

## Finding Aid for THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH Collection

### Collection Processed by:

Sandy Lu, 2.22.17

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### OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION:

**Origination/Creator:** Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios  
**Title of Collection:** THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH Collection  
**Date of Collection:** 1935 -- 1981  
**Physical Description:** 17 boxes; 7.1 linear feet  
**Identification:** Special Collection #15  
**Repository:** American Film Institute Louis B. Mayer Library,  
Los Angeles, CA

### RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS:

**Access Restrictions:** Collection is open for research.  
**Copyright:** The copyright interests in this collection remain with the creator. For more information, contact the Louis B. Mayer Library.  
**Acquisition Method:** Donated by Sam White in 1982.

### BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORY NOTE:

THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH began as a novel published in 1933. Originally written in German by Franz Werfel, the story was translated into English in the fall of 1934. The book was a success after being featured in The Book of the Month Club—selling approximately 150,000 copies in the United States alone.

Werfel was inspired to write his novel after a trip to the Middle East during which he met Armenian survivors of the Young Turk regime. Werfel heard stories about the struggle at Musa Dagh (“The Mountain of Moses” in English), where some 5,000 Armenians resisted Turkish military strength for 53 days before French and British ships intervened. Though it is a work of fiction, the real-life Armenian genocide features prominently in the book. The book earned praise from American literary critics, as well as Armenian-Americans who described Werfel as a “friend God has sent.” Many drew a connection between the treatment of

Armenians during the Ottoman Empire, with the then-contemporary treatment of Jews by a Nazi German regime.

Before the book was translated into English, executives at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer purchased the screen rights for \$15,000. After review by censor Joseph Breen and MGM-head Louis B. Mayer, limited political pushback was anticipated. David O. Selznick was put in charge of the film's production, and "was the first to sense the danger in the project."<sup>1</sup> To ameliorate Turkish audiences, the film's plot was to be revised so that, rather than blaming *the whole* of the Turkish government, just one single Turkish person would be implicated for the atrocities of the Armenian genocide. Selznick also asked his contacts at the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) to notify the Turkish government of the project.

Realizing that the film might cause a stir, Frederick Herron at the MPPDA implored Selznick and other MGM heads to approach the project with extreme caution. He recommended that the film take place 20 years earlier than the novel to avoid association with the Ottoman Empire. Herron also urged Selznick to stress the virtues of the Turkish people in the film. MPPDA's major concern was that, should the film cast Turkey in a negative light, the French might also boycott it—given the strong relationship between the two countries. French audiences made up a large portion of film revenues at the time, and the American film industry could not afford to lose those profits.

From there, the situation escalated. The State Department and the Turkish embassy both got involved, as did Turkish media outlets—who publicly attacked MGM for attempting the project, accused the studio of actively seeking to destroy Turkey's reputation, and encouraged Turkish citizens to boycott. The project was halted in late 1935.

However, the project was revisited in 1938. In the midst of World War II, most American films were restricted in Germany and Italy. With diminished European profits anyway, MGM considered making the movie for solely American audiences. The Turkish press and American authorities caught wind soon enough, and quickly extinguished the possibility of the film's production.

Following World War II, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* became "the most 'on again, off again' major literary property in the history of American motion pictures."<sup>2</sup> MGM poured massive financial resources into its attempts to have it made but the studio was always thwarted.

MGM eventually sold the rights to John Kurkjian, a California real estate

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<sup>1</sup> Welky, David. "GLOBAL HOLLYWOOD VERSUS NATIONAL PRIDE: The Battle to Film *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*," *FILM QUARTERLY*, Vol. 59 No. 3, Spring 2006: 35-43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

developer, who had hoped that the film would bolster his reputation in the Armenian-American community. The result is the 1982 film, *THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH*. Shot in Malibu, California on a budget of \$1 million and cobbled together from early drafts of the screenplay, the film was panned by critics.

Since then, a number of attempts have been made to properly adapt Werfel's novel for the screen. In 1989, a West German company announced its plans to shoot the film on a budget of \$25 million—which never panned out. Hollywood stars Mel Gibson and Sylvester Stallone have both individually also expressed interest in producing the movie.<sup>3</sup> The future remains to be seen.

### **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE:**

THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH collection includes iterations of the screenplay, dated between 1935 and 1982. Additionally, a copy of Werfel's novel and a few books about Armenia are also included in the collection—presumably for research purposes.

The collection is divided into two series: Scripts and Research.

