


ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ HISTORY

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THE PAST AND PRESENT LANGUAGES OF THE PEOPLE OF AZERBAIJAN

Abstract

The historians and academics of the Republic of Azerbaijan, preach and propagate that since the language spoken in the Iranian Province of Azerbaijan is the same as that spoken by the population of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the two are the same race and of the same background, therefore, they are the same people who presently live in two separate countries. Based on this baseless assumption, they propagate all sorts of misinformation aimed at the Iranian side, to separate from Iran and join their historical brothers and sisters in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The article suggests that language cannot be the sole basis for understanding the background of a certain society or tribe. Otherwise, most of the population of South America, all of Mexico, and the Philippines should actually be named Spanish. By the same token, many African countries that speak a European language would belong to the members of the same races, who, earlier on, had colonized their lands.

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The Past and Present Languages of the People of Azerbaijan

Keywords: *Azerbaijan, Caucasian Albania, Armenia, Iran, the Azeri language, the Turkish language, Pahlavi dialect.*

Introduction

The authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan conveniently and consistently forget to mention that the Turkic language presently spoken in the neighbouring Iranian province of Azerbaijan is a relatively new development.

Until the onslaught of the Turkic-speaking tribes from Central Asia, beginning with the Seljuks ruling from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, and also continued by the Persianate Timurid Empire, Qara-Koyunlu and Aq-Koyunlu Turkish tribes from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the local languages spoken by the population of the Iranian Provinces of Azerbaijan and Ardabil, situated south of the Araks River, were derivatives of the old Pahlavi dialects named Tati and Harzani. This was the “true Azeri” language spoken until the 15th–16th centuries by the local Iranian Azerbaijanis.¹ (However, their language gradually changed to that of their overlords – the Turkish spoken by the ruling tribes coming from Central Asia. This change occurred gradually, due to the fact that the local language did not have a script and was transmitted only orally. Simultaneously in the same region there existed large Armenian communities, but as their language did have a proper script and base, they managed to save their spoken and written language. Many Iranian specialists and linguists have written articles and books about this subject, alas, mainly in Persian.

Another interesting fact is that, at least in the region of the South Caucasus, even the ruling Turkish language did not have a script. All official documents and letters of the Turkish rulers were in Persian, which was their “official” language. All local historians wrote their works in Persian and the first Turkish written texts appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century, using the Persian-Arabic script, while their spoken language was Turkish.² The first Turkish language newspaper ever appeared only in 1875.³

It is impossible to determine whether the Azerbaijani historians’ claim, promoted by their leaders, is justified. How does it happen that their country is 3000 years old, a script until the end of the nineteenth century?

¹ Galichian 2012, Chapter 1.

² Karageozov 2005, 148.

³ Altstadt 1992, 52.

The written language

For the first time written Turkish officially appeared in the region, in a newspaper using Persian-Arabic script towards the end of the nineteenth century. Since that time, the script employed for the written format of Turkish used by the population of the region of the Republic of Azerbaijan has first been Persian-Arabic, then in 1922–27 this changed to Latin. In the communist period, in 1937–39, the script changed to Cyrillic, and after the independence, in 1991 it was further changed to another version of the Latin alphabet.⁴ Due to the changes as mentioned above, the local population is unable to read their own history and other documents, which have now become illegible for the layman. Thus, the authorities have a useful tool for the transliteration of all historic and geographic texts, changing and adapting the translations to fit their new plans.

Similar language changes have also occurred in South America, the Philippines, Mexico and other regions and countries, where the local languages mainly based on oral traditions, gave way to that of their overlords and conquerors – the Spanish, Portuguese, French or others. These people are neither Spanish nor Portuguese, nor are they French, but they have adopted and speak the language of their rulers, simply because their languages had no written script and were only orally transmitted from one generation to the other.

