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ON THE HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN SANCTUARIES OF  
ABSHERON PENINSULA  
(an overview)

*Key words:* falsification, Proper Aghwank, Transcaucasia, Absheron peninsula, indigenous, the Armenian diocese of Shamakhi, church, monastery, sanctuary.

*Introduction*

In post-Soviet Azerbaijan where the anti-Armenian state policy along with the far-reaching falsification of history has become a common trend, the Azerbaijani “historians” have undertaken the initiative of new large-scale informational attacks, which have been carried out even more consistently since Azerbaijan’s independence. As rightly mentioned by Academician Ashot Melkonian, “after the proclamation of independence with the direct guidance of the Aliyev government, the Azerbaijani historiography got out of any scientific control, and due to its unlimited fancy even surpassed the Turkish historiography”<sup>1</sup>. The fraudulent official “historiography” of Azerbaijan, getting out of scientific scrutiny (Z. Buniatov, G. Geibulaev, R. Geyushev, F. Mamedova, R. Melikov and others) in the studies on the history and historical geography, concerning Aghwank and

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<sup>1</sup> Մելքոնյան 2011, 13:

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Shirvani<sup>2</sup> was obsessed with antiquating the artificial and false “history” of the state of Azerbaijan emerged on the basis of the formation of the nomadic tribes on May 28, 1918 and proclaimed “democratic”. In its quest to find “Azeri”, “Azeri tribes”, “Azeri race” the Azeri “historiography” Azerbaijan persistently made efforts to appropriate the ethno-cultural and political history of the regions lying between Kur valley and Absheron peninsula (including the regions of Aghwank lying east of the Kur). Their targets also included the Trans-Caspian areas lying north-east of Aghwank along with the regions of the downstream of the Araks/Yeraskh (these were originally part of Baku province) and eastern coastal areas of the Caspian sea of Great Armenia’s Paytakaran region situated south of the Araks<sup>3</sup>. The descendants of Oghuz-Turks, also known as the invaders from trans-Alpine prairies were nothing more but Caucasian Tartars who started to proclaim themselves “Azeri” in the late 1930s. Through vandalism, robbery common only to Turks the appropriation, annihilation of the century-long history and civilization of the natives (Armenians, Udis, Lezgis, Budughs, Khinalughs, Krizis, Haputlis, Avars, Tcakhurs, Tats, Talishes, etc.), along with the falsification and distortion of statistical data they strive for “affirming themselves” as the “most ancient and civilized nation”.

### *Goal and Objectives*

Within the scope of the given article, we shall dwell upon the history of cultural activities carried out by the Armenians since the early Middle Ages in Absheron peninsula, particularly in Baku. The importance of this question is stipulated by the fact that the anti-Armenian state policy on the part of the Aliiev administration drove the Azerbaijani story-tellers, aka historians, to intentionally falsify and distort the facts, introducing the anti-scientific perspective on all the events that involve the Armenians on Absheron peninsula, especially in the city of Baku. In their studies on different historical periods of Baku the erzats historians (S. Ashurbeili<sup>4</sup>, F. Taghin<sup>5</sup>, and others), employing the anti-scientific approach to

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<sup>2</sup> In the historical sources since the X century the area lying between the downstream of the Kur river and the Caspian sea has been mainly known as Shirvan (see **Минорский** 1963, 85, 106–119; also see **Փափազյան** 1953, 80, 86). In this respect Mikael Chamchian writes: “Aghwank is the land lying between the Kur river and the Caspian Sea up to Darband. And this is called Aghavank of Shirvani or Shirvan”. (**Համչյան** 1984, 131).

<sup>3</sup> **Ստեփանյան** 2009, 133–142; **Էնաեթոլլահ Ռեզա** 1994; Galichian 2013.

<sup>4</sup> See **Ашурбейли** 1964; **Ашурбейли** 1992.

data fabrication and distortion of sources consistently conceal the accurate Armenian and international sources, testifying to the fact that the Armenians have been old residents on the peninsula, especially in the city of Baku and have long carried out culture-creating activities. It should be noted here that another Azerbaijani fabricator, Enver Pasha-Zade<sup>6</sup>, who has authored the so-called work titled **“The Mosques and Churches of Old Baku”**, with a striking effort to disguise the fact that the residence of the Armenian population in the city dates back to ancient times, has only introduced the Catholic churches. Whereas, the historical truth is contained in the fact that since the earliest times, specifically since the Middle Ages, when the Trans-Caspian regions teemed with the indigenous Armenian residents, the history did not know and could not have known about the **existence of a nation that named itself as “Azeri”**. Hence, **academic studies on** different historical events, concerning the Armenian population in Baku enable us to bring to light all the falsehoods about the Armenians that have consistently been disseminated by the state propaganda of Azerbaijan.

#### *The History of the Research*

The trustworthy historical records testify that since ancient times an Armenian segment<sup>7</sup> coexisted with Afghans in the multi-ethnic region on the left bank of the Kur. The Armenian segment played a unique role in the ethno-cultural and political development of the region. As stated by Hr. Atcharian, **“there were tribes of Armenian origin in the country of Aghwank. Those tribes were so powerful that not only did they preserve their independence and have a permanent presence there, but also owing to some favorable circumstances had an influence on the country’s affairs ...”**<sup>8</sup>. Of special interest are the data introduced by Yu. Gagemeister, an expert on the **Caucasian studies**: **“Of all the former Caspian population only the Armenians and the Udis can prove their proto-settlement”**<sup>9</sup>. According to some data, in the Middle Ages a great number of

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<sup>5</sup> See Тагиев 1999.

<sup>6</sup> See Паша-Заде 1997.

<sup>7</sup> See Գալստյան, Հակոբյան 2003, 91–92.

<sup>8</sup> See Աճառյան 2002, 44:

<sup>9</sup> See Гегемейстер 1847, 58.

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Armenians lived in the whole region stretching from the Kur river to the Caspian Sea. The settlements populated by the Armenians approached more than 200<sup>10</sup>.

As an indigenous and culture-creating nation of the region, the Armenians were actively involved in the socio-political, socio-economic, educational and cultural life of the area, creating a rich history. The undisputable testimonies of the cultural activities by the Armenian – populated villages are represented by the churches, monasteries (Saint Yeghisha Arakyal of Kish, Saint Astvatsatin of Chalet, Saint Stepanos Nakhavka of Saghian and Saint Astvatsatin of Meysari), chapels, constructed on the concept of the Armenian architecture and hundreds of khachkars (cross-stones) and gravestones with Armenian inscriptions found in the cemeteries of the villages Nizh, Vardashen, Tchalet, Amuravan, Gandzak, Ghalaka, Vank, Rushanashen, Hnghar, Saghian, Matrassa, etc. Of exceptional value are a great number of Armenian manuscripts<sup>11</sup> copied throughout the XIV–XVIII centuries that are found in various educational centers of the region (Baku, Shamakhi, Saghian, Meysari, Tchalet, Matrassa, etc.). On the left bank of the River Kur the Armenian cultural influence is mainly reflected in spreading and reinforcing **Christianity and literacy**. According to Agathangelos' account, Gregory the Illuminator and the Armenian King Trdat III, the Great (298–330) disseminated the **Christian teachings**, “up to the Maskuts' and Alanians' borders reaching the Caspian area as well....”<sup>12</sup>. It is historically corroborated that in the early 30s of the IV century it was Grigoris the elder priest (ordained as the bishop of Aghavank and Vrik by the Catholicos Vrtanes A Partev) who preached the Christian teachings in the region. By the order of the Maskut king Sanesan Grigoris was martyred in the Caspian valley of Vatnya (presently Khachmas), lying to the south of Derbend. B. Harutyunian introduced a more accurate date of **Grigoris' death according to which, he was martyred shortly after king Trdat III died in 330–331**<sup>13</sup>. The spread of Christianity, literacy and enlightenment in Aghwank is closely connected with the educational activities of Mesrop Mashtots. At the beginning of the V century having finished the reinforcement of the newly created alphabet and the establishment of literacy in Armenia, Mashtots undertook the same initiative to spread the Caucasian Albanian alphabet of his

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<sup>10</sup> Կարապետյան 1989, 57:

<sup>11</sup> See Կարապետյան 1997; Ստեփանյան 2005, 67–73:

<sup>12</sup> Ագաթանգեղոս 1909, 439:

<sup>13</sup> See Հարությունյան 1981, 76–77:

own creation. The king of Aghwank and Yevsgheh, bishop Yeremia and elder priest Benjamin helped him to accomplish his mission of enlightenment in Aghwank<sup>14</sup>.

In terms of administration and religion, the church formed in Aghwank became part of the Armenian Apostolic church, thus acknowledging its supremacy<sup>15</sup>.

Many references about the bishopric dioceses of Kapaghak, Baghasakan, Hashu, Bakhaghat, Tcri, Shaki, date back to the V century manuscripts, testifying to the existence of the Christian, including Armenian population on the eastern bank of the Kur River and preservation of the religious traditions peculiar to the Armenian Apostolic Church<sup>16</sup>. At the end of the X and at the beginning of the XI centuries the Armenian dioceses of Shamakhi (Shirvani) and Shaki were founded on the aforementioned dioceses<sup>17</sup> which were under the jurisdiction of the Aghvan Catholicosate. The Aghvan Catholicosate (at the end of the XIV and at the beginning of the XV centuries the Catholicosate existed under the name of Gandzasar<sup>18</sup>) was another see under the auspices of the Armenian Apostolic Church, while the Catholicosses were ordained by the All-Armenian Catholicos<sup>19</sup>.

#### *The Churches and Chapels of the Peninsula*

The historical records attest that the Armenian-populated settlements have been found in the Trans-Caspian region, including Absheron peninsula going back to ancient times. Here Armenians had their sites of worship. Such villages of the peninsula as Buzovna, Balakhan, Sabunchi, Mashatagha, Shaghan, Surakhani, Mardakyan were populated by the Armenians<sup>20</sup>. According to records, despite adverse political circumstances, great work has been done to construct and renovate churches and monasteries in the aforementioned settlements. After visiting Buzovna, in September 1874 the public figure Al. Kalantarian wrote an article “A Letter from Buzovna”, pointing out that those villages had been

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<sup>14</sup> See Կորյուն 1941, 70.

<sup>15</sup> See Акопян 1987, 137, see also Հակոբյան 2002, 33.

<sup>16</sup> See Կորյուն 1941, 70, 72, see also Կաղանկատուացի 1983, 89, 122, 346.

<sup>17</sup> See Ստեփանյան 2005, 870–873.

<sup>18</sup> See Բալայան 2009, 168.

<sup>19</sup> See Օրմանեան 1911, 162, see Մկրտումյան 2006, see also Ուլուբաբյան 1998, 119, see also Դանիելյան 2005, 47.

<sup>20</sup> See Կարապետյան 1997.

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populated by the Armenians since ancient times. The author of the article introduced data on the churches that had disappeared in the villages of Balakhan, Buzovna and highlighted the existence of Armenian gravestones in that region. According to Al. Kalantarian, the date **found on an Armenian woman's gravestone** showed that she died 400 years before<sup>21</sup>.

The local Arab geographer and traveler Abd ar-Rashid al Bakuvi at the beginning of the XV century presented noteworthy information on the Armenian rural communities in the surrounding region of Baku, referring to the latter as **Christians**. Bakuvi wrote: **"There are many villages in the vicinity of Baku and each of them has a fortified citadel with strong walls. All of the villagers are Christian (i.e. Armenians – G.S.)"**<sup>22</sup>. In order to study the history of Armenian-Tats, in 1928 B. Miller, a professor of oriental studies at Moscow University undertook an expedition on Absheron peninsula. Travelling around such Tat-populated settlements as Buzovna, Balakhan, Mashtagha, Surakhan, Khousan, Ghala, Turkan, Sabunchi and other surrounding areas, he recorded multitudinous traces of Armenian churches and cemeteries dating back to ancient times. The old residents of the region also told Miller ancient stories according to which, it had been previously an Armenian location<sup>23</sup>. The Armenian correspondent of the **"Meghu Hayastan"** Aleksandr Najarian from Shamakhi introduced significant information on the Christian component of the Armenian culture found on the peninsula according to which, earlier on **in the pilgrimage site called "Bibi Heybat" lying 4 feet south-west to Baku there was the "Monastery of 40 Virgins"**. As Al. Najarian stated, **"the given pilgrimage site used to be a monastery, homing Armenian nuns, however now the Turks dominate the pilgrimage site and the land rich in oil"**<sup>24</sup>. On the instructions of the Armenian Catholicos Nerses V Ashtaraketsi Archbishop Sargis Djalalians visited (August, 1850) the diocese of Shamakhi in order to collect the church revenues. On his visit, the Archbishop

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<sup>21</sup> Քալանթարեանց Նամակ Բուզովնա, «Մշակ», 1874, սեպտեմբերի 19:

<sup>22</sup> **Абд ар-Рашид ал-Бакуви** 1971, 89–90. It should be noted that Buniatov, the publisher of the work, who is characterized by his aptitude of falsifying and distorting the historical facts, casting doubt on the accuracy of the record, meddled with the historian's account.

<sup>23</sup> See **Миллер** 1929, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Նաջարեանց Բագուի նախագործանատիրոջ ծայրահեղ անհոգութիւնը, «Մեղու Հայաստանի», 1183, փետրվարի 23:

also went to the oilfield regions, indicating that the debris of the church were still traced<sup>25</sup>.

Of special interest is Miller's account based on the local residents' stories, according to which, "the ancient city of Qaisidun being probably Armenian, used to lie between Turkjan and Ghalan villages"<sup>26</sup>. In August, 1842 Ilya Beryozin, a professor at the Universities of Petersburg and Kazan, an expert in the oriental studies visited Absheron peninsula, stating that many villages in the vicinity of Baku were populated by the Armenians, however during the Iranian rule, they left their settlements, moving to Baku, while the Muslims occupied the abandoned areas<sup>27</sup>. The philologist S. Tsotsikian, a former resident of Baku, stated that an Armenian village called Nor Shen was located in the vicinity of Baku, where during the excavation carried out in 1892 a heathen statue of worship was unearthed: "Some 30 years ago during an excavation in the village of Nor Shen, located in the vicinity of Baku, a statue dedicated to one of the Gods (of Fire and Sea – G.S.) was discovered"<sup>28</sup>.

It should be stated that a lot of data on the former Armenian settlements which were populated by Muslims later on Absheron peninsula can be traced back to the village of Buzovna (situated on the eastern border of the peninsula at a 30 km distance from Baku). The correspondent Sahak Muradian (who was also known under the pseudonym) "Aghuan" travelling to Buzovna at the end of the XIX century, wrote down the following story: "About 60.000 Armenians used to live all over Absheron peninsula, on the way from Baku up to the town of Absheron. Later on the incessant attacks of violent people from the eastern coast of the Caspian Sea (Central Asia) forced them to spread around, while the present-day Turks occupied the territory"<sup>29</sup>. It should also be noted that I. Beryozin's description of Buzovna in many respects verifies the data introduced by the authors of later periods. An article published in the monthly "Ararat" highlighted notable facts, concerning the evidence on the Armenian segment in Buzovna. The author of the article presents valuable information on the Armenian religious sites and some pieces of lithographic material. In his words, "formerly having been an

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<sup>25</sup> Ջալալեանց 1858, 409–410:

<sup>26</sup> Ջալալեանց 1858, 409–410:

<sup>27</sup> Березин 1850, 41.

<sup>28</sup> Ծոցիկեան 1922, 279:

<sup>29</sup> Ովքեր են մատրասեցիք, «Նոր-Դար», 1903, հունվարի 17:

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Armenian village now Buzovna serves as a summer resort for the Baku residents”<sup>30</sup>.

Other archaeological data also testify to the fact that Buzovna was populated by the Armenians in the period in question. At the entrance of a tomb unearthed in the village there was an inscription written in Arabic, stating: “It is Shmavon’s grave – the son of Bahram of Armenian (Tarsaich) descent, dating back to the month of Muharram, 703 (1303)”<sup>31</sup>. In the village of Buzovna the debris of gravestones and cross-stones with inscriptions dating back to the years of 700, 800 and 900 were conserved. The ruins of churches and ancient coins with Armenian letters were also found in the village. There were Armenian inscriptions on one side of a golden coin excavated in 1902, while on the other side there was a cross<sup>32</sup>. Up until the 1500s Buzovna existed as a purely Armenian village<sup>33</sup>. The facts show that the village had the Tat-speaking Armenian population and the local people were forced to emigrate to various places due to the Qizilbash invasion into the region in the years of 1501 and 1509<sup>34</sup>.

The history of the religious sites and sanctuaries in Buzovna village will be briefly introduced below.

The chapel of St. Yeghia and St. Andreas<sup>35</sup> was a well-known pilgrimage site in Buzovna. The Christian preachers Andreas and Anania are related to the chapel. The chapel is situated in a scenic location. Professor I. Beryozin put forward crucial information on the Armenians in the village of Buzovna, their sanctuaries and the tomb situated next to the chapel of St. Yeghia and St. Andreas. According to the data introduced by the professor, next to the hermits’ grave there was a small square chapel with an arched dome, which in the local Armenians’ words served as a cell for the Saint Hermits. At the entrance of the chapel the traces of an Armenian inscription were seen<sup>36</sup>. The Arabic inscription

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<sup>30</sup> **Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց** 1902, 482:

<sup>31</sup> **Չոբանեան** 1999, 13: P. Chobanean cited the aforementioned significant information from the Azeri historian Sima Qerimzade’s PhD summary.

<sup>32</sup> See **Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց** 1902, 486.

<sup>33</sup> See **Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց** 1902, 484–485.

<sup>34</sup> On the thorough study of the Tat-speaking Armenians, their genealogy, the history of formation, as well as their cultural specifics and identity see **Հակոբյան** 2002.

<sup>35</sup> See **Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց** 1902, 483.

<sup>36</sup> See **Березин** 1850, 64.



on the sidewall next to the chapel stated that in 1480–1481<sup>37</sup> the building was constructed by a certain Armenian called Atanvar. The Armenians living in Baku and its vicinity mainly performed their religious rituals in that chapel<sup>38</sup>. I. Beryozin wrote that there he met three Armenian families that were on a pilgrimage<sup>39</sup>.

After I. Beryozin it was Mesrop Archbishop Smbateants, the patriarch of the Shamakhi Armenian diocese, who presented a further description of the chapel. **The Archbishop's depiction stated: "It is a small and decorous chapel where on such religious holidays as Varadavar, Astuatsatsin, Surb Khach, a priest from Baku comes to serve a liturgy, consoling the pilgrims..."**<sup>40</sup>.

The next description is authored by a Baku resident Yer. Ter-Hovhanniseants who visited the ancient site in 1902. Yer. Ter-Hovhanniseants noted: **"The magnificent chapel of Saint Yeghia is situated in a superb location. The chapel is surrounded by white-stone pavements and wooden cages, behind them leafy trees like fans are standing like bodyguards, in the shade of which many residents from Baku, thirsty from the heat frequently enjoy their rest"**<sup>41</sup>.

Similar valuable information about the chapel was proposed by Al. Kalantaryan. Al. Kalantaryan in his correspondence sent to the Mshak in September, 1874 stated: **"The pilgrimage site is a chapel named St. Yeghya and Andreas. I have been told that the latter were pious vardapets (archimandrites) who led a life of a recluse"**<sup>42</sup>. The chapel had a hand-written book of records where the details of the chapel chronicle, a number of village estates were mentioned<sup>43</sup>. When the Archbishop Mesrop Smbateants and Yer. Ter-Hovhanniseants visited the chapel the inscription made by the elder priest Nerses about the well of his own making was still preserved: **"Me the elder priest Nerses built a well in memory of my parents – father Nerses and his wife Khatun in the year of 870**<sup>44</sup> **(excavated in 1421)"**<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> See **Березин** 1850, 65.

<sup>38</sup> See **Автономов-Спаский** 1855, 502.

<sup>39</sup> See **Березин** 1850, 64–65.

<sup>40</sup> **Սմբատեանց** 1896, 173:

<sup>41</sup> See **Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց** 1902, 485:

<sup>42</sup> **Քալանթարեանց Ալ.**, Նամակ Բուզովնայից, «Աշակ», 1974, սեպտեմբերի 19:

<sup>43</sup> See **Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց** 1902, 485:

<sup>44</sup> Yer. Ter-Hovhanniseants mistakenly mentioned that according to the Armenian calendar the inscription dated back to the year of 820 instead of 870 (see **Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց** 1902, 484).

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Noteworthy is the fact that on August 12–18 one of the five religious holidays of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Feast of The Transfiguration of the Virgin, was celebrated in the chapel. The pilgrims came from the neighboring locations and bordering provinces. Taking this circumstance into consideration, Sahak Adamian, a merchant and manufacturer from Shamakh, constructed three stone rooms on the western side of the chapel<sup>46</sup>. While entrepreneur Levon Yaghubian's donation was directed to the renovation of the chapel from top to bottom<sup>47</sup>. On the door it was written: "At God's will a holy house is built in memory of pious Saints Yegya and Andreas, thanks to honorable Levon Gasparean-Yaghubeants' donation, September 30, 1862"<sup>48</sup>. According to the "Family Calendar", "The graves of Saints Andre and Yeghya are located on Absheron peninsula (at a 30 feet distance from the city. A chapel has lately been built (i.e. rebuilt – G.S.)<sup>49</sup> in the place of the graves of the Saints. It is worth mentioning that Orbeli<sup>50</sup> once sated that words "karutsel" (build) and "shinel"(construct) were frequently used not only to denote "lay the foundations", create" but also "verakarutsel, norogel" (rebuild, renovate).

The chapel was greatly damaged during the 1905 Tartar-Armenian clashes<sup>51</sup>.

The Chapel of Saint Simeon and Saint Hovhannes<sup>52</sup>. The chapel was built in the location where the hermits were martyred. The date 1118<sup>53</sup> was written on the hermits' gravestones. Yer. Ter-Hovhanniseants found the given date to be implausible. However, an additional source clarifies the issue under discussion. At the city museum of Baku different materials from the debris of the Armenian inscriptions (brought from various regions of the republic) were exhibited. On a fragment of the debris it was written: "I Karabakh born Khacahtur Sahaketanov currently residing in Baku, built a chapel as a gift in 1830"<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 173, see also Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց 1902, 484.

