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Armenian Studies Program

California State University, Fresno

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Lecture on

“On the Trail of My Musa Dagh Ancestry”

by Dr. Vahram Shemmassian

Dr. Vahram Shemmassian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Northridge, will give a presentation on “On the Trail of My Musa Dagh Ancestry” at 7:30PM on Friday, September 30, in the University Business Center, Alice Peters Auditorium, Room 191, on the Fresno State campus.

The presentation is part of the Fall Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program, with financial support from the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

This presentation recounts Dr. Shemmassian’s rendezvous with the history of Armenian Musa Dagh, his ancestors’ birthplace. The odyssey began during the early stages of the civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990), when life seemed to stand still and required re-ignition. Idle wanderings in Anjar, Lebanon, where his family had taken refuge, came to an end with the discovery of the umbilical cord tied to the missing Homeland and its people.

The young graduate student embarked on his mission cautiously but surely, navigating through uncharted archival domains, reviewing numerous periodicals and newspapers, interviewing and corresponding with natives, visiting homes across continents in search of family papers, soliciting vintage photographs, and in the process

making friends and finding himself in anecdotal situations. All of this resulted in a doctoral dissertation, articles in scholarly journals, conference talks, Power-Point presentations, exhibits, interviews, and so on. It also led to the publication of a new book: *The Musa Dagh Armenians: A Socioeconomic and Cultural History, 1919-1939*.

Dr. Vahram Shemmassian is the director of the Armenian Studies Program in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures at the California State University, Northridge. He holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and has conducted extensive research in some forty archives in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Armenia, gathering data on such areas of interest as the Armenians of Musa Dagh and Armenian Genocide survivors in the Middle East at the end of World War I

Dr. Shemmassian's latest articles are "Humanitarian Intervention by the Armenian Prelacy of Aleppo during the First Months of the Genocide," *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* (2013), and "The Economy of Armenian Musa Dagh in the 19th and Early 20th Century," *Haigazian Armenological Review* (2014). In the summer of 2010 the Ministry of Diaspora of the Republic of Armenia awarded Dr. Shemmassian the "William Saroyan Medal" for his contributions to the promotion and preservation of Armenian culture in the Diaspora.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Free parking is available in Fresno State Lots P5 and P6, near the University Business Center, Fresno State. No parking permits are required for the lecture.

For more information about the lecture please contact the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669, or visit our website at www.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies.