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DOI: 10.54503/1829-4073-2023.2.27-39

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF TRANSCAUCASIAN CITIES IN THE 19TH CENTURY ON THE EXAMPLE OF GYUMRI-ALEXANDRAPOL (A Historical Rerview)

Keywords: Alexandrapol, rural town, trade, craftsmanship, city economy, tax, city budget.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 19th century, Gyumri was a small village in a place called Cherkezi Dzor (Cherkez Gorge), where there was an old church and about 50 houses of inhabitants¹. When the Russian Cossack detachments entered Gyumri in 1804, the area around the settlement was deserted. On the southern side of the village, they built a residential area for the soldiers of the border guard garrison. Soon a well-fortified border station was also built. However, until the end of the 1820s, Gyumri, as a settlement, did not have any prospects.

The first positive impulses in the economic life of the settlement appeared only when, after the end of another Russian-Turkish war, it was filled with around 1250 families of the Armenians from Kars, Karin and Bayazet. In 1837 it received the status of a city and was renamed Alexandrapol². Nevertheless, until the 1840s, Gyumri-Alexandrapol remained essentially a rural town, similar to other settlements in Eastern Armenia. After the formation of the city, the old local

* Հոդվածը ներկայացվել է 24.05.23, գրախոսվել է 24.05.23, ընդունվել է տպագրության 28.08.23:

¹ ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ՊԻ արխիվ, Մ. Թամրազյանի նյութերը, տետր 1:

² See the details in Հայրապետյան 2005, 167–180:

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Gyumri inhabitants and about 150 families of immigrants from Kars, Alashkert, Mush and Basen settled in the newly created districts “Geghtsonts mahla” and “Ranchparneri mahla” and continued to practice agriculture. Besides, the numerous oil mills and water mills in the city became a good source of income for them³.

Agriculture and animal husbandry remained important in the economy of Alexandrapol for a long time. They lost their former significance only at the end of the 1850s. Instead, crafts and trade became the primary sources of livelihood for the bulk of the inhabitants of Alexandrapol.

The Main Prerequisites for the Development of the City Economy

It is a well-known fact that the newly created city became one of the prominent commercial and industrial centers of Transcaucasia in a short period due to unprecedented economic growth. If at the beginning of the 1840s, Alexandrapol was the 8th in Transcaucasia in terms of its gross economic output and city revenues, then by the end of the 1870s it was second only to Tiflis⁴.

The rapid development of the city economy of Alexandrapol was due to the following favorable factors:

1. The urban population, and especially the immigrants, were distinguished by exceptional diligence and entrepreneurship. N. Florovski, who visited Gyumri in 1836, described it as follows: “Immigrants from the Ottoman Empire are knowledgeable and inclined towards a good economy”⁵.

2. Former Erzurum, Kars, and Bayazet residents brought their centuries-old trade-craftsmanship traditions to Gyumri.

3. Its favorable military-strategic position played a major role in the development of the city economy of Alexandrapol. As a result of successive wars and the immigration of the Western Armenians in the first thirty years of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire was deprived of its hard-working population. The craftsmen and merchants of Alexandrapol quickly adapted to the demand of the neighboring country's market and took a monopoly position in the field of production and export of a number of products⁶.

³ Սեդրոսյան 1974, 177:

⁴ Աղանյան 2007, 79:

⁵ Обозрение Российских владений 1836, 305.

⁶ Աղանյան 2007, 78:

The geography of connections of Alexandrapol merchants was not limited only to the neighboring countries. It extended to the interior provinces of the Russian Empire on the one hand, and to Western Europe on the other. Alexandrapol merchants had their representations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as in Marseilles and other commercial centers of Western Europe.

The Russo-Turkish wars of 1853–1856 and significantly 1877–1878 greatly influenced the development of the city economy of Alexandrapol. In the absence of railways, communication with the industrial regions of Russia caused difficulties, and the army had to rely on local manufacturers in many cases. During the wars, the craftsmen and merchants of Alexandrapol received large-scale military orders and served the Russian army. For example, the famous gunsmith Karanyans received orders to repair the weapons of the active troops⁷, and the local carpenters received orders to build bridges to organize the Russian army's river crossing, over Akhuryan⁸.

The local bakers were in charge of supplying bread to the army. During the winter of 1876–1877, in addition to 31 bakeries in the city, 32 permanent bakeries and 50 field bakeries were built for the preparation of dry bread (before the end of the war, there were 83 temporary kitchens, 7 ovens and 89 ovens in the military camp of Alexandrapol)⁹.