<sup>46</sup> See Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց 1902, 484.

<sup>47</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 173, Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց 1902, 484:

<sup>48</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 173:

<sup>49</sup> Տոմար ընտանեկան 1874, 124: It should be noted that the expression "a chapel has been built" refers to the restoration of the building or its thorough renovation.

<sup>50</sup> See Орбели 1963, 419.

<sup>51</sup> See Հայաստանի ազգային արխիվ (ՀԱԱ), ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 217, թ. 1:

<sup>52</sup> In Ter-Yovhannisants' work the old version of the name – Simovn is mentioned.

<sup>53</sup> See Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց 1902, 486.

<sup>54</sup> Շահինյան 1976, 89:

The concise content of the inscription leads to presume that the word “built” (shinetsi) referred to the renovation of the chapel in 1830.

The Chapel of Saint Minas. It was situated not far from the chapel of Saint Andreas and Saint Yeghya. On the façade of the chapel it was written: “I, Taguhi Gurgeneants, the wife of Sergey Melikeants, built the chapel in memory of Saint Minas in 1876”<sup>55</sup>. No other data on the chapel have been preserved.

It should be noted that to the east of Saint Yeghya and Andreas Chapel the fourth religious site with no inscription<sup>56</sup> was situated on a cliff.

Summing up the aforementioned data extracted from different sources, we draw the following conclusion: peninsular Buzovna used to be a densely populated Armenian settlement, where Christian traditions were strongly maintained. Yer. Ter-Hovhannseants rightly stated: “Taking into consideration the local ancient literary monuments and inscriptions, it must be assumed that Buzovna was an ancient settlement populated by many Armenians, having its own sanctuaries, priests and cemetery”<sup>57</sup>.

Of all the Armenian-populated settlements on Absheron peninsula the city of Baku built by the Armenians played an important role in the history of Armenians<sup>58</sup>. At different periods, under the jurisdiction of the Shamakhi diocese, five Armenian churches functioned in Baku. They maintained the underlying traditions of the Armenian architecture, dating back to the depths of centuries. The history of each church will be briefly illustrated below<sup>59</sup>.

St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) is the first Armenian church to have been built in Baku. It was situated in the old district of the city at the foot of the citadel, in the vicinity of the “Virgin Ashtarak” (Virgin Tower) next to the Armenian caravanserai. Previously we mentioned that the Armenian influence in the civilization developments on the left bank of the Kur river spread from Greater Armenia’s north-eastern provinces of Artsakh and Utik. During the lasting and efficient rule of the king Vachagan the Pious (Barepasht) (485–523)<sup>60</sup> the

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<sup>55</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 173–174:

<sup>56</sup> See Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց 1902, 486.

<sup>57</sup> Տէր-Յովհաննիսեանց 1902, 482:

<sup>58</sup> On a more thorough study, concerning the history of Armenians in Baku province see Ստեփանյան 2010: Stepanyan 2013.

<sup>59</sup> On more details see Ստեփանյան 2007, 63–75.

<sup>60</sup> See Յակոբեան 2008, 72–88.

### On the History of the Armenian Sanctuaries of Absheron Peninsula

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Armenian influence Artsakh was reinforced in the ethno-cultural events of Aghwank. The king of the strong country of Artsakh ruled over the land of Albanians and Kambech. According to a historical legend, when Vachagan the Pious (Barepasht) gave away Bagavan region (it was part of Greater Armenia's Paytkaran province) as a dowry to his daughter Varsenik, Baku became the king's winter resort while Shamakhi – a summer resort<sup>61</sup>. Reverend S. Eprikan wrote: "In 500 AD this fiery country was given by the king Vachagan residing in the city of Barda, as dowry to his daughter Varsenik, whose winter resort was Baku and summer resort – Shamakhi"<sup>62</sup>. The legend about Vachagan Barepasht and princess Varsenik was reflected in the religious-moral writing "A Novel about Varsenik – an Armenian from Aghwank" penned by eminent writer and pedagogue Mesrop Taghiadian.

In history Vachagan Barepasht is remembered as a pious leader who was utterly devoted to his nation and his church. His patriotic and godly activities were acclaimed in Movses Kaghankatvatsi's work: "He was an enlightening source of theology. The blissful was also a role model because of his various acts of kindness"<sup>63</sup>. As Kaghankatvatsi's work contains clear information<sup>64</sup> on King Vachagan's influence and activities on the left bank of the Kur, it can be concluded that King Vachagan took the initiative of strengthening Christianity. To that end he carried out the church building activities that spread up to Absheron peninsula (the winter resort)<sup>65</sup>. The fact that in 500 he built St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) church in the location where M. Mashtots formerly had laid the foundation of a chapel testifies to this. According to a legend: "The old chapel had been built in the place of pagan altars dedicated to heathen non-Gods of fire and sea." On his visit to the country of Aghwank, Yeghishe apostle destroyed the altars, later translator Mesrop built a chapel there, dedicating it to Mother of God, and the king Vachagan the Pious (Barepasht) from Aghwank built a church there in 500 AD. Thus, it is the ancient and remarkable church of St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin), a sanctuary in Baku, which is situated in the citadel in front of the

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<sup>61</sup> See Հանրամատչելի հանրագիտական բառարան 1915, 199.

<sup>62</sup> Էփրիկեան 1903–1905, 362:

<sup>63</sup> Կաղանկատուացի 1983, 83:

<sup>64</sup> Կաղանկատուացի 1983, 50:

<sup>65</sup> See Էփրիկեան 1903–1905, 362, see also Հանրամատչելի հանրագիտական բառարան 1915, 199.

tower”<sup>66</sup>. It should be noted that the author refers to the most ancient church of St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) in Baku. Despite the folkloric nature of the data according to which it was Vachagan Barepasht, the king from eastern Armenia who had built the church of St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin), undoubtedly they reflect the reverberations of the real historical events. The mere existence of the Armenian church can be considered as powerful evidence, testifying to the fact that in the early Middle Ages there was an Armenian community in Baku. The cross-stones<sup>67</sup> with Armenian inscriptions and carved images in the neighboring areas of the already non-existent church St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) are unquestionable pieces of evidence, proving that since ancient times the Armenians used to live and create cultural monuments in Baku. The philologist S. Tsotsikian wrote about old Baku and the Armenian church constructed by the king Vachagan the Pious (Barepasht): **“Within the walls of the citadel there are many old buildings, residence of Shirvani Shahs and Persian Khans, narrow, crooked streets and newsstands and houses with nearing facades are found, too. The Armenian church of St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) is within the walls of the citadel”**<sup>68</sup>. The Bishop Makar Barkhutaryants, having visited Baku in 1890 wrote:

**“The Armenians of Baku had two stone-built churches. The small one was built at the foot of the citadel and named St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin). From the outer and inner architecture of the building it can be assumed that it was the only Armenian church in Baku”**<sup>69</sup>.

The church of St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) was a basilica. The rotund broach of the church was erected from the drum of the dome. The western entrance door had belfry of two floors. The lower floor of the belfry had four pillars, while the upper consisted of eight pillars, ending with a pointed broach. The church was built with unhewn stones, while the belfry - with carefully polished ones. The

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<sup>66</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 373:

<sup>67</sup> As a result of a years-long policy pursued to destroy the Armenian churches, cemeteries, cross-stones and gravestones there were just four cross-stones out of many in the vicinity of St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) Church. The Armenian inscriptions on those four cross-stones were erased and half ruined. They were moved to a one-time market situated in the citadel of Baku next to the Virgin Tower. Untimely deceased Zaven Sargsian the former director of the museum named after Parajanov handed us the last photos (made in November, 1986) of the cross-stones.

