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**TAVUSH DISTRICT FROM THE EARLY
17TH CENTURY TO THE FIRST QUARTER
OF THE 18TH CENTURY**

A Study of the Demographic History of Armenia

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The monograph is devoted to the history of the Tavush District during 1600–1725, with particular emphasis on historical and demographic aspects. Drawing on the 1727 *Extensive Defter of the Ganja-Karabakh Eyalet*, it presents the settlement patterns of Armenian and Turkic communities in the district and neighbouring territories. The villages of Tavush and their tax-paying Armenian inhabitants are listed by name, alongside an account of the district's economic conditions. The study also reflects on the history of the local Armenian principality (melikdom) and its spiritual and cultural life.

This work is intended for historians and all those with an interest in Armenian history.

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PREFACE

The Tavush district, designated as Tuchkatak (attested in certain manuscripts under the variant forms Tuchkatak, Tus-Kusatak, Ushanatak, etc.), is recorded in the *Ashkharhatsuyts* as the fifth canton of Utik, one of the provinces of Greater Armenia.¹ In addition, Paruyr Muradyan identifies the Tuhk canton, mentioned in the *History* of Movses Khorenatsi (in the story of Vardges Manuk) with Tavush.² Scholarly opinions concerning the extent of the territory occupied by this canton differ; it therefore seems appropriate to briefly present these opposing views.

Ghukas Inchichyan addressed the topography of Ashkharhatsuyts Tavush,³ primarily bringing together the information reported by medieval Armenian authors on the subject. Ghevond Alishan sought to clarify the boundaries of the canton⁴ and advanced the view that Tavush corresponded to the upper reaches of the homonymous river, with its borders extending as far as the Katsaret fortress.⁵ Suren Yeremyan also considered the question of the location of medieval Tavush. According to him, the original form of the toponym

¹ **Movses Khorenatsi**, *Ashkharhatsuyts (Geography)*, "Armenian Classical Authors" (hereafter: ACA), vol. II, Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, p. 2153.

² **Muradyan P.**, *On the Question of the Localisation of the "Tuhats Canton"*, "Historical-Philological Journal" (hereafter: "HPHJ"), 1979, no. 1, pp. 245–250.

³ **Inchichyan Gh.**, *Description of Armenia*, Venice, 1822, pp. 349–352.

⁴ **Alishan Gh.**, *Topography of Armenia, Uti*, "Bazmavep", Venice-St. Lazarus, 1990, nos. 3–4, p. 361.

⁵ See *ibid.* The ruins of this fortress are located within the territory of Tavush village, Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia.

Tuchkatak should be Tus-Kustak. Unlike Alishan, Yeremyan concluded that the territory of the canton corresponded to the lower basin of the Tavush River, covering an area of approximately 700 square kilometres.⁶ As for the upper basin of the river, the author, dividing the Kusti-Parnes canton of Artsakh into two parts – Kust and Parnes, located the former in the upper reaches of the Tavush River.⁷

We consider Babken Harutyunyan's localisation to be the most acceptable and accurate. Having described and located the cantons of the provinces of Utik and Artsakh within Greater Armenia, he concludes that Tuchkatak corresponds to the basins of the Tavush, Varagajur (Hakhum, Hasansu), Akhnji, and Khndzorut rivers, and that its borders extend as far as the Kura River.⁸ Accordingly, the southern border of the canton lay along the Varazhnunik canton of Ayrarat; in the north-east it reached the Kura River; in the east and south-east it bordered Gardman of Utik; and in the west and north-west it bordered the Aghue cantons.⁹ Tavush, according to Harutyunyan, also included the Varagajur river basin, extending as far as the Kura River, with the Paytapar (Hakhum) mountains forming its eastern boundary and the Gardman mountains its western boundary. Tigran Gevorgyan, largely concurring with Harutyunyan, nevertheless mistakenly identifies the

⁶ **Yeremyan S.**, *Armenia according to "Ashkharhatsuyts"*, Yerevan, 1963, p. 86.

⁷ **Ibid.**, p. 90.

⁸ **Harutyunyan B.**, *Issues of History and Historical Geography of Eastern Armenian Regions and Albania, Collection of Articles, "The Administrative Division of the Eastern Regions of Armenia According to the Ashkharhatsuyts"*, Yerevan, 2016, p. 71. See inset map, p. 72.

⁹ According to the author, Aghue canton was located in the middle course of the Aghstev River. Aleksan Hakobyan, however, places it in the basin of the Getik River. See **Hakobian A.**, *Historical-Geographical and Epigraphic Studies (Artsakh and Utik)*, Vienna–Yerevan, 2009, see inset map.

Tavush fortress with the village of Tus, locating the latter at the mouth of the Tavush River.¹⁰

During the reigns of the Artaxiad and Arsacid kings, Utik, together with its constituent cantons, formed part of the Kingdom of Greater Armenia. During the reign of King Arshak II (350–368 AD), taking advantage of internal rebellion against the king and Persian incursions, the state of Caucasian Albania, together with several cantons on the right bank of the Kura, also seized Tavush from the Kingdom of Greater Armenia. However, during the reign of King Pap (374–378 AD), the sparapet¹¹ Mushegh Mamikonian succeeded in reuniting these territories with Greater Armenia.¹²

The Arab punitive forces that invaded Armenia under the command of Bugha in the 9th century also passed through the cantons of north-eastern Armenia. After capturing Gardman, which bordered Tavush to the east, they advanced further and arrested Stepanos Kon, Prince of the Sewordik in the village¹³ of Tus.¹⁴

Immediately after his coronation, Ashot I (885–890) Bagratuni also brought north-eastern Armenia under his authority. Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi provides noteworthy details concerning these events, referring to the centrifugal population of the Uti canton with the epithet *yeluzak*. He notes that *“he also subdued the other and*

¹⁰ **T. Gevorgyan**, *The Eastern Regions of Armenia According to the “Ashkharhatsuyts”*, PhD dissertation (unpublished), Yerevan, 2013, pp. 135–136.

¹¹ The supreme commander-in-chief of the armed forces in ancient and medieval Armenia.

¹² **Pavstos Buzand**, *Buzandaran Patmut'iwkn'*, (ACA), vol. I. Antelias, Lebanon, 2003, p. 390.

¹³ The village of Tus is attested for the first time in the *History* of Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi and corresponds to the village of Tavush in the consolidated Berd community of Tavush Province, Republic of Armenia.

¹⁴ **Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi**, *History of Armenia*, (ACA), vol. XI, Antelias-Lebanon, 2010, p. 436 (hereafter: **Draskhanakerttsi**).

rebellious inhabitants of Gugark and the **yeluzak** (brigandish) people of the Uti¹⁵ canton by common force ...".¹⁶ The Bagratid kings paid particular attention to the strategically important north-eastern frontiers, a fact that may be explained by the dense network of fortresses constructed during their reign.¹⁷

The princely houses of Tavush and the neighbouring districts periodically displayed centrifugal tendencies, seeking to free themselves from the Bagratid domination. Taking this into account, King Ashot II (914–928) established the administrative unit of the Uti canton in the early years of his reign and appointed a supervisor.¹⁸ According to Artashes Shahnazaryan, it was during the reign of King Smbat I (890–914) that the Tavush fortress was constructed, subsequently becoming the centre of the royal administrative unit.¹⁹

In his later work, Catholicos Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi refers to the canton under the name Tavush. It may therefore be assumed that the transition from the toponyms Tuchkatak and Tus-Kustak to Tavush most likely occurred during the Bagratid period, in the second half of the 10th century.²⁰ The Tavush gorge mentioned by Draskhanakerttsi, included within the borders of the administrative unit of Uti,

¹⁵ Not to be confused with Uti canton mentioned by the authors of the "History of the Caucasian Albanians". For a detailed discussion of its topography, see **Arakelyan H.**, *The Cult of the Apostle Yeghishe among the Udis and on the Question of the Province of Utik*, "Herald of Social Sciences", 1991, no. 6, pp. 69–86 (hereafter: HSS).

¹⁶ **Draskhanakerttsi**, p. 444.

¹⁷ Among the notable fortresses are Gag, Ghalinjakar, Gavarzin, Katsaret, Tavush, and others.

¹⁸ See **Shahnazaryan A.**, *Uti Region*, "Review of Armenian Studies", 2020, no. 2, pp. 26–42.

¹⁹ See **Shahnazaryan A.**, *Tavush Fortress*, "Issues of Armenian Studies", 25(1), 2022, pp. 33–42.

²⁰ **Muradyan P.**, *On the Question of the Localisation of the "Tuhats Canton"*, p. 248.

corresponds to the upper reaches of the river. Consequently, the Tavush canton attested in later sources largely corresponds to the Tavush gorge, encompassing the upper reaches of the river referred to by Catholicos Hovhannes.

In this sense, the Ashkharhatsuyts Tuchkatak–Tavush canton represents a smaller entity, comprising the homonymous fortress and the adjacent settlements. In order to avoid confusion, it is necessary to distinguish this Ashkharhatsuyts Tuchkatak–Tavush unit from the Tavush canton attested from the 10th century onwards. The latter, unlike Ashkharhatsuyts Tuchkatak, occupied a more limited area. Part of the territory of the Tavush canton today lies within the Republic of Armenia and corresponds to the consolidated Berd community of the Tavush Province. The lower reaches of the Tavush River, extending towards the Kura River, are currently part of the Tovuz region of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

After the fall of the Bagratid kingdom and the establishment of Seljuk rule in the 11th century, the Tavush canton passed to the Kyurikids (Kyurikyans), one of the cadet branches of the Bagratids.²¹ The Kyurikid princes established themselves in Matsnaberd, Tavush, and Nor Berd,²² of which the principalities of Nor Berd and Matsnaberd proved the most enduring.