During the war, Alexandrapol merchants Pitoev, Korganov, Tairov, Porakov, Sargisov, Ter-Hovhannesov, Gurgenbekov, Isakov, Mirzoev, Terterov, Ghazarov, Kasoev and others received licenses to supply certain goods to the active army. With their efforts, the army was supplied with 1,300 fathoms (sazhens) of firewood¹⁰, 320,000 poods of hay, 640,000 poods of medicine and 24,000 poods of barley¹¹. Many of them received the highest government awards for their services to the state. For example, Abraham Unjian, the deputy of the city council of Alexandrapol and a first-class merchant, was awarded a gold medal¹², Yegor

⁷ Աղանյան 2000, 136:

⁸ Рербег 1879, 47–48.

⁹ Шильман 1880, 41.

¹⁰ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 94, ց. 1, գ. 83, թ. 22:

¹¹ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 101, ց. 1, գ. 198, թ. 116–118:

¹² ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 94, ց. 1, գ. 157, թթ. 1–10:

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Khalatov – a silver medal, Ter-Poghos, a Catholic priest from Kyavtarli, was awarded a golden cross of St. Anna¹³.

Unfortunately, during World War I, the image changed radically. With the railroads in operation, the Russian capital completely controlled military supplies, dealing a serious blow to the local industry and commerce.

Big shifts in the city economy of Alexandrapol took place as a result of the construction of the Tiflis-Alexandrapol-Kars and Alexandrapol-Yerevan-Julfa railways. At the beginning of the 20th century, the city turned into a major railway junction. One of the largest railway depots of Transcaucasia operated here¹⁴. On one hand, the railway contributed to closer economic ties with the cities of the Caucasus and Russia, and on the other hand, it made the traditional market of Alexandrapol vulnerable. The products of local craftsmen were inferior in competition with cheap factory-made products imported from Europe and the interior provinces of Russia. It caused the decline of some branches of crafts¹⁵.

The development of the city economy was greatly influenced by the existence of the customs house. Not far from the village of Gyumri, there was a border post during the Turkish-Persian rule, and the contemporaries, taking this fact into account, mistakenly believed that the place name Gyumri was derived from the Turkish word "gumruk"¹⁶.

After coming under Russian rule, a new, large customs house was established in Alexandrapol, which operated continuously until the end of the 70s of the 19th century. After the annexation of Kars region to Russia, the Russian-Turkish border moved away from Alexandrapol, and the customs office lost its former importance.

Starting from the middle of the 19th century, the city budget of Alexandrapol was formed mainly on the basis of taxes collected from craftsmen and merchants. At the beginning of the 20th century, it amounted to around 120–130,000 gold rubles, which was a huge amount for a city of 30,000 inhabitants at that time.

From the beginning, craftsmen and merchants of the city paid two types of taxes: basic and additional. The former was paid once a year and entitled a craftsman or merchant to practice his chosen trade. For example, at the beginning

¹³ **Баликян, Саркисян, Эвоян** 1971, 41.

¹⁴ See the details in **Հայրապետյան** 2022, 74–81:

¹⁵ **Աղանյան** 2006, 48:

¹⁶ Военный сборник 1909, 8.

of the 1970s, this type of tax was 3 rubles and 85 kopecks per year for a craftsman. First and second guild merchants paid 650 and 97 rubles and 50 kopecks, respectively¹⁷. In case of a large profit, the merchant also paid an additional tax: 118 rubles for the first guild, 10 rubles and 25 kopecks for the second.

Organizations providing communal and household services, libraries, reading rooms, charitable and benevolent societies (orphanages, shelters) were exempt from paying the basic tax. For free activities, they received a special certificate from the police or city administration once a year.

In 1875 new types of taxes and duties were established for the city-dwelling craftsmen and merchants of the Caucasus viceroyalty. The reason for this change was as follows: after passing under Russian rule, the urban population of Eastern Armenia, including the people of Alexandrapol, were not included in the class register of urban citizens of the Russian class register and were taxed as state peasants. To correct this injustice, in 1837, the people of Alexandrapol turned to Tsar Nicholas I (who arrived in Transcaucasia) with a letter petition and, due to showing persistence, managed to clarify the issue of taxing them as townspeople¹⁸. For comparison, let's note that the problem was solved in Yerevan, the provincial center, only in the mid-1870s¹⁹.

