NH: Re-using things for different purposes. Finding use for them.

AK: So that's one thing, and then she has really done, like from a skirt to something else. It has nothing to do with being poor or rich, you had the respect toward something, toward everything—book, paper, furniture, clothing, food...you can turn food into other food. Which people used to do anyway. Now they call it recycling. Now it has a name. But before it did not have a name.

MH: Well sure, quilts...Did she, there was a saying in my family, if somebody was really talented with needlework that they had golden hands. Was there anything like that?

AK: I just read yesterday, this sentence, in the book (?), that the great great grandfather used to say, "A work is sacred and it's the only thing is good on earth." But that sentence existed, "A trade is like a gold bracelet, on your arm, because when you are in need you can sell it." And why these people, the middle eastern, lets say...they always gold bracelet jewelry, something. It's not really so they look fancy, some day they might need it to sell. And a lot of people in the (?) time have been saved by...

NH: By stuff like that.

AK: My mother-in-law said that all my jewelry is on my waist and that they look all dead. Who thinks there is something on her waist. And then the youngest one would be your uncle, baby. And she had to wash her on the Euphrates, on the banks of the water, and she has to wash something. My mother-in-law's family had been rich, imagine to be rich, to be like that. She said, "I used to give one ring so that the guard lets me do all these things." The jewelry, the gold means, some kind of force, some kind of, something to save you. And the trade and the work, any work, like the orphans after the massacre, have survived on embroidery.

MH: Like the woman I was mentioning in the Worcester area, who is ninety-three, learned in the orphanage. But it was lacework. And it was sold just like you say, it was sold overseas.

AK: Sold overseas. And they...

MH: It seems also that orphans, that there's a tie, a preservation factor during the massacre- that those art forms were preserved and now they're in this country, but this is very rare. When you were growing up, Anahid, many girls learned to do Marash, or no? How common was it?

AK: I don't know...the old people worked, to make money. But not my age. See my age, they were so happy, our ancestors (?) it just happens that my mother's family were not massacred or deported. They already were in Aleppo, because my grandfather was the treasurer of Aleppo city. He was educated in Istanbul and he had been sent to Aleppo, so he brought his family and mother. And my mother is born in Aleppo, but that doesn't mean anything, because she had seen...

NH: They also knew that there was something stirring. And that he was encouraged to leave. Because the minute they left, about a year or two later, all of the relatives, who portions of their family who had died, all ended up in their family. They all came, crashed into the...

AK: It doesn't matter, we have so many...

NH: Stories...

AK:...stories. And interviews of my mother telling all this, I have that. But as I said, everything is in the storage.

NH: But even when I told people, when my mother won the apprentice program that we are involved in, I told friends my age, they saw the article and so forth, and they all said, "Oh yeah, my grandmother does that." Or very few but suddenly they started creeping out of the corners and of course, nobody does it, I think, as well as she does. There might be some that if you search you could find...it's our grandmothers, it her mom's.

AK: You know, I don't blame them. My learning is really...I'm curious until now, you see this...

NH: Celery.

AK: Celery...this was a big bunch on the steps and I said, "Oh my god, it's cold, this will freeze." Either she has put that so someone takes or

someone has put that so she takes. So I say, I am going to take home. I give half to your friend and she is going to...I can not throw this away, it's impossible, I will plant it somewhere. Because it has life, I can not.

NH: And individuals like my mom, eventually affect people that interact with them, because it becomes normal, this becomes a normal activity and not abnormal...

AK: I am sure that her husband is giving her hard time.

NH: No, he hasn't said anything yet...

AK: He will tell, eventually, what's this doing here?

NH: Eventually, when he notices.

AK: But I will take it away, because I know that. Now I don't blame my generation not to learn, or even my mother's generation, not to teach.

Suddenly, after the massacre, this anger, is so big you can not imagine.

Every family...my mother's uncles, were both of them...

MH: Were what?

AK: Engineers. You never knew this part, when they were building, see there is Baghdad and there is Turkey, Istanbul here, and there is two trains that the Germans made, constructed, for war purposes, not for any love of Turkey. And they touched here and this line came to Aleppo. The name of this train line was the "German Line." I know, because where the train station was here- big, beautiful, European style...We lived here. The first street from our house- this is what we saw all our life. There was tennis courts, I mean you would think you were in Europe, you were in...

So when they were going to build this, they called all the engineers and craftsmen and masons of Armenia on the roads to the massacre they knew them. They all were happy that they were not going to die. They were going to work...not die at least. But after it was all finished, there was all celebration, everything, and they killed all of them.

MH: The workmen?

AK: All the Armenians.

MH: What year was that?

AK: The 1915, 1916 time, the war time...