The name of Davit Kyurikyan of Nor Berd is also associated with the construction of the monastic complex of Nor Varagavank at the end of the 13th century; it was originally known as Anapat.²³ In the 13th

²¹ From the early 10th century, the Kyurikids held dominion over several cantons of northern Armenia; see **Vardan Vardapet**, *Compilation of History*, Venice, St. Lazarus, 1862, p. 90.

²² **Kirakos Gandzaketsi**, *History of Armenia*, edited by **K. A. Melik-Ohanjanyan**, Yerevan, 1961, p. 152 (hereafter: **Gandzaketsi**).

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

century, the Kyurikid principalities of Nor Berd and Matsnaberde were incorporated into the domains of the Vahramids (Vahramyans), a cadet branch of the Zakarids (Zakaryans). The latter succeeded in liberating a number of cantons and fortresses of north-eastern Armenia from the Seljuk control, including Tavush.²⁴ These territories formed the Vahramyan principality, extending from the fortress of Gag on the left bank of the lower Aghstev River as far as Shamkor.²⁵

The early 13th century in Tavush was also marked by a notable spiritual and cultural revival, largely associated with the figure of Vanakan Vardapet Tavushetsi (1181–1251).²⁶ Through his efforts, the renowned monastic complex of Khoranashat was constructed.²⁷ In 1222, he completed the building of the main church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God. Under his patronage, a scriptorium and a seminary were also founded at Khoranashat, where such prominent figures of Armenian historiography as Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Vardan Areveltsi, and Grigor Aknertsis received their education.²⁸

The Vahramid principality, however, was short-lived, as the Mongols soon appeared in the region. After taking control of Gandzak, part of the Mongol forces, led by Molar Noyin, entered the domains of Vahram Gagetsi.²⁹ Within a short period, the Mongols succeeded in capturing the most important fortresses and castles of north-eastern

²⁴ **Kirakos Gandzaketsi**, p. 163.

²⁵ **Shahnazaryan A.**, *The Principality of the Vahramyans*, Yerevan, 1990.

²⁶ See **Shahnazaryan A.**, *Vanakan Vardapet Tavushetsi* (On the occasion of the 750th anniversary of his death), "Etchmiadzin", 2001, No. 13, pp. 51–62.

²⁷ **Gandzaketsi**, p. 346.

²⁸ **Voskian H.**, *Hovhannes Vanakan and His School*, Vienna, 1922, p. 12.

²⁹ **Vardan Vardapet**, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–145.

Armenia, including Tavush, which fell to them in 1236.³⁰ Continuing their campaigns, the Mongols subsequently conquered the whole of Armenia, which remained under their domination for more than a century. From the beginning of the 15th century, Armenia was in turn ruled by the Turkmen Kara-Koyunlu and later the Ak-Koyunlu tribes.

Subject to repeated incursions by various armies and nomadic tribes, and successively dominated by different states and political formations, the orderly of economic life of the region was severely disrupted. The demographic composition of the area likewise began to change gradually. This process was primarily linked to the arrival and settlement of Turkic tribes in various parts of Armenia. Having begun with the invasions of the Seljuk Turks, it continued under the Mongol rule and subsequently during the domination of the Kara-Koyunlu and Ak-Koyunlu Turkmen confederations.³¹

The lowland areas of the Tavush canton, situated along the main routes connecting Tiflis with Gandzak, were particularly affected and repeatedly exposed to military operations. The aforementioned territories gradually began to be appropriated by recently arrived nomadic tribes, while the Armenian population increasingly retreated to and relied upon the mountainous parts of the canton. These processes continued into the 16th and 17th centuries, when the territory of Armenia became an arena of sustained military confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran.

The present study is an attempt to examine the most significant episodes of a critical period in the history of the Tavush district – the

³⁰ **Gandzaketsi**, p. 243, cf. **Grigor Aknertsi**, *History of the Tatars*, Jerusalem, 1974, p. 23.

³¹ See **Margaryan H.**, *The Noble Prince Families in Armenia in 12th – First Half of 14th Century*, Yerevan, 2023, pp. 18–19.

17th and 18th centuries, with a particular emphasis on the region's demographic processes. It is argued that the events and demographic shifts of this period to a considerable extent shaped a number of realities characteristic of the modern era.

An impartial examination of the historical and ethnographic processes in the Tavush canton during this period is of particular relevance, especially in the present day, when neighbouring Azerbaijan has been advancing state-