<sup>68</sup> Ծոցիկեան 1922, 280–281:

<sup>69</sup> Բարխուտարեանց 1893, 153:

ancient church caught in the turmoil of history was renovated by the local Armenians in different periods. S. Tsotsikean was right to have written: “St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) church still stands thanks to occasional renovations”<sup>70</sup>. In 1789 during Bishop Voskan’s prelacy (1785–1796) at the Shamakhi diocese, the church was renovated with the donations of the Armenian community. The Catholicos Ghukas A Karnetci played a great role in the renovation of the church. In 1784, the Catholicos issued a kondak, instructing Yeghiazar – the treasurer of Shamakhi diocese to help the people: “The new kondak sent to treasurer Yeghiazar, Baku instructing him to collect money and give it to people...”<sup>71</sup>. Another kondak by the Catholicos, sent to priests Hovsep, Hovhannes, Barsegh, and treasurer Davit, all residing in Baku stated: “ Allow the residents of Baku to build a church in the Armenian Tagh (residential area)”<sup>72</sup>. Five years later in 1789, the church was again in need of repair. Wealthy merchants, Tarumian brothers – Marcos, Zohrap, Hovahannes, Karapet from Nakhichevan, provided the financial assistance for the renovation of the church. In 1799 the church was again in a decadent state. In 1881–1882 the Armenian patriarch of the Shamakhi diocese Bishop Tadevos Dzyunakan (1876–1887) initiated the thorough reconstruction of the decaying church and the surrounding wall. A two-storied inn<sup>73</sup> was also built in the courtyard.

The church was included in the 1916 list of functioning churches<sup>74</sup>. After the establishment of the Soviet rule in Azerbaijan the church being considered a cultural monument, was reconstructed<sup>75</sup>. At the end of 1986 an initiative was undertaken to renovate the church. However, due to the widespread anti-Armenian policy in Azerbaijan, the reconstruction was suspended.

After the Baku massacres of the Armenians, perpetrated by the Azerbaijani ruling circles in January, 1990, the Armenian cemeteries and archaeological-historical monuments were destroyed. By the order of the Azerbaijani authorities the next barbaric act was committed when the church of St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin) (which though without its crosses was still standing) along with its

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<sup>70</sup> Ծոցիկեան 1922, 292:

<sup>71</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 217:

<sup>72</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 217:

<sup>73</sup> See ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 57, g. 2, q. 1921, թ. 37 շրջ.:

<sup>74</sup> See ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 56, g. 2, q. 904, թ. 1:

<sup>75</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 409, g. 1, q. 2685, թ. 2:

neighboring inn was levelled to the ground. The British journalist and writer **Thomas de Waal** testifies: “In the old city where the chapel of Saint Virgin used to stand the area is abandoned and vacant. In 1992 in the most violent periods of the Karabakh war, from the account of a diplomat working in Baku one can learn how the chapel was demolished”<sup>76</sup>. After demolishing the upper two floors of the belfry, its spared first floor was transformed into a new building. The latter resembles a heathen temple<sup>77</sup>, lying 3.3 kilometers east of Sarukhan settlement on Absheron peninsula. In the place of the church and its inn a tea house was built<sup>78</sup>.

Saint Gregory the Illuminator (Surb Grigor Lusavoricvh). The increasing number of the Armenian residents<sup>79</sup> in Baku brought about the need of building other churches (apart from the church of St. Virgin in different parts of the city. The Patriarch of Shamakhi diocese Daniel vardapet Shahnazariants<sup>80</sup> (1863–1868) undertook the initiative of building the second church. In June 1863 the Patriarch laid the foundations of the church<sup>81</sup>. A Baku resident, a philanthropist and a member of “Humanitarian Society” Javad Melikiants’ financial assistance along with the St. Astvatsatsin revenues and parish donations<sup>82</sup> contributed to the construction of the church in the center of Baku, in Kolyubakinski Square (Parapet), situated next to Velikoknazhevski Avenue. The construction of the church was completed during the Archbishop Andreas Andreasyan’s (1869–1874) prelacy at the Shamakhi diocese. On May 4, 1869, the church was consecrated under the name of St. Gregory the Illuminator (Surb Grigor Lusavorich)<sup>83</sup>.

As an architectural monument, the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator (Surb Grigor Lusavorich) was indeed one of the most remarkable buildings of the

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<sup>76</sup> **Թոմաս դե Վաալ** 2007, 155:

<sup>77</sup> See **Կարապետյան** 2017, 17.

<sup>78</sup> See **Ստեփանյան** 153.

<sup>79</sup> According to the pan-Russian census of 1897, the number of Baku Armenians approximated 45.402 (see **Կարապետ եպիսկոպոս, նամակներ խմբագրության (I) «Արծաղանք», 1897 հոկտեմբերի 31**) while on January 1, 1916 the Armenian population of Baku (including the police station of Balakhan-Sabunchi) reached 77.166 (46.657 males and 30.509) females. **Кавказский календарь** (from now on- КК) 1916, 183, 185.

<sup>80</sup> See **Ստեփանյան** 2009, 45–53.

<sup>81</sup> See **Սմբատեանց** 1896, 375.

<sup>82</sup> See **Սմբատեանց** 1896, 375.

<sup>83</sup> See **ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 56, ց. 1, գ. 4348, թ. 3**, see also **Սմբատեանց** 1896, 377.

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city. It was accredited with the honor of becoming the Holy See for the Armenian residents of Baku. The church is architected as a basilica, with central-domed courtyard, having octahedron drum and pointed broach and a three-floor belfry on the eastern wing. It is built of polished stone, the northern and western entrances are edged with two elevated cross-stones on both sides<sup>84</sup>. All the patriarchs of the Armenian diocese of Shamakhi constantly kept the renovation of the church on their agenda. In 1887, on Easter day one of the most outstanding figures of Armenian music, the composer, choirmaster, a specialist in folk music, the great master of the four-part harmony Kristapor Kara-Murza performed his four-part liturgy for the first time, getting acclaim<sup>85</sup>.

The church was mentioned in the 1916 list of functioning churches<sup>86</sup>. On September 15, 1918, after the Turkish army seized Baku, the church was thoroughly robbed<sup>87</sup>. After the Turkish campaign the city of Shamakhi was set on fire, forcing the local Armenian population to migrate to Baku. As a result, on October 16, 1918 the Patriarch of the Shamkhi diocese Bagrat Archbishop Vardazarian (1916–1921) decided to move the primacy and diocese court from Shamakhi to Baku, converting the local church of St. Gregory the Illuminator (Surb Grigor Lusavorich) into a primacy See, while the diocese was renamed as Baku Diocese<sup>88</sup>. In 1988–1990 when a large-scale policy of persecuting the Armenians was unfolding, on December 25, 1989 the Azerbaijani mob barbarously set the church on fire, as a result of which a great number of valuable church books, icons and all the church property<sup>89</sup> were burnt to ashes. After desecrating the church, the Azerbaijani authorities used the building for other purposes. With its damaged inscriptions, missing crosses<sup>90</sup> (on the dome and belfry), the church that had been transformed into a book storage, is still standing.

The Church of Saint Resurrection/Surb Harutyun (St. John the Baptist/Hovhannes Mkrtych?). The construction of the church started during the

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<sup>84</sup> See **Կարապետյան** 1997, 69.

<sup>85</sup> See **Կարապետեան Յով.** 1904, 39.