NH: It's interesting, because yesterday, when I was at the Clark University, that's why I went, cause I told you they were talking about this region. They touched upon, the doctor who was speaking, touched upon the fact that Germany could have prevented certain things and because they were allies together, and there were money issues, always it's about money and about getting from Point A to Point B that they didn't focus on the Christian population. And I think America had intervened, during Wilson saying, "Well, this is a Christian community and Germans are Christian, aren't you Christian? So don't you..." Isn't that a reason...

AK: Then religion had the way in politics, but does not now (?)

NH: I don't think it did then.

AK: Now it doesn't matter, it's oil, oil, oil, whatever the name is.

NH: It's interesting how you mention that.

AK: This book, it says Germany, and Turkey, and the devil had made pact in our time. How much, the smoke comes, and the dirty something, it's all white, but when the snow melts, the dirt is there. And no matter how politics is covering all, eventually the suffering of people will speak.

NH: I think, is that what you were trying to make the point. They put aside these works and they wanted to keep it in the past.

AK: I don't know why...The anger and the suffering—having two uncles, for my grandmother, oh my god, my grandmother...

NH: I didn't know about that.

AK: So who thinks about teaching something which is from the past—Marash work, Aintab work, the hell with it, I'm sorry to say this word. Let them be happy, our children...go to school, get dressed, be fed, be happy, be happy. Let's forget, let's forget. You want to forget bad things. And then when the time came, I, as a first generation, after the massacred people, I did not know what had gone on. Until I grew up, I heard, I heard, I read, now I know more.

NH: I don't remember my mother telling me...

AK: If there was something sad in my life, when she was a little girl, I never have told her, I'm waiting. Maybe I will tell her when she is all strong, and thirty-five, forty, ok, someday...

NH: Almost forty...

AK: You know what...

NH: No, yeah, I do.

AK: When you have children, you want them to grow up normal.

NH: But this experience with Marash has been a positive one for me. See, that's interesting you're saying all these "older" things. For me it's been more, you know, I have a little treasure, I know something, I'm learning something and people are valuing it. It's like another, it's a turning point on it, it's not quite the same.

AK: When I was five, six, seven, ten, fifteen...there still were orphanages, there still were that orphanages, that were an orphan nobody wanted.

NH: And did they work?

AK: Yeah, they still worked. And there were orphanages of old people, they used to call it...it's a beautiful word, to be, a place to be save. And there were a lot of old people, old when I say, sixty, seventy, that at the massacre time, maybe they were forty, forty-five, whatever, and everybody has died. Every family had one or two extra people. We did not know who they were. We used to call them, "auntie, grandma." They were like people in houses, because you brought them in, you brought them in, my mother brought them in.

NH: She brought quite a few, she said at one point there were seventeen people.

MH: Tell me your mother's name again?

AK: Marie.

NH: Marie Dakessian, Dakessian is her maiden name.

AK: Maiden name.

MH: When was she born?

AK: 1900.

NH: 1904.

MH: Between 1900 and 1904.

NH: Cause during 1912, she said she held a flag for some parade. She wasn't twelve there. That's why we're saying...

AK: Right before she was married.

NH: Or was it 1918 when Armenia became independent...that's why we're saying she was about twelve, we're assuming she was born in 1904. But they didn't have good records.

AK: She didn't know.

NH: But it's all of four or five years difference.

MH: And she came to this country when?

AK: She came twice...

NH: The seventies.

AK: ...once, when you got married.

NH: That was the last time she came and stayed, '87, 1987 she came.

MH: So she didn't really live here until later.

NH: And then she came visiting once before.

AK: Once before, she came, she came and she stayed two year and half. In some weeks, she said, "Wow, this country is made for me."

MH: She liked it.

AK: She meant, if you worked...

NH: People appreciated it.

AK: ...there was appreciation. There is opportunity. And she, to the last, she always wished she could drive.

NH: Drive and she kept saying, "I've been born in the wrong time."

AK: Wrong time, wrong time, wrong place. And she always dreamt of driving, she says, "Oh, in my dream, I saw driving." And many, many times...

NH: We wanted to get her in the car, I told her when she first came, we can drive up and down the driveway.

AK: Very, very advanced person. Her mother was like that too.

MH: And she was highly educated, wasn't she?

AK: As in those times, my grandmother, oh god it's a funny story. My grandmother, her mother, was married to my grandfather. So, my grandfather was sent from Marash to Istanbul to get education. And his

mother, my grandfather's mother, had chosen my grandmother when she was nine only...because they all knew each other. It's not someone...she has sent my grandmother from Marash to Aleppo to a french...

NH: Not a dormitory, I lost the word, private, boarding school.

AK: Boarding school, to get education so that when he will...he doesn't know about it...

NH: Nine or ten, my daughter's ten.

AK: Who is now getting education, MIT.

NH: But she doesn't know.

AK: But the parents know. And she knew French. And then in Aleppo, when we used to work, and that school still existed, Jean D'Arc. Ecole de Jeunes Filles, Jean D'Arc. She used to say that was (?).

NH: So she wanted to make her appropriate for her son.