Within Scripts, the series is divided into files by writer: Talbot Jennings, Carey Wilson, Jan Lustig, Elick Moll, Kathryn Berman, Neil Paterson, Guy Green, Guy Green and Neil Paterson, Howard Clewes, Baruch Cohon and Samuel White, Ronald Harwood, Clarke Reynolds, Larry Hilbrand and Samuel White, and Alex Hakobian are represented in the collection. Each of these writers has a file in the Scripts series. Files are arranged chronologically. Within each writer file, multiple versions of the script may exist. This series retains its received original order.

The Research series is comprised of only one file: Books. The books are arranged alphabetically within this series.

### **CONTAINER LIST:**

#### **Series 1: Scripts**

##### **Box 1**

f. 1 Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1729, 1935, April 15

f. 2 Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1726, File Copy, 1935, April 15

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<sup>3</sup> Yigal, Schleifer, "Armenia's Doomed Quest to Recruit Steven Spielberg," *The Atlantic*, 2012 February 15, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/02/armenias-doomed-quest-to-recruit-steven-spielberg/253131/>.

- f. 3 Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1725, File Copy, 1935, April 15
- f. 4 Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1728, File Copy, 1935, April 15
- f. 5 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 0560, Vault Copy, Temporary Incomplete, File Copy, 1935, February 7
- f. 6 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 1925, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, February 7
- f. 7 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 1850, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, February 18-19
- f. 8 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 0803, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, Vault Copy, 1935, February 18-19
- f. 9 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Screenplay, 1935, April 23
- f. 10 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1946, File Copy, Vault Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 11 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1948, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 12 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1949, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 13 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1947, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 14 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1<sup>st</sup> Draft Wilson
- f. 15 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 0816, File Copy, Temporary Complete, 1935, April 23

**Box 2**

- f. 1 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 8181, 1935, April 25
- f. 2 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 0649, 1935, April 25

- f. 3 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script Original #2, Scenes 122 to end, 1935, April 25 with changes through June 14
- f. 4 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Carey Wilson Working Copy, 1935, June 19
- f. 5 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script, Carey Wilson, 1935, June 19

**Box 3**

- f. 1 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 15666, 1935, June 19
- f. 2 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 15695, 1935, June 19
- f. 3 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script No. Two, 1956, December 11
- f. 4 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script Original Treatment, 1956, December 14
- f. 5 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script Treatment No. Three, 1956, December 14
- f. 6 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script Treatment No. Four, 1956, December 14
- f. 7 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 15, 1957, January 29
- f. 8 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 13, 1957, January 29
- f. 9 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 14, 1957, January 29
- f. 10 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 10, 1957, January 29

**Box 4**

- f. 1 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment 40 DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 4, 1957, January 29
- f. 2 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title] Treatment, No. 9, 1957, January 29
- f. 3 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title] Treatment, Original, 1957, January 29
- f. 4 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], No. 14, 1957, January 29 - February 8

- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Script "File Copy", 1958, December 9
- f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, 1958, December 9
- f. 7 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, Dialogue Treatment, 1958, December 9
- f. 8 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, Rough Treatment, 1958, December 11
- f. 9 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], File Copy, Treatment Outline, 1958, December 29
- f. 10 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, Treatment Outline, 1958, December 29
- f. 11 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, 1959, January 12
- f. 12 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, Notes and Experiments, 1959, January 19

**Box 5**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, Notes and Experiments, 1959, January 19
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, 1959, January 22
- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], 1959, January 22
- f. 4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title] Original, 1959, January 22
- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title] Draft of Screenplay ORIGINAL, 1959, February 16
- f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title] / MUSA DAGH, Draft of Screenplay Original + Part Dictation, 1959, February 16

**Box 6**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], ORIGINAL, 1959, March 9
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions, Vault Copy, Volume 1
- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions, Incomplete, 1959, March 9

**Box 7**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., 1959, March 23
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Notes, 1959, May 5
- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, 1959, May 6
- f. 4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, Original 1959, May 6
- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, 1959, May 8
- f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, Vault Copy, 1959, May 8
- f. 7 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, Originals, 1959, May 8
- f. 8 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Incomplete Script, Original, 1959, May 25
- f. 9 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Original, 1959, June 8

**Box 8**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title] / MUSA DAGH, Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., File Copy, 1959, June 8
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], General Outline, 1959, June 29

- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], General Outline, 1959, June 29
- f. 4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title] / MUSA DAGH, Vault Copy, 1959, June 30
- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Section of Script, 1959, June 30
- f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Section of Script, 1959, June 30
- f. 7 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Section of Script, 1959, June 30
- f. 8 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Section of Script, 1959, June 30

**Box 9**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Original, File Copy, 1959, June 30<sup>4</sup>
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, Part I, 1959, June 30
- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Original, 1959, July 24

**Box 10**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Temporary Complete, 1959, July 24
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Temporary Complete, File Copy, Composite Script, 1959, July 24
- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Temporary Complete, 1959, July 24
- f. 4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title] / MUSA DAGH, Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Vault Copy, Composite Script, 1959, July 24

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<sup>4</sup> Oversized, handle with care



## **Box 11**

- f. 1 Scripts, Berman, Kathryn, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Breakdown of Book, 1962, September 7
- f. 2 Scripts, Berman, Kathryn, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Breakdown of Book, 1962, September 7
- f. 3 Scripts, Berman, Kathryn, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Breakdown of Script by Neil Paterson, 1963, September 12
- f. 4 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1962, November 5
- f. 5 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1962, November 5
- f. 6 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1962, November 5
- f. 7 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Treatment, 1962, November 5
- f. 8 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Outline of Approach, Original, 1962, November 8
- f. 9 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Outline of Approach, Composite Script, File Copy, 1962, November 8
- f. 10 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Outline of Approach, 1962, November 8
- f. 11 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Original, 1963, July 2
- f. 12 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, File Copy, Part I, First Draft, 1963, August 1
- f. 13 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., Opening Script Scenes, 1963, September 9
- f. 14 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Vault Copy, Composite

- f. 15 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., 1963, September 12

**Box 12**

- f. 1 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., Composite Script, File Copy, 1963, September 12
- f. 2 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Vault Copy, 1964, June 17
- f. 3 Scripts, Green, Guy, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, File Copy, 1964, February 17 - April 13
- f. 4 Scripts, Green, Guy, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, File Copy, Semi Final, Undated, 1964, July 16
- f. 5 Scripts, Green, Guy, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Semi Final, Undated, received 1964, July 16

**Box 13**

- f. 1 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., File Copy, Composite Script, 1964, April 14
- f. 2 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., 1964, April 14
- f. 3 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., Vault Copy, 1964, April 14
- f. 4 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., File Copy, Composite Script, 1964, August 6
- f. 5 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., Original, 1964, August 6
- f. 6 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., File Copy + Handwritten Cast List, 1964, August 6

**Box 14**

- f. 1 Scripts, Clewes, Howard, THE 40 DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1969, December 2
- f. 2 Scripts, Clewes, Howard, THE 40 DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Screenplay by Howard Clewes, 1969, December 22
- f. 3 Scripts, Cohon, Baruch and Samuel White, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 3<sup>rd</sup> Draft, Screenplay by Baruch Cohon and Samuel White, Producer Samuel White, 1973, January
- f. 4 Scripts, Harwood, Ronald, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, A treatment for a film by Ronald Harwood, 1976, June

**Box 15**

- f. 1 Scripts, Harwood, Ronald, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1<sup>st</sup> Draft Screenplay, 1976, September 8
- f. 2 Scripts, Harwood, Ronald, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Harwood Repro Copy 1976, Producer James B. Harris, 1976, September 8
- f. 3 Scripts, Reynolds, Clarke, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, First Draft Screenplay, Producer Samuel White, 1978, April

**Box 16**

- f. 1 Scripts, Hilbrand, Larry and Samuel White, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, First Draft Screenplay by Larry Hilbrand and S. White, 1978, July
- f. 2 Scripts, Hilbrand, Larry and Samuel White, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Tele-version, Adapted from the Screenplay, by Larry Hilbrand and S. White, Producer Samuel White, 1978, July
- f. 3 Scripts, Hakobian, Alex, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Screenplay by Alex Hakobian, Shooting Script, 1981, April 14

**Series 2: Research**

- f. 4 Research, Books, Green, Frederick Davis, *Armenian Massacres and Turkish Tyranny*. New York: American Oxford Press, 1896.
- f. 5 Research, Books, Buxton, Noel and Rev. Harold Buxton, *Travel and Politics in Armenia*. New York: MacMillan Company, 1914.

**Box 17**

- f. 1 Research, Books, Bryce, Viscount, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916*. London: GP Putnam's Sons, 1916.
- f. 2 Research, Books, Vahan, V.C., *History of Armenia, Volume 1*. Boston: Ararat Publishing Co., 1963.
- f. 3 Research, Books, Werfel, Franz, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. New York: Viking Press, 1934.