Western historians, unaware of these subtleties, assume that the people of the whole region of northern Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan are Azeri, basing their assumptions solely on the language spoken by them. While the fact is that the true Azeris are the population living south of the Araks River, in the Iranian provinces, who are of Indo-European stock and until recently spoke various dialects of the Pahlavi language, while those living north of the Araks River were mainly a mélange of the Seljuk and other tribes, such as Turks, Tats, Kurds, as well as Avars, Udis, Tskakhurs, Ingiloy, Talishes and other tribes mentioned by Strabo during the first century.⁵ It is interesting that presently many of these tribes still live in Azerbaijan, but are not allowed to use their ancient languages, and all are named “Azerbaijanis.”

Let us be aware that after the establishment of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918, the region was given the name of the neighbouring Iranian province,

⁴ Galichian 2012, 46–47.

⁵ Strabo. *Geography*. 11.4.6.

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which has now been accepted, despite the official protests by the Iranian government of the time.⁶

In 1920, Azerbaijan joined the Communist camp of the USSR, and the name of the Republic was kept on as Azerbaijan, though the population of that country was officially known by everyone in the USSR as Turks and Tatars, or simply Muslims.⁷ It was only in 1936 that, by the decision of the Supreme Soviet, the name of the population of the land was officially changed to "Azerbaijani."⁸

Ancestry

When President Aliyev of Azerbaijan speaks with the Christian Westerners, he always claims to have a Christian, that is, a Caucasian-Albanian heritage, people who accepted Islam during the 8th–12th centuries. It is worth noting that most of the Christian monasteries, churches, chapels and khachqars (inscribed tombstones) in the territory of present-day Azerbaijan were mainly constructed and erected after the 12th and 13th centuries, when the Albanian tribes, with the exception of a very small number of Udis, had already been converted to Islam. The question arises, how could a small tribe of Christians (whose numbers are now only a few thousand) have built the plethora of these monuments? Particularly considering that in an Islamic country churches could only be built after obtaining special permission from the Sultan or the King.

On the other hand, it has been shown that Azerbaijan has destroyed and is still destroying cemeteries and churches, which they had previously claimed to be the heritage of their Albanian ancestors. If these monuments are truly part of their heritage, why, instead of protecting them, do they consistently destroy them? Perhaps, because they are not part of Albanian, but of Armenian heritage⁹?

On the other hand, when the authorities and historians of the Republic of Azerbaijan speak with Muslim or Turkish rulers, they claim to have a Central Turkic heritage, and say that "The people of Türkiye and the present-day Azerbaijani population are the same people, who have been forcibly split into two countries by the Russian and the Iranian Empires".

⁶ Galichian 2025, 42.

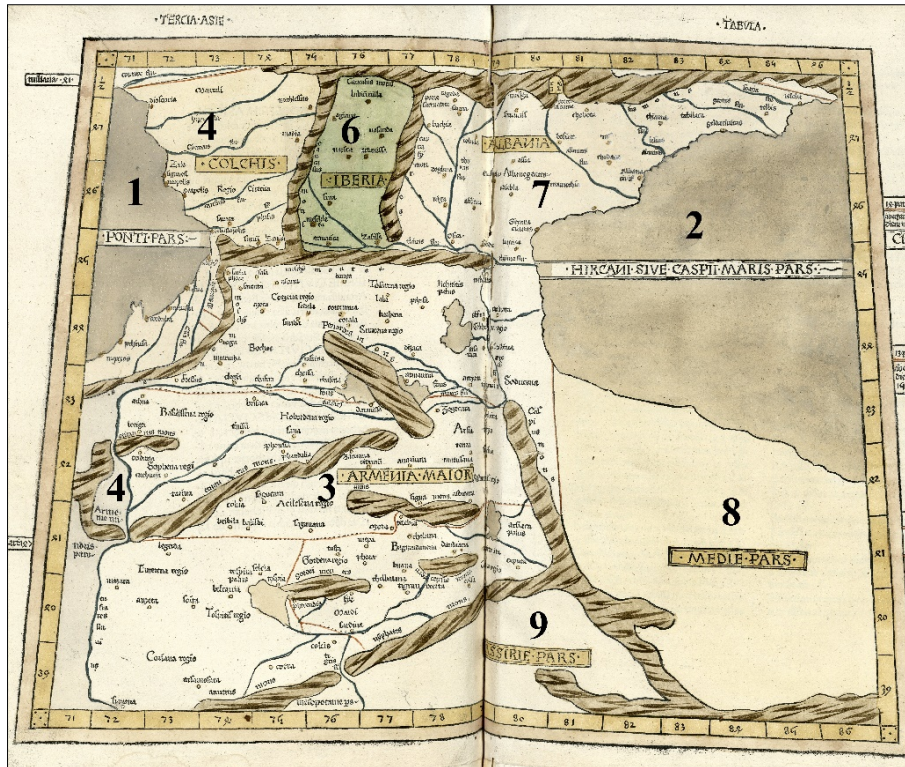
⁷ Alekbarly 8.8.2009.