AK: Appropriate...and they really got married! And she grew up in her future mother-in-law's house. Under her patronage (?). And then, he came, they married. That was normal. But they really, really were in love.

MH: They were in love?

AK: I remember. When they used to visit us, and stay with us, and maybe my mother did not have a big bed for them, I don't know, rooms were not...they used to sleep on the floor, in a twin bed together. And I used to go and look at them.

NH: They must have been tiny at that point.

AK: ...I did not know married people had to sleep together. I did not know. It was funny, there is other places, why is she sleeping like that, tight...for god's sake.

NH: But she wanted to be with her husband.

AK: They were. Oh, they walked together. My grandmother had this white hair, we used to call her Beethoven. You look like Beethoven. And she used to say, that's enough, used to drive her crazy. Grandmother, you're mighty. We used call her mighty. "Mighty, are you going to die?" And she used to say, "No, I'm not dying." "But your hair is all white." "No, no I'm not dying." And then, my daughter, the older sister, used to say, one hair if she saw on anybody, say, "Oh my god, is she dying?"

NH: Well, did she know you learned?

AK: Yes, yes.

MH: You mean your grandmother knew?

NH: Cause she was still around then.

AK: My grandmother was so, as I said, advanced for her age. She was educated. My grandfather, in his time, you think people had classical music, they knew what it is? People are out of massacre, they would know about classical? He had records, my grandfather. I don't know what happened to them. Had this phonograph, that he would turn like

this...and then they would, how you say phonograph? There is this place that sound comes, we children, we used to...and he would start getting ready...we all...

You look from that place, like the opening of a garage.

MH: The horn?

AK: There is the horn too, but there is that, and they had the velvet thing he used to clean the record. And the record, there was this (?)...his master's voice...you know...and the sound...

MH: You were amazed where it was coming from.

AK: You know what it means, then? That one of the things that...out of this world. Now, whatever you touch, everything works.

MH: I want to get back to the passing on of this tradition. How do you feel, what's important to you about your daughter learning this?

AK: It's like, you know, you give birth to something. You say finally this is going towards her. And now the little girl wants to learn.

NH: Yeah, now my daughter, she's getting curious.

AK: I will teach her. When she wants to do it.

NH: Well, I had moments, like turning corners that was difficult. And the stars, I think they look funny, but she's very encouraging. And says, "No, no, you're doing ok." And here, is it ok if we talk about it? Well, we don't know how this is going to turn out. We created this. She's trying to get me to do the thinking. But we're trying to turn a corner in another way. Because I wanted these to be attached, instead of separate. So, not that she hasn't done it, I'm sure she has, or she's pretending that doesn't know what's going to happen—I'm going to discover it. But that's what we're aiming for right now. Cause you see here there's two levels, or the second stitch is started? But not here in the corners, because I have to continue and then do the second level here where this second level's already done.

MH: Describe that about the four levels.

AK: Now my mother taught my sister, who is eight years older than me (?), here in America. She tried to teach her. So, she worked but then she stopped.

NH: This is a section, that the layers, we were just testing another color. So that...

AK: It shows.

NH: So that the pattern shows.

AK: So my sister said, "No, that's not my work." Now the thing in this Marash work, is that this stretch (?) will never stop.

MH: The dark thread?

AK: This is where you will not do the square separate, and this separate, somehow you will do constantly. When you come here you jump here and

then you turn, then you turn. And when she comes here, she'll do like this and like that. And my sister did separately.

NH: Which is the fake way.

AK: Which is not the correct way.

MH: Oh, the correct way is continuous.

NH: But the fake way would be to just separate those. And you wouldn't know, because, or I wouldn't know certainly, I wouldn't see it. Because it would be stuck. In the back, obviously, there shouldn't be any of that. You would be able, maybe from the back someone like her might know, see how continuous it is. It's like a street.

MH: And why is it important that it's continuous?

AK: When you do this...you should not do this, then this, goes up and down and turns.

NH: And then turns.

AK: And comes back...maybe when we go up, do this, do that, turn back and then continue.

MH: Now why is it important that it's continuous?

NH: Well, because it's a secret stitch.

AK: If it's not, ok, you stop. You say, oh I cannot, I cannot.

NH: I don't know, was it with you we spoke, or with someone else? About it being a secret stitch, not being able to understand, not being able to solve. Well, that way you would be able to solve it and they would know that it's not... But I turned these corners pretty good. When you were talking about them...

AK: Another thing, for instance, here you start, I start from here. And then go and cannot stop, return, come here, go there, come back...It's your brain does it. It's like a frame of a house. You cannot do one room and then another room.

NH: No, that's a good explanation, actually, that's a good way to explain it.

AK: Like the body, the arm, so connected. You cannot have...if it was like that, you could have an arm hanging. Everything is so beautifully connected, it's exactly the frame.

MH: I'm still curious about the secrecy of it. Originally, when this work was made, the first time. Was there a technical reason for why it should be continuous and not stopping and starting?