<sup>86</sup> See ՀԱԱ ֆ. 56, ց. 14, գ. 298, թ. 56:

<sup>87</sup> See ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 57, ց. 3, գ. 280, թ. 1:

<sup>88</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 57, ց. 5, գ. 280, թ. 1:

<sup>89</sup> «Գրական թերթ», 1990, փետրվարի 2:

<sup>90</sup> **Ստեփանյան** 2009, 45–53:



Archbishop Mesrop Smbateants' prelacy at the Shamakhi diocese. A Mariam Grigorian Mikatdze born in Tbilisi, but residing in Baku was the initiator and financial contributor to the construction of a church. In her letter addressed to the patriarch on July 23, 1891 Mariam Mikatdze explained her initiative by the fact that unlike the Armenians, the Russians of Baku had a small church within the **city's new cemetery where funeral ceremonies of the deceased were performed**. Since it was prohibited to perform funeral rituals at city churches it would have been desirable that the Armenians too had a similar church in their new cemetery, where they would serve a liturgy<sup>91</sup>. The patriarch accepted the proposal and the preparations of the construction began without delay. The archpriest of Baku churches, the elder priest Khoren Mirzabekiants presented the project to the collegial assessor and city architect Anton Kadimov and suggested constructing the church adhering to the architectural style, common to the churches of one of the Armenian capitals, namely – Ani<sup>92</sup>. In 1894, Archbishop Mesrop Smbateants laid the marble foundation-stone of the church, on which it was carved: **“In the year of 1894 AD (according to the Armenian calendar in 4386) with Tbilisi-born Armenian, Mariam Grigorian-Mikatdze's financial contribution and the Archbishop Mesrop Smbateants' blessing, the church of Saint Resurrection (Surb Harutyun) was founded”**<sup>93</sup>. The church was being built on one the city cliffs (there was a Park named after Kirov since 1939, while since 1990 it turned into the so-called “shahids' park”)<sup>94</sup>. Indeed, the church was to be **built in a scenic location. According to the Archbishop Mesrop Smbateants, “the small church of the Armenian cemetery creates a beautiful view for the city of Baku. From the whole city the church is seen as a jewel crown placed on a head, being built on an elevated, remarkable location. It is relevant to cite the historiographer, Syunik bishop Stepannos Orbelean's statement about St. Resurrection (Surb Haurtyun) church in Baku, according to which, Vayots Dzor was a ring without a stone and I built it”**<sup>95</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> The old Armenian cemetery of Baku was situated in the center of the city. Later being included in the Montin neighborhood, the cemetery also took its name.

<sup>92</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 56, ց. 1, գ. 8720, թ. 1:

<sup>93</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 380:

<sup>94</sup> Арустамян 1999, 56.

<sup>95</sup> Սմբատեանց 1896, 380:

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At the beginning of 1895, the construction of the church built with polished stone, ended. In terms of its layout and structure, the monument stands out among all the other Armenian monuments. Its architecture replicated the churches of the V–VII centuries with cruciform domes that were widespread in Armenia. The entrance opened on the western cross-wing. The church had an octahedral dome with a pointed broach, and was illuminated by eight windows. At the top of the western door there were two arch windows. Outwardly, facades were built on arch pillars. It should be noted that due to its small size the church to be built was also called a chapel<sup>96</sup>. On January 29, 1895 the bishop Makar Barkhutareants who was interim vicar of the diocese in 1895–1896, anointed the church. In this connection noteworthy is the fact that though the church had been originally anointed under the name of St. Resurrection (Surb Harutyun), due to some circumstances it was re-anointed as St. John the Baptist (Surb Hovhannes Mkrtich). In his report addressed to the Etchmiatzin synod the interim vicar **stated the following: “On January 28, I performed the consecration ceremony and anointed this church according to the ritual of the Armenian Apostolic Church. On January 29, the church was named after Saint John the Baptist (Hovhannes Mkrtich), while the altar – after Apostle Andreas”**<sup>97</sup>. It should be emphasized that the church was mentioned under the name of St. Resurrection (Surb Harutyun)<sup>98</sup> in the list (of 1912, 1916 and of successive years) on churches functioning under the jurisdiction of Shamakhi diocese. This may be accounted for by the fact that later on after a thorough renovation, the church was again anointed under the name of St. Resurrection (Surb Harutyun).

In February 1922 the church was half-ruined. On February, 1922 the vicar of Turkestan and Baku primacy Grigoris Vardapet Yarmishian (November 4, 1921 – March 12, 1922) sent a letter to the Armenian Catholicos Gevorg V, stating: **“I have personally witnessed that the church is ruinous and a dump ...”**<sup>99</sup>.

The Azerbaijani authorities in their pursuit to erase the traces of Armenian culture from Baku continued the cultural genocide. In June, 1928 under the pretext of building a road from Chemberiqend to Bayilov and a park the council of Baku intended to demolish the half-ruined church and the neighboring

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<sup>96</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 56, ց. 1, գ. 8720, թ. 5, see also ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 149, ց. 1, 141, թ. 232:

<sup>97</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 56, ց. 1, գ. 8720, թ. 11.

<sup>98</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 57, ց. 2, գ. 1921, թ. 30 շրջ., ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 56, ց. 14, գ. 298, թ. 56:

<sup>99</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 57, ց. 3, գ. 404, թ. 3:

Armenian cemetery (it had more than 800 graves) both situated in Verkhne-Kladbishchenskaya street<sup>100</sup>. The victims of the Armenian massacres of 1905 and 1918 in Baku were also buried there<sup>101</sup>. On January 3, 1930 the director of the Communal National Economy Pishkin, inviting the patriarch of the diocese Archbishop Matevos Matevosian demanded that he hand in the church keys, promising to return<sup>102</sup> them shortly. However, after getting the keys on the night of January 5, the Azerbaijani mob broke into the church and robbed it<sup>103</sup>. Although the church was not demolished for a **while, with the authorities' blessing** the cemetery was ravaged and desecrated barbarically<sup>104</sup>. The church, converted into a storage of street lamps, was eventually ravaged in 1979. In 1995 in the place of the church a mosque was built<sup>105</sup>.

The Church of St. Jude (Surb Tadeos) and St. Bartholomew (Surb Bardughimeos). At the end of the XIX century the number of Armenian population increased so much in Baku, that it was indispensable to build the third church. The merchant and manufacturer Yenovk Budaghian bequeathed the financial means for the construction of the church<sup>106</sup>. In those days the Mshak<sup>107</sup> wrote: **"The Armenian population of Baku has grown in number, the church lacks space especially on holidays, the parishioners do not have an opportunity to enter the church. A new church should be built"**. In 1899 a contest was announced for the project on the construction of the church. Architects from Moscow, St. Petersburg and Baku presented their projects at **the competition. A graduate of St. Petersburg's Institute of Civic Engineering**, architect Gabriel Ter-Mikelian along with his friend Al. Rostinian also participated in the contest, introducing a project<sup>108</sup>. Academician G. Grimm won the first prize of the competition, the civic engineer A. Ditrich gained the second one, while the architect T. Berhard – the third. Noteworthy is the fact that **although G. Grimm's project won the first prize, on G. Ter-Mikelian's project it**

<sup>100</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 149, ց. 1, գ. 141, թ. 229–230, 234:

<sup>101</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 330, թ. 4, see also **Арустамян** 1999, 56.

<sup>102</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 149, ց. 1, գ. 214, թ. 1:

<sup>103</sup> See **Арустамян** 1999, 56.

<sup>104</sup> See **Арустамян** 1999, 56.