According to the changed tax code, the taxpayers of the city were divided into eight groups according to the property census. The merchants of the first and second guilds were considered the highest, followed by petty traders, craftsmen, service industry representatives, coachmen and cartmen, and so on. The representatives of each of these groups paid certain taxes and duties (state tax, city tax, school and charity fees, license fee) from which the city budget was formed. For example, a vodka and wine warehouse paid an annual tax of 267 rubles, of which 211 rubles went to the state treasury, 36 rubles to the city budget, 16 rubles to schools and 4 rubles to patents²⁰.

Trade

Since the middle of the 19th century, one of the important components of the Alexandrapol economy was trade: retail, wholesale, and transit. The core of the

¹⁷ ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ՊԻ արխիվ, Ն. Նիկողոսյանի նյութեր, տետր 1:

¹⁸ Гагемейстер 1845, 46, Անանուն 1916, 179:

¹⁹ Հակոբյան 1959, 478:

²⁰ Эсадзе 1907, 45–46.

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city's merchant class was the immigrants from Bayazet. By the late 1860s, Alexandrapol had 673 merchants²¹ and was second only to Tiflis in Transcaucasia. The trade turnover of the city merchants was about 500,000 silver rubles per year, which was 1/3 of the entire trade turnover of Yerevan province²². In the 1910s, that figure doubled.

Mainly agricultural products were imported to Alexandrapol, as well as dried fruits, wine as well as factory-made cloth, while wheat, wool, soap, leather, etc. were exported. According to V. Abrahamyan, at the beginning of the 80s of the 19th century, about 10,000 rubles of leather was exported from here to Tiflis and Turkey²³.

Most of the merchants from Alexandrapol had occupied monopoly positions in the field of production and export of certain types of goods. For example, starting from the 1850s, the "Aragats" trading company founded by Sirekan Goroyan was in the hands of the growing and processing plant called "Rhamnus", which was very important for the production of yellow and green dyes. The powder obtained from the medicinal plant, was exported to Russia and Europe and used in medicine as a laxative in addition to dye²⁴. Sirekan Goroyan was awarded a silver medal by the "Free Economic Association" for making a great contribution to the development of the Caucasus economy, and his Moscow trade representative Mirzoyants was awarded a gold medal at the Marseille international exhibition²⁵. The rating of "Aragats" company was so high that even fake companies appeared under that brand in Russia.

At the end of the 19th century, there were 27 wax, soap, leather, beer, clay pipe, brick, lime and artificially carbonated water factories in Alexandrapol, as well as 4 mills and an oil mine each²⁶ (in 1902, the number of factories reached 32)²⁷.

The possibility of transit trade, the convenient geographical location and the wide opportunities offered by the city's market also contributed to the development of the service sector. In the 1970s and 1980s, the city had 17 inns,

²¹ ՀՀ ԳԱԱ ՊԻ արխիվ, Ն. Նիկողոսյանի նյութերը, տետր 1:

²² **Боронов** 1869, отд. III, 68.

²³ **Աբրահամյան** 1971, 53:

²⁴ ՀՊԹ արխիվ, Աստրախտի ֆոնդ, գործ 176 /ա, էջ 32:

²⁵ **Բազեյան, Աղանյան** 2015, 21:

²⁶ ՀԱԱ, ֆ. 94, ց. 1, գ. 9664, թ. 62:

²⁷ Памятная книжка 1903, отд. III, 8–28, 44–45, 84–86.

26 cafes, 15 wineries, 13 restaurants, 4 beer stands and about 1460 large and small shops. Their abundance once surprised even Russian researchers²⁸.

Crafts

Another important component of the city economy of Alexandrapol was crafts. Thanks to the immigrants from Karin and Kars, the city quickly turned into a major craft center of Eastern Armenia and Transcaucasia. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, there were more than 100 crafts there, while the number of them in the provincial center of Yerevan did not exceed 76²⁹. In terms of the absolute number of craftsmen, Alexandrapol was second only to Tiflis, the center of the viceroyalty. As of 1863, the annual income of the craftsmen of Alexandrapol was about 160,000 silver rubles³⁰.

Among the crafts of Alexandrapol, the following major branches were distinguished: building crafts, metalworking, woodworking, weaving, food production, leatherwork, soapmaking, crafts related to painting and embroidering, etc. Workshops were located in special rows and were called "charsu" or district (for example, "Damrchnots charsu")³¹. At the same time, each major craft branch (ironwork, coppersmithing, jewelry-silversmithing, woodworking, pottery, etc.) was presented in a separate row. The mentioned workshops also played the role of a store from where the finished products were sold. Craftsmen worked both to order and for the market. Some branches of trades, mainly construction, had a seasonal, often also outgoing, itinerant character. For example, carpenters and masons also worked in other settlements of the province and states.