NH: Cause it's all on the surface, it's above the material.

AK: These two rows on the surface and then there is the third and the fourth that is on the...I'll show you.

MH: The third and the fourth are what?

AK: I'm not going into the fabric.

MH: They're just on the surface of the threads.

AK: On the surface, I'm just rolling (?) and if you do one mistake, on the first row, and then you go and then you do the second and there is a mistake, that's it, you will undo all of it. It's exactly the frame of a house. You cannot make a mistake, the house will someday fall apart.

MH: That first row is very important.

AK: The first. And the second too. But the second cannot be right, unless the first is right, and the third and the fourth go fast. Without, as I said, without...see how I'm kind of rolling around. And I'm going to stop now and show the fourth, the fourth row...see...I'm going here...

MH: You're sort of weaving around the frame.

AK: It's like a...(?) Now you see what I did?

MH: I see it, that is complicated.

AK: I kind of finished, the work is done now. This is kind of coarse. It could be very fine too, and very thick too.

MH: So these red and white are already done, they have the four layers.

AK: They are done. So as you see, I finished the work.

MH: I get it. That's actually a really good thing, right there, to photograph, because it shows all four layers. It shows all four stages... You see, isn't this all four? This is the one, two, and then...

NH: And as she was putting the American flag together, I mean, it could have been any subject, but we had chosen this one because of the year... You know she was teaching me, not just about stitching, cause there's, before the stitching we have to draw it. And we have to, there's so much to learn.

AK: You have all this?

MH: I think so.

NH: This is in storage, Mom, isn't it?

MH: I don't know if I have this. Was this from the Lowell festival?

AK: You remember the...(?) was her name...she made it, but too bad.

NH: This is the original

AK: I have the original of that.

NH: I can put a black marker on that white strip.

MH: It's true, we could do that...

MH: Who did this? The Museum of American Textile History in Lowell...

NH: She came to my daughter's school, my mom.

MH: Oh, did she? Good.

NH: As a guest once, and gave the children this activity.

MH: This is from 1990, wow, at the Brush Gallery. Eleanor Wax...nice, very nice.

Pause

AK: This is the only book that the woman in Armenia has prepared. This is that flat weave.

MH: That's the flat weave.

AK: I bet there are others. These are so complicated.

MH: Is that Marash?

AK: Yeah, that's Marash.

Photographs taken by Maggie

MH: It's really wonderful. And was it mainly meant for decoration on very sturdy fabrics?

AK: Yes, sturdy fabrics. But now, people are doing it on fancy things.

This is really a peasant work, it's not Aintab work. It's not lace. It should be colorful. Now people are doing...

NH: They've changed... When they were interviewing me, I talked about that. I told my mom, couldn't I do something...

AK: Now look at this.

MH: It looks Celtic.

NH: It does!

MH: Carved in 1308.

AK: There are...in Ireland. On the edges of cliffs, just like in Armenia, it is so bizarre...

End of Side A

AK: My Irish friend went to Ireland...she says she's Irish when Irish need me and she's French when France is in trouble, she's Armenian when Armenia is in trouble.

NH: Is this the right section here...this is Beirut. I think they...

MH: Is that the similar thing?

NH: This is Marash, Armenian alphabet.

MH: You just sort of wonder how it first came to be. It's making me think about...cause this is very old. When do you think people first did this form?

AK: That's why I'm showing, it's kind of a repetition of the stonework too. I'm trying to...where did it go?

NH: Here's that map that we were talking about.

MH: Ok, so where is? I don't recognize anything.

NH: That's where my father's family's from.

MH: Where's Aleppo?

NH: Oh, that way.

MH: I thought you said it was the next town to Marash, no?

NH: No, Aintab and Marash. Aleppo is in Syria. This is Turkey and Armenia, well, old Armenia and that's present-day Armenia.

AK: You know the old Armenia is (?)...they used to say between three waters. And Caspian here. And these three, Lake (?) and Sevan and (?). Where is Mediterranean, here. And this is Turkey. This here, was Syria,

when I was still very young. And then France gave this part to Turkey. Turkey always is given. And there is Cypress here, one third of it is given. And now Syria wants its land back. The six provinces here, was Armenia, wait, wait, I haven't finished.

MH: Where is Lebanon?

AK: So, the English...Turkey and Russia were in war. So this is the border, for Russia too. Of course they will fight from here and from Georgia too. So...some politics. England has told Russia, "Withdraw." And this is when...(?) all these were massacred, because that part suddenly is given. And then there was the huge massacre. Besides this massacre. This is another massacre, the Armenians fled, as much as they can. This is how they are in Azerbaijan, in Turkmenistan, in India, in wherever.

NH: Because they fled northeast.

AK: And this part, wherever, has remained, walking, walking. Came to...where is Marash. Aintab is closer. So when they, in one night they started to slaughter them, horsemen run to Aintab saying get ready.