<sup>105</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 462, ց. 1, գ. 4, թ. 43, see also ֆ. 57, ց. 2, գ. 1921, թ. 29:

<sup>106</sup> «Աշակ», 1897, փարիի 26:

<sup>107</sup> ՀԱՍ, ֆ. 149, ց. 1, գ. 214, թ. 1:

<sup>108</sup> **Տիգրանյան** 1971, 51:

was written “executive project”<sup>109</sup>. The project in terms of its creative insight, resembled the layout model of Ani’s Holy See<sup>110</sup>. However, due to some unknown circumstances none of the projects introduced at the contest was seen valid for the construction of the church, thus the solution to the question was postponed to 1906. In the same year, the second contest on the projects of the church construction was announced. This time G. Mikelian’s project won the first prize. V. Pokrovski, an architect from St. Petersburg was also awarded with the first prize. Nevertheless, Pokrovski’s project got nothing to do with the architectural style, peculiar to the Armenian churches. Hence, the church committee of the diocese decided that the church should be built on G. Ter-Mikelian’s project. Nonetheless, none of the projects was put into practice. The issue dragged on and was resolved in an unexpected way. The deceased Budaghian’s (who was of great wealth) testators B. Dolukhanian and St. Ayvazian decided to hand the construction project of the church to architect Hovh. Ter-Hovhannisian (Kajaznuni)<sup>111</sup>. The church was being built on Bondarnaya Street (later renamed as Dmitrov). On September 26, 1913 the ceremony of anointing the church foundation was performed. The construction ended at the beginning of June<sup>112</sup>, 1913.

The newly built church was constructed with white polished stone, having a nave of 1000 seats and a spacious parish vestibule<sup>113</sup>. In the foundation layout of the church the concept of an equilateral cross and a central dome was preserved. The main dimensional four angles of the church were formed with four-perimeter curved tabernacles. The belfry having an arch gable and a vertical, staged tower narrowing at the end, was situated next to the western facade. The church had a sixteen column drum with a pointed broach supported by two powerful cross-shaped arches (due to this the space of the chapel was enlarged). The western facade had three-arched windows. The subtle outer layer of the church being composed of white stone and gold, endowed it with exceptional sublimity<sup>114</sup> in the sunlight. In eyewitnesses’ words it was the most

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<sup>109</sup> Տիգրանյան 1971, 52:

<sup>110</sup> Տիգրանյան 1971, 52:

<sup>111</sup> Քաջազնունի 2008, 8:

<sup>112</sup> «Աշակ», 1913, հունիսի 12:

<sup>113</sup> Դոլուխանյան 1997, 10:

<sup>114</sup> Տիգրանյան 200, 237:

magnificent building<sup>115</sup> in Baku. After the Turkish army's conquest of Baku (on September 15, 1918) the Turkish-Tartars robbed the entire church<sup>116</sup>. The church of St. Jude (Surb Tadeos) and St. Bartholomew (Surb Bardughimeos) **didn't have a long life either**. Under the pretext of reconstructing the center of Baku, the Azerbaijani authorities using the acoustics and other features of the church reconstructed it in 1931-1939 to serve as a conservatoire<sup>117</sup>.

The Church of St. Translators (Surb Targmanchats) was situated in the suburb of Haykavan – in “Armen Village”, at the address of Armyanskaya 8<sup>118</sup>. The growing population (according to the data of 1911, the settlement already had a 400-member parish)<sup>119</sup> led to the need of building a new church in Haykavan. At the beginning of 1907<sup>120</sup> the construction of the church started at the site of a former chapel. Having no accurate source of data, we are however inclined to assume that the architect of the building was Freidun Aghalian (who in that period had authored the project of the second part of the city), while Hambardzum Grigorian<sup>121</sup> was its stonemason. The initial sum (10000 roubles) for the construction was provided by the Council of Oil Manufacturers of Baku the president of which was A. Ghukasian<sup>122</sup>. It was a relatively small church, being annointed in October, 1907 by the patriarch of Shamakhi Diocese Bishop Anania Hamazaspian<sup>123</sup> (1903–1914). It was included in the 1912, 1916 list on functioning churches<sup>124</sup>. On September 15, 1918 after the Turkish army captured Baku<sup>125</sup>, the church was totally robbed by Turk-Tartars. The church was eventually ravaged in the 1930s.

It was planned to build St. Hripsime church in Haykavan while in the suburb of Balakhan-Sabunchi the church of St. Sahak and St. Mesrop was intended to be

<sup>115</sup> **Շիրվանզադէ**, Ամենակարեւորը, «Աշակ», 1914, ապրիլի 32:

<sup>116</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 57, ց. 3, գ. 280, թ. 1:

<sup>117</sup> **Մոսեսովա**, Հովնանյան 1992, 55:

<sup>118</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 188, թ. 10:

<sup>119</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 188, թ. 47–48:

<sup>120</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 188, թ. 10, 26 շրջ.:

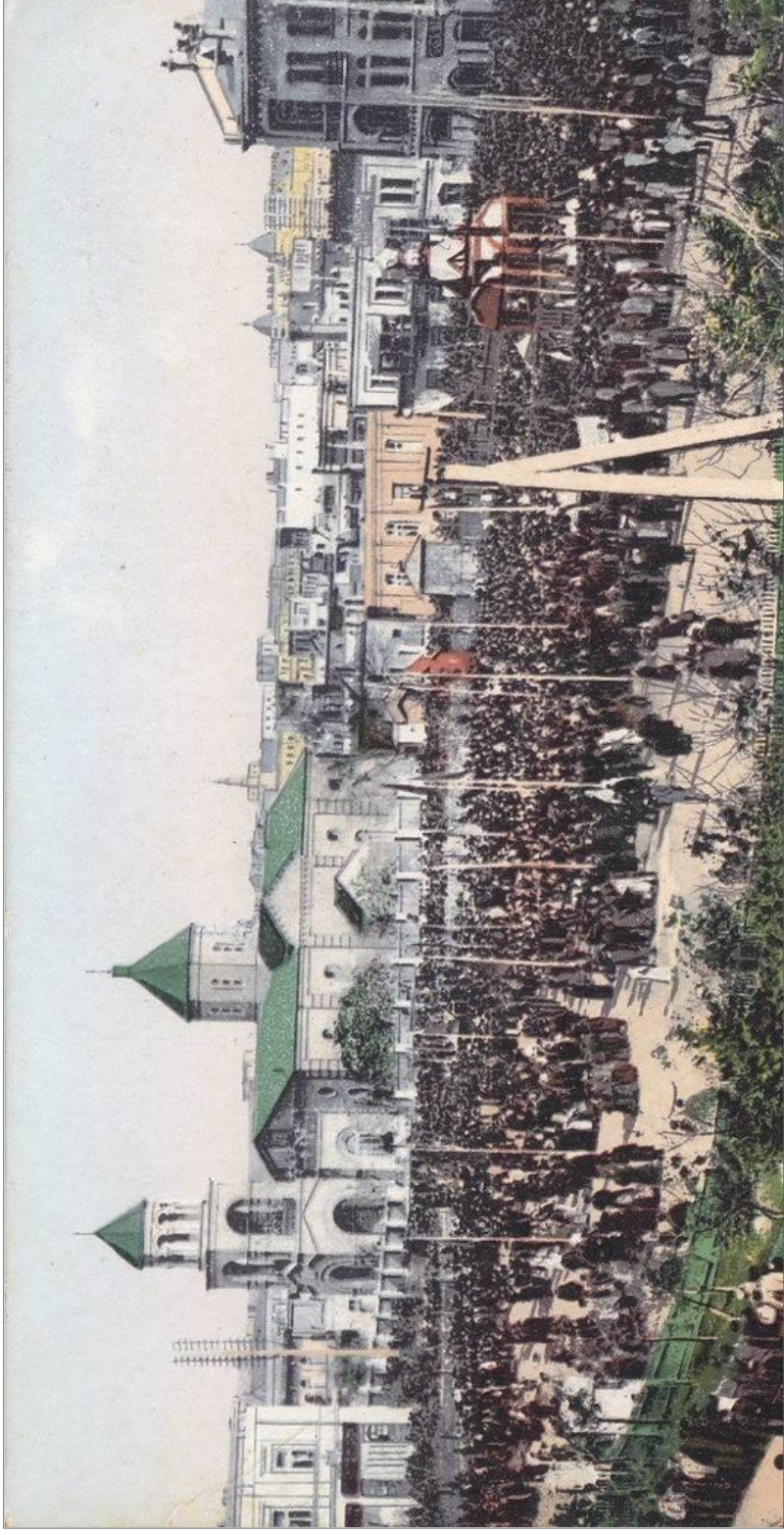
<sup>121</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 188, թ. 12:

<sup>122</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 188, թ. 10:

<sup>123</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 188, թ. 26 շրջ.:

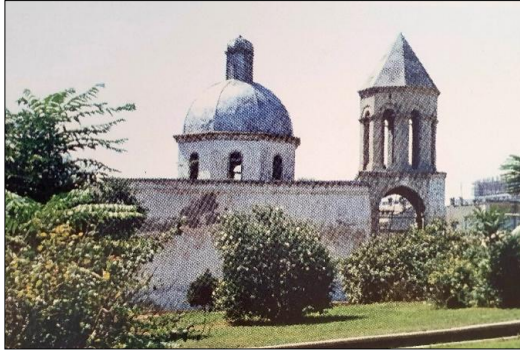
<sup>124</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 57, ց. 2, գ. 1921, թ. 30 շրջ., ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 149, ց. 1, գ. 167, թ. 1, 5–6:

<sup>125</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 57, ց. 3, գ. 280, թ. 1:



**Baku, January 6, 1904 at the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator (Surb Grigor Lusavorich) a special liturgy is being served on the religious holiday "Water Consecration" which symbolizes Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River**

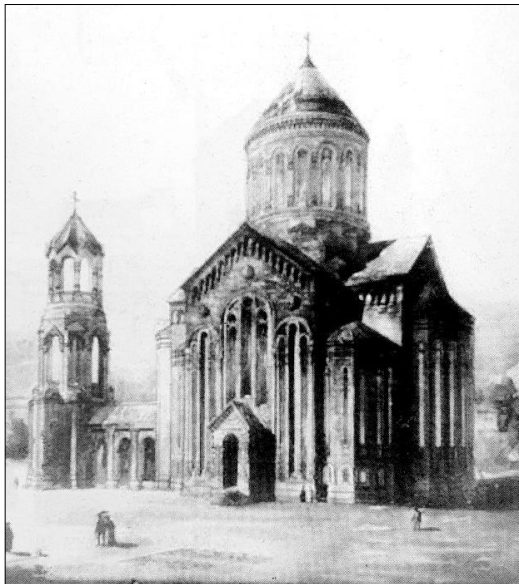




**St. Virgin (Surb Astvatsatsin)**



**St. Translators (Surb Targmanchats)**



**St. Jude and St. Bartholomew  
(Surb Tadeos and Surb Bardughimeos)**



**St. Resurrection /Surb Harutyu  
(St. John the Baptist /Surb Hovhannes Mkrtych ?)**

## On the History of the Armenian Sanctuaries of Absheron Peninsula

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constructed<sup>126</sup>. However those churches were never built because WWI started. The churches are not mentioned in the list of the churches<sup>127</sup> functioning in the diocese in 1916. It should also be noted that the evangelic Armenian community had a chapel too ( it was built in 1912)<sup>128</sup>.

### *Conclusion*

Annalistic, lithographic, documented sources evidence that on Absheron peninsula the settlements of Buzovna, Balakhan, Sabunchi, Mashtagha, Shaghan, Surakhani and Mardakyan had been populated by the Armenians since early times. In those population centers local Armenians had such sites of worship as monasteries, churches and chapels. Particularly in the city of Baku constructed by Armenian entrepreneurs, the local Armenian population was actively involved in public, political, socio-economic cultural and educational life of the city, creating a rich history. The church life of the city was sustained by the churches functioning under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Shamakhi diocese, as well as by the **evangelic Armenian community's chapel**. The sanctuaries on Absheron peninsula became powerful institutions for local Armenians surrounded by the Muslim segment. These sanctuaries conditioned the preservation of Armenian community's national rituals, beliefs, culture, religion and the Armenian identity as a whole.

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<sup>126</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 458, ց. 1, գ. 167, թ. 6, ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 149, ց. 1, գ. 167, թ. 1, 5–6:

<sup>127</sup> ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 56, ց. 14, գ. 298, թ. 56:

<sup>128</sup> **Ստեփանյան** 2019, 277–288:



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## **ԱՓՇԵՐՈՆ ԹԵՐԱԿՂՉՈՒ ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՍՐԲԱՎԱՅՐԵՐԻ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԻՑ (համառոտ տեսություն)**

ՍՏԵՓԱՆՅԱՆ Գ.

**Ամփոփում**

**Բանալի բառեր՝** կեղծարարություն, Բուն Աղվանք, Արևելյան Այսրկովկաս, Ափշերոնյան թերակղզի, Շամախու հայոց թեմ, եկեղեցի, վանք, սրբավայր:

Մատենագրական, վիմագիր և վավերագիր աղբյուրները վկայում են, որ Ափշերոն թերակղզում վաղ ժամանակներից հայաբնակ են եղել Բուզովնա, Բալախան, Սաբունջի, Մաշթաղա, Շաղան, Սուրախանի և Մարդաքյան բնակավայրերը, որտեղ տեղաբնակ հայերն ունեցել են պաշտամունքային օջախներ՝ վանքեր, եկեղեցիներ և մատուռներ: Հայերի հոգևոր-եկեղեցական կյանքը կազմակերպել է Շամախու հայոց թեմը: Ափշերոն թերակղզու սրբավայրերը մահմեդական զանգվածով շրջապատված թերակղզու հայության համար եղան այն հզոր կառույցները, որոնց շնորհիվ երկար ժամանակ պահպանվեցին հայ համայնքի ազգային ծեսերը, հավատալիքները, մշակույթը, դավանանքը և ընդհանրապես հայկական ազգային ոգին:

**ИЗ ИСТОРИИ АРМЯНСКИХ СВЯТИЛИЩ АПШЕРОНСКОГО  
ПОЛУОСТРОВА  
(краткий обзор)**

СТЕПАНЯН Г.

**Резюме**

**Ключевые слова:** фальсификация, Собственно Агуанк, Восточное Закавказье, Апшеронский полуостров, Шамахинская епархия, церковь, монастырь, святилище.

Библиографические, литографические и письменные источники свидетельствуют о том, что населенные пункты Бузовны, Балахана, Сабунджи, Маштаги, Шагана, Сураханы и Мардакян Апшеронского полуострова издревле были заселены коренными армянами, которые имели свои культовые очаги – монастыри, церкви и часовни. Духовно-церковная жизнь этих населенных пунктов была возложена на Шамахинскую епархию. Армянские святилища Апшеронского полуострова играли огромную роль в религиозно-духовной жизни местного армянского населения, способствовали сохранению национальных ритуалов, культуры, религии и армянской идентичности в целом.