The rapid development of the city, in accordance with the new plan and urban development requirements, the construction of houses from hewn stone, the wide momentum of church construction, and the construction of fortresses and barracks for the Russian garrison created favorable conditions for the increase in the number of people practicing the above-mentioned craft.

In the context of the multi-branched craftwork of Alexandrapol, crafts related to metalworking occupied a special place. Ironwork was particularly notable for its

²⁸ «Кавказский календарь» 1865, отд. III, 68.

²⁹ **Արրաիւմյան** 1971, 57: **Հակոբյան** 1959, 404:

³⁰ **Воронов** 1869, 52.

³¹ **Աղանյան** 1999, 171:

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great diversity: weaponry, jewelry, coppersmithing, etc. The Russian researcher Chernoyarsky talks with undisguised admiration about the high-quality and elegant items made by the Alexandrapol goldsmiths³².

The furniture makers from Alexandrapol enjoyed a great reputation. The forestless province imported wood materials from Georgia and Sarighamish. The craftsmen from Alexandrapol made elegant and high-art furniture using the Sarighamish samshid wood.

The variety of crafts and the high quality of the products used to receive the admiration of foreigners visiting the city. The silver items made by the famous Alexandrapol silversmith Martiros Tarakhchyan won a gold medal at the international exhibition in Paris. According to people familiar with the works of the carpenter Usul Grigor, this craft has reached perfection in Alexandrapol, and N. Mar compared the works of the carpenter-mason Antikens Tatos with the masterpieces of Ani³³.

In addition to the traditional ones, starting from the middle of the 19th century, "outside" trades were also imported to Alexandrapol: tinsmithing, wheelsmithing, European tailoring, etc. Their nuances were quickly and skillfully mastered by Alexandrapol masters.

Unfortunately, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, with the entry of cheap and mass-produced Russian factory products into the Alexandrapol market, many traditional crafts disappeared, and those involved in them had to requalify and adapt to new conditions.

Finally, a few words about the famous Alexandrapol guilds. In the studied period, they had a decisive role in the economic and social life of the city, and within the framework of their many functions, they also performed an economic regulatory role.

Not only the internal social-normative problems of the society (judicial and some religious-ritual functions, organization of mutual aid, etc.), assuming the intermediary role in the state-city-society relations but also the procurement of raw materials, price regulation, product quality control and other aspects were under the competence of the guilds.

The guild as a form of public cooperation was a serious lever in the internal regulation of the economy of Alexandrapol, which was carried out by the guild

³² **Воронов** 1869, 40.

³³ **Բազեյան, Աղանյան** 2015, 27:

council of elders and the council of ustabashis (chief masters). In case the craftsman made inferior products, procured the raw materials independently, or violated the established price scales, the Hamkar council had the authority to impose economic (up to the point of forcibly closing the shop) and moral (dishonour) sanctions against him³⁴.

Conclusion

Until the 1840s, Gyumri-Alexandropol was essentially an insignificant rural town with a population mainly engaged in agriculture. However, starting from the middle of the 19th century, the newly created city underwent an unprecedented economic growth, thanks to which it became one of the prominent commercial and industrial centers of Transcaucasia in a short period of time.

The economic rise of the city was determined by the following factors:

1. The Armenians from Karin, Kars and Bayazet, who became the core of the population of Alexandropol, brought here their centuries-old trade and craft traditions.
2. Unlike provincial center Yerevan, Alexandropol had a favorable military-strategic position, due to which the local craftsmen and merchants took a monopoly position in the field of production and export of a number of products.
3. The Russian-Turkish wars of the 19th century also contributed to the development of the urban economy. Local craftsmen and merchants received large-scale military orders and supplied the Russian army.
4. The construction of the Tiflis-Alexandropol-Kars and Alexandropol-Yerevan-Julfa railways greatly influenced the development of the city economy of Alexandropol.
5. Finally, craftsmen (guilds) associations played a decisive role in the economic life and social relations of Alexandropol, which in the new conditions became the direct continuation of the traditions of the respective organizations of Karin and Kars.