NH: Get ready to go...start walking.

AK: From Aintab they ran to Syria and Syria took them.

NH: But isn't it interesting how things like this survived?

MH: Yeah.

NH: That's what's amazing to me. Somebody knew how to do it and taught somebody else and it survived...

AK: It's amazing, for instance, why we repeat our (?) Is it that we want to continue ourselves?

MH: Don't you think it's because it has meaning and connection to family?

NH: Where's the section on just Marash here, just the stitch itself.

AK: You look for something, you can't find it.

NH: I think they did an exhibit and then they gathered all the...

MH: I wish my grandmother could see this.

AK: I saw that story, beautiful, all embroideries.

MH: In your opinion is the Marash an endangered art form?

NH: Like the Armenians themselves.

AK: You know why it is? All embroideries are, when you cannot make your living on it. You cannot. If, for instance, this is done. How much you can sell this?

MH: You've got a really good point. Because even the way you learned it was tied into economics.

AK: In my time, women did not work, we embroidered—for fun, for loving it.

NH: This is 1929 and there's a theme in it. There's a story behind it. Because we were talking, I said, "Couldn't I change and make a pattern or

do something different?" She's like, why not, we can try it, but it may not be something traditional. Like this isn't.

MH: But there's a story.

AK: You want me to bring my old pieces?

MH: Oh yes.

AK: Some of them are upstairs.

MH: So you're saying, how will it survive, if women now work, and they can't make a living from it, how it is very endangered. Who's going to carry it on?

AK: How much you can sell, like a rug. We sell rugs, me and my husband.

MH: Rugs.

AK: Rug is a rug, rug you put on the floor, you use it. And somehow rugs, we know are expensive, and it serves something too. But this takes as much time, but would you buy it for a pillow?

NH: Maggie would.

AK: For lets say five hundred, that's how much time it takes. You wouldn't, I wouldn't too. Now I am trying to find something...

MH: And yet, it's meaningful to you.

NH: Well, she's always wanted to teach me, it's funny. And now, with this program, it kind of took form. And we're having fun. I hope everybody else who won feel the same way I do.

MH: We should maybe get you all together, it would be interesting to see.

NH: But there's no way I've mastered, like she, I could never...

AK: You will, you will.

NH: Someday I will...What is it you're looking for?

AK: The blow up of the design.

NH: Underneath, the one you took the picture of, that one?

AK: You know, I talked to the school.

NH: To the kids.

AK: Not talked, I took to the school....

MH: And then this one's colored in.

AK: Really bigger than this.

NH: It says pick two colors...we gave it as an assignment.

AK: What museum of textile?

MH: Lowell? The American Textile Museum?

AK: No, the one on the water.

MH: Boott Mill? I know where you mean.

AK: I went there to teach. And I took small pieces with the needle on it and I taught a group of eleven, twelve, thirteen year olds. Always there was one who learned, one is a devil always, learns. And then there were younger, which they could not, it was dangerous with needles. So then I had this idea, and I gave them, and then it was part of the (?)

NH: They had to go under and over and learn and follow.

AK: Even coloring...and I would say, ok, this is the highway, you go under the bridge...there were always two or three that understood, the rest were, "I would not want to do..."

NH: I remember in my daughter's school, there was a boy. The boy was...he really good.

AK: And then I prepared, before that, another colored something. And then we glued, and then, Happy Father's Day, they took home.

MH: Now these are only the two layers, right? Or would that also be four?

AK: You see this, is this blue.

MH: The blue, ok.

AK: Now, it's only this...

MH: And it's more angular, I see that...

AK: But when you, want to do this, you cannot stop here and then continue this, you have to come...

MH: This is the interconnected part.

AK: You see here. And even if there is something else here, you have to be able to travel and then come back, that part is really, you cannot teach.

NH: See here, this is square, there's only a certain direction I can go in. And then, of course these are a little bit more intricate, but they're just squares and not like those round, flowery patterns you saw. So, eventually, I'll get there.

MH: You'll get it.

AK: Eventually. There was some other thing too...

NH: I had no clue, but she said, we can't do that right now. We can't start, we're still finishing up on the corners.

AK: You know these are from...

NH: Really nice. She's from Marash too.

AK: The stubborn woman.

MH: Which one?

NH: An elderly lady that my family...my mother and grandmother knew.

AK: She wouldn't give it to me, I bet it's all thrown somewhere too.

MH: So you just copied them.

NH: She copied them.

MH: So you think in all of Watertown, all of the Armenian people that are here...

NH: You know Maggie, there's a huge interest. Because when we put the article up at the Armenian Center, they started calling. Women your age, who are still young and want to do something. They're not like my mother's age. You know the class was offered...they were talking about, should we offer a class somewhere and would she...It's time consuming, but she could do it.

AK: Let me settle down, I'm homeless now.

MH: Is that your house there? Where's your house?

NH: They just moved here.