⁸ Alekparov 1960, 71.

⁹ Karapetyan 2024.

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Is it not advisable to make up your mind before you loudly express contradicting claims regarding your past and ancestry?



Map of the region of the South Caucasus, entitled the *Third Map of Asia*, from Ptolemy's second century book *Geografia*. This version was printed in 1486.

Collection, ref. MO-1072, Matenadaran, Yerevan.

At the time these were the regional countries and seas:

1. The Black Sea,
2. The Caspian Sea,
3. *Armenia Major* (Greater Armenia),
4. At the bottom left, *Armenian Minor pars* – part of Lesser Armenia,
5. Just to the south of the Caucasus *Colchis* (Abkhazia) as part of Georgia,
6. *Iberia*, another part of Georgia,
7. [Caucasian] *Albania*, which presently Azerbaijan partially occupies,
8. *Media pars* – part of Media, which later became the "Iranian Azerbaijan,"
9. *Assyrian pars* – part of Assyria,

There is no Azerbaijan to be seen anywhere on the map or any other map of medieval times.

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Ամփոփում

Ադրբեջանի Հանրապետության պատմաբանները քարոզում և պնդում են այն տեսությունը, որ Իրանի Ադրբեջան-Ատրպատական նահանգի լեզուն, որով այժմ խոսում են Իրանում, նույն լեզուն է, ինչով խոսում է Ադրբեջանի Հանրապետության ժողովուրդը: Նրանք ցանկանում են փաստել, որ երկուսն էլ նույն ցեղից են և ունեն նույն ծագումնաբանությունը, հետևաբար նույն ժողովուրդն են, ովքեր ներկայումս ապրում են երկու տարբեր երկրներում:

Ելնելով այս անհիմն ենթադրությունից՝ նրանք տարածում են կեղծիք և ապատեղեկատվություն՝ ուղղված իրանական կողմին և հետամտելով նրանց անջատումը Իրանից և միացումը իրենց հանրապետության մեջ բնակվող «պատմական» եղբայրներին ու քույրերին:

Հոգվածում նշվում է, որ լեզուն չի կարող լինել որոշակի հասարակության և ցեղի նախապատմության միակ հիմքը: Հակառակ դեպքում Հարավային Ամերիկայի մեծ մասը, ինչպես նաև Մեքսիկայի և Ֆիլիպինների բնակչությունը պետք է իրականում կոչվեր իսպանացի, քանի որ բոլորը խոսում են իսպաներեն: Նույն սկզբունքով աֆրիկյան շատ երկրներ, որոնք խոսում են տարբեր եվրոպական լեզուներով, կպատկանեն այն ազգի անդամներին, որոնք անցյալում իրենց տարածքում ստեղծված գաղութների հիմնադիրներն ու տիրակալներն են եղել:

Բանալի բառեր՝ *Ադրբեջան, Կովկասյան Ալբանիա, Հայաստան, Իրան, ադրբեջաներեն, թուրքերեն, փեխլեվի բարբառ:*