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³⁴ About Alexandropol's Trade Unions see in Details **Սեդրոսյան** 1974, 187–188:

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**ՍՈՑԻԱԼ ՏՆՏԵՍԱԿԱՆ ԿՅԱՆՔԸ ԱՆԴՐԿՈՎԿԱՍԻ
ՔԱՂԱՔՆԵՐՈՒՄ XIX ԴԱՐՈՒՄ
ԳՅՈՒՄՐԻ-ԱԼԵՔՍԱՆԴՐԱՊՈԼԻ ՕՐԻՆԱԿՈՎ
(պատմական ակնարկ)**

ՀԱՅՐԱՊԵՏՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բառեր՝ Ալեքսանդրապոլ, գյուղաքաղաք, առևտուր, արհեստագործություն, քաղաքային տնտեսություն, հարկ, քաղաքային բյուջե:

Մինչև 1840-ական թվականները Գյումրի-Ալեքսանդրապոլն աննշան գյուղաքաղաք էր՝ հիմնականում գյուղատնտեսությամբ զբաղվող ազգաբնակչությամբ: Սակայն, XIX դ. կեսերից սկսած՝ նորաստեղծ քաղաքը ունեցավ տնտեսական աննախադեպ աճ, որի շնորհիվ կարճ ժամանակահատվածում դարձավ Անդրկովկասի նշանավոր առևտրաարդյունագործական կենտրոններից մեկը:

Քաղաքի տնտեսական վերելքը պայմանավորվեց հետևյալ գործոններով.

1. Ալեքսանդրապոլի ազգաբնակչության կորիզը դարձած կարինցիները, կարսեցիները և բայազետցիներն այստեղ բերեցին իրենց առևտրա-արհեստավորական բազմադարյան ավանդույթները:
2. Ի տարբերություն նահանգային կենտրոն Երևանի՝ Ալեքսանդրապոլն ուներ ռազմաստրատեգիական բարենպաստ դիրք, ինչի շնորհիվ տեղի արհեստավորներն ու առևտրականները մենաշնորհային դիրք գրավեցին մի շարք ապրանքատեսակների արտադրության և արտահանման ասպարեզում:
3. Քաղաքային տնտեսության զարգացմանը նպաստեցին նաև XIX դ. ռուս-թուրքական պատերազմները: Տեղի արհեստավորներն ու առևտրականները մեծածավալ ռազմական պատվերներ ստացան և սպասարկեցին ռուսական բանակին:
4. Ալեքսանդրապոլի քաղաքային տնտեսության զարգացման վրա մեծապես ազդեց նաև Թիֆլիս-Ալեքսանդրապոլ-Կարս և Ալեքսանդրապոլ-Երևան-Ջուլֆա երկաթուղիների շինարարությունը:
5. Ալեքսանդրապոլի տնտեսական կյանքում և հասարակական հարաբերություններում վճռական դերակատարում ունեցան արհեստավորական համքարությունները, որոնք նոր պայմաններում Կարինի և Կարսի համապատասխան կազմակերպությունների ավանդույթների անմիջական շարունակողները դարձան:

**СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКАЯ ЖИЗНЬ ГОРОДОВ
ЗАКАВКАЗЬЯ В XIX ВЕКЕ НА ПРИМЕРЕ
ГЮМРИ-АЛЕКСАНДРОПОЛЯ
(исторический обзор)**

АЙРАПЕТЯН А.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: Александрополь, поселок, торговля, ремесла, городское хозяйство, налог, городской бюджет.

До 1840-х годов Гюмри-Александрополь был, по сути, небольшим городом, население которого в основном занималось земледелием. Однако с

середины XIX века, благодаря небывалому экономическому росту, город стал одним из крупных торгово-промышленных центров Закавказья.

Экономический подъем города был обусловлен следующими факторами:

1. Жители Карина, Карса и Баязета, составившие ядро населения Александрополя, внедрили здесь свои многовековые торгово-ремесленные традиции.

2. В отличие от губернского центра Еревана, Александрополь имел выгодное военно-стратегическое положение, благодаря которому местные ремесленники и купцы заняли монопольное положение в сфере производства и экспорта ряда товаров.

3. Развитию городского хозяйства способствовали и русско-турецкие войны второй половины XIX века.. Местные ремесленники и купцы получали крупные военные заказы для русской армии.

4. Большое влияние на развитие городского хозяйства Александрополя оказало строительство железных дорог – Тифлис-Александрополь-Карс и Александрополь-Ереван-Джульфа.

5. В экономической жизни и общественных отношениях Александрополя решающую роль сыграли ремесленные артели (цеха), ставшие в новых условиях продолжателем традиций соответствующих организаций Карина и Карса.