AK: I'm the...(?)

MH: You were there, you were across the street?

NH: I wrote that in our last, I mentioned that, one of the difficult parts of this program...we didn't have our corners of stuff. That every time we had to pack up, put it away, and then fifteen, twenty minutes of time would waste again, ok, where's the thread, let's start again, let's talk again. Whereas you see, if you have a corner, like a little studio space, Marash studio, where she had in her other house, her stuff was all...it would have been better for us.

AK: I know I have more things, for instance, I have the...

NH: But I didn't start on this, I started on these practice ones, do you want to see them? I don't know where they are now, where is the other, light pink?

MH: But that's an unusual color though, isn't it, the pink?

NH: Oh this is just...we did it on here because, I can see, you see how I can see these dots.

MH: You drew those on there?

NH: I started drawing them, under her guidance, and I'll do the same here. Once I get to it, I'll start putting in the line. This isn't the best color but I don't mind it.

AK: There still are things there.

NH: But where are my practice ones? The practice ones are great because they were huge.

Pause

NH: ...the modern theme, where it's the stripes. I wonder if she had connected...well, it wouldn't be same color, it would have to be separate.

MH: I know.

NH: Here you didn't connect them.

AK: No, I did not.

NH: Yeah, I know, we were talking about it as a choice.

Pause

AK: This is how I used to teach the kids, easily. And they used to look at me doing...

MH: The four steps.

AK: ...the first, the second, fourth and the fifth.

MH: Oh, I recognize this piece.

AK: You know what this is?

MH: Is that a belt?

AK: The belt. I have the comforter of this...I was planning to have a cradle and make it and then put this.

MH: This is a belt for holding a baby.

AK: You see there is two loops here, the other is gone. And this goes under the cradle...even this my mother has made.

MH: She wove it?

AK: Wove it. Look at this. Everything is braided. And the grandmother...

Maggie takes photographs

MH: What would it be called, is there a name for that?

AK: A belt...

NH: This one is so delicate.

AK: My sister has this.

NH: And you see how you can see the fabric has a grid?

MH: Like canvas.

NH: That was one of the issues, you said, why do we pick this. So that I can see, I can learn, when I am putting in...

MH: This is old?

AK: This is old, yeah. I don't know what to do with it. This can be framed for a big home, not my house, somewhere...

MH: So how old do you think this is?

AK: Now this is from the trousseau of my aunt, my father's sister.

MH: So that's from your aunt?

AK: My aunt, my father's sister. And my grandmother...and as soon as a girl was born, mothers started to pile up, you say the chest...

NH: The hope chest.

AK: Hope chest, and they pile up, up, up. And they start to work, that's her wealth. And even this fabric is foot loom, it's not from any European machine made thing.

MH: A foot loom?

NH: It's denim.

AK: These threads are handspun, and the name of this fabric here it's called the denim, is it denim? I want to know the origin of this fabric...you tell me.

MH: Indians?

AK: Is it Indians?

MH: Indigo, because of indigo, dyeing it with indigo.

AK: My mother insisted that it had started in the Middle East, Arabs have it too.

NH: But that's because of the spice trading and the silk road. I'm sure that there's a connection.

AK: Every young woman married, that they do the washing, they did not do standing up...this is all they need. So to have that they had (?)

NH: Like big baggy pants.

AK: The middle is all pleats.

NH: And that's very Indian too.

MH: When they kneel, I mean squat.

AK: And everybody had that when I was little. And then suddenly everything changed. There were these fountains (?). And the washing machines started.

NH: And there is a connection to it being Indian because the Indians have some other primitive form, I think they do two layers, don't they? Of this work?

AK: Of India.

NH: Somewhere in India. And there is an old Armenian connection.

AK: Community.

NH: Community, in a town in India.

AK: You know the (?) question now, the Armenia and (?) that is this fighting.

NH: Another conflict.

AK: Argument with Azerbaijan.

MH: Azerbaijan, yes.

AK: The name is (?) in Armenian. So, always, Azeres gave hard time to...in the old times, religion was big deal. Because of that Armenians immigrated, ran away, they reached India and they all were merchants. Now there is maybe two million Armenians in Russia. You read it?

NH: Most heavily populated outside of Armenia.

AK: Ninety percent of the Armenians are merchants in Russia. They are merchants.

MH: Here they are too, in Boston.

AK: So, when they are there, they took with them. This is from Arapal (?). And then why they are in Arapal? Because Marash, whoever had the hard time, their daughter was kidnapped or their house was burnt, goes somewhere. And then they have gone to Arapal, from Arapal again they have moved...

NH: It's mountainous, it's a good place to hide.

AK: My grandfather, my mother's maiden name is Janzuzian, my mother's grandfather, they are from Arapal. My father's family is from Arapal too. So my grandfather's father was very friends with another Azeri family. They both were good friends. People used to be friends too, in Turkey too. And this Azeri man's son wants to marry that Azeri family's daughter and these three are friends. That family who has the daughter asks my grandfather's father,

"How is he, this young man? Do you think I should marry my daughter to this?" And this one is telling my great-grandfather that he is going to ask that family's daughter for his son. Fathers, mothers, aunts did this. And he said, "Yeah, she's a very nice girl." That family is asking my great-grandfather, do this is a good...old people know the young ones how they

are. And my great-grandfather said, "I don't think you should." And then he refuses this family...he refuses his daughter...and the gossip, the word comes that it's because of my great-grandfather. Because he says, "I'm your friend, I don't think you should..."

MH: Don't think it was a good match.

AK: And this family that has been friends forever with my great grandfather's family, someone when he is on the roof...roofs were used for...they have shot him. And he has right away died. And this is how from Arapal my mother's family have moved to Marash. And the name then, family's were nicknamed always, their name is "Janzuzian."

Meaning he fell without soul.

MH: Can you write that down, the spelling of it?

AK: My mother's maiden name is Janzuzian.

MH: Is that in Armenian?

AK: No, it's in Turkish.

MH: He fell without soul.

AK: Meaning he dropped dead in one minute. "Jan" meaning soul.

NH: And Armenians use that word, "jan," they'll say, "Maggie-jan" meaning you're speaking to the soul of Maggie, or you're speaking to the soul of the child.

MH: So this connects to the story of...

NH: And "jan-zuz" means absence of.

AK: "Zuz" is without...

MH: Because he was shot and fell off the roof?

AK: He was shot and died, dropped dead in one minute. He fell "jan-zuz."

MH: And that becomes the name.

AK: For instance, there is a family whose name is "?" We have books like this about names. It's because his carriage had fallen in a river and he was sitting on the river waiting to be saved. And everybody said, "Oh, you look like the captain of a boat." So the captain turned into...[the name]. So people used to be named...

MH: What about your married name Kazazian?

AK: I don't know Kazazian, there are some Kazazians. I don't know, I am Kazaz, meaning I am bored. Not bored, I am tired of something. So I don't know if it means that. But then are second names...

It's a very old name. Sometimes they think it's from Greek...

NH: Did you go through all your questions.

MH: I wanted to know, again, what it means to have this state sponsored apprenticeship—to both of you.

AK: It's really pushing us to, instead of neglecting, thinking about it and thinking about it and postponing it. And then there are financial things too that, I got paid for this, I have to do it. And really, maybe, it's to be forced. Otherwise you never sit and say, ok, this is the day to teach you.

NH: We became more focused. We had a schedule. There were days that we didn't meet, but we then rescheduled. That part of it's interesting. Because the state which I grew up in has become a part of my life, it's a connection. Whereas before it was a thing that my grandmother did, or my mother and my grandmother talked about. Something like she said, kind of in the past. I would always look at it but I never thought I would be involved in it somehow. And I feel a more a part of it, and when Jay Kauffman sent us the letter, the town came and wanted to talk about it, our friends started talking. It wasn't just an Armenian thing anymore. It became something bridged into my local community. And I mentioned, I said, I feel more a part of the Lexington heritage because they wanted to include it. They want my mother to come to the Heritage Museum for example. It kind of connected us to the present day, my present day Massachusetts, Lexington, and the community. It's an interesting turn of events. Rather than something with my grandmother in the corner talking about it.

MH: And you're being acknowledged as being part of...

AK: I like what she said, giving to our town.

NH: Our community, our immediate community.

AK: And then the thing that they appreciated it. They came from the newspaper and then suddenly...I'm not alone to love it, others love it too. The letter that Jay Kauffman [wrote], is so warm.

NH: Extending the invitation to come and exhibit. And in our town, Lexington is a historical town. There are so many people, so many families who have given to the town in many ways. So this was our little...

AK: I'm planning really to do more. So here she's going to give that to the Lexington town.

NH: Oh yeah, this one, we haven't finished it. Hers is the more...

AK: I will give this, if they don't I will give to Lexington.

NH: That's our little thing, we're not obligated to do it.

MH: You're really right. There are all so many people that live in Massachusetts, and all of them have the traditions. And yet, I love what you said, because it does somehow make you feel more included. Of course you feel welcome in your own ethnicity, but to feel connected and appreciated outside of that.

AK: When I was invited to the Smithsonian festival in Washington, and then I returned, I really lived with the folk people, the folk festival. That was my luck to see how this country has turned around and have reached this here...fifteen days I lived with them and I talked with them, I saw what they did. And I returned, I sent them a thank you note. Me thank them. How many years we were here, from '69.

NH: Almost twenty years.

AK: I really had not yet made roots, I'm saying really sincerely the truth. I was a mother, I immigrated, I am a citizen. I had not made roots. I was living, I was alive, but you have to make roots. And I wrote like this to them, I said, these fifteen days was my christening of being a citizen. I felt it. Really felt it. And from that day on, I really feel I have to give too. It's not take, take, take. Because the immigrant comes, works, is paid, there is money, there is car...but what do you give back. You don't think of it.

NH: Of my generation who has no opportunity to really focus on things like that. Say, I have my career, or whatever I am doing, and this connected it all. And my friends, my everyday American friends, who know about it, talk about it, we've had a positive turning...

AK: Not making roots is something, but I have never, never felt.

NH: Alienated?

AK: I never have felt it. I have always been...people complain, complain, complain.

NH: Outsiders, I think. Is that what you mean.

AK: What are you complaining you know. If you complain, why are you coming. If you say this is a devil's country, ok, go home!

And everybody amused me. The first years were not easy. For instance, if I opened my mouth. Then there were not this much foreigners.

MH: In 1969? And how old were you when you came here?

AK: Forty, fifty.

NH: About my age almost.

AK: It amused me, I never had these arguments, fights, courts. I remember the first summer, first car, first parking habits, there are habits in everything. We were in Nahant, and they were always full, and one spot free. And there were two cars, one and us, going exactly the same difference. My husband always is careful, not to have any problem. So he stopped, he said, "Go ahead." The man came out of the car, this is one of the funny, came up out of the car, came to the window of my husband, had a quarter. You don't know what's going on. He put on his hand. My husband say, "Ok, you go ahead." My son was then thirteen, he said, "Father don't be scared." He knew from the schoolmates what's that. I did not know. Heads or tails. The man doesn't know that he doesn't know English, or he doesn't know what's going on. He's insisting, a big

man, to the window. And you don't know what's going on, you are on a different planet...and the man said, "Ok, it's yours." Your father did not understand what was going on...Things which were new for us, it takes many, many years.

NH: It's a familiar thing in our family, it's bridged over into people who have no knowledge of what this is and it's made it more familiar to them. I guess that's how you become more included. And I don't know if the Mass Arts Council knows what that is all about...how did it all start...

MH: The base of the work that I do there would be about that. It's making all these little pockets of people understand each other and appreciate across lines to some extent.

NH: Are they having a party?

MH: They did that in Virginia. They brought all the apprentices and masters together in the beginning. But maybe we should do that...cause there are five others. Two of them are music, one of them is Turkish marble painting...

Discussion of marble painting

MH: Anahid, if I asked you this, where is home to you?

AK: I don't know how to put this, where is home to me. You are right, I have grown up in Syria. Where you are born, really is where you are born. My childhood, my teenage-hood, that's the most important part of your life. There is like...of memories, but then there is something else. I don't know, should I say or not. Where your children grow up, is your second home. It's inevitable that you don't have memories too. I made memories with them. They did not make memories with me, I made with them. So this is now my home. I went to Armenia, two years ago, and it's a beautiful feeling. This land which is under your foot, is your land. But I was asking to myself, do I want to stay here. No. No. I have asked this to a lot of Jewish friends of mine, have you been to Israel. Some yes, some no. Even the ones that have been, I ask, do you want to live there. No. It's not you like or don't like. It's not your home.

MH: For anyone that emmigrates that's got to be a pull, in two different directions.

NH: Even for me, I think of this place as my home.

MH: Did you grow up in Lexington?

NH: I was three when we came, I know no other country...

AK: If they asked me if I would live in another town, no again.

NH: I'd rather live here. I did live in Arlington. We moved back because we had property to come to. For example, not that this has anything to do with Marash, my daughter is in a town soccer group. And one of the parents was saying why don't we take the girls out, cause she took her girl out, to a travel team. I said no, this is my town, why would I take her out of the town team? Let her enjoy her town. For a while, and I always feel

that this is my town. But our children know about Armenia. We teach it to them as a country that we would appreciate if they went to and visited, just like France, and other...

But is it a nice feeling? I don't know, there's a lot of issues. It's not the same, traveling to France is fun, traveling to Armenia is heavy. It's not quite the same.

But, our friends, when we talk together, it's like where are we going next, is it London? No ones dying to go to Armenia...

AK: Before we went to Armenia we were in Switzerland and we were on a lake touring. And this beautiful, all around the lake, beautiful houses. Clean, clear, everything is perfect. Water fountain in from the lake. And then right after that we went to Armenia and there is this lake Sevan, it's impossible that you don't see the difference. Beautiful lake. There is a peninsula going from the land and there is beautiful monastery there. And I cried, of jealousy, I say things exactly how I feel. I cried because I said, beautiful, I mean look at this lake, why is it that Switzerland all this and not here. Even though that's very commercialized and this is nature. Plain nature. There are one, two, maybe hotels, that's all. And people come and visit, and then go. It's not commercialized. But the fickleness of the people and the leisure and this luxury makes you sad.

MH: For your own people you mean?

AK: Why is that my own daughter, right now, is saying that it's fun to go to France but heavy to go...even what she said hurts me. She's right, this is the truth. It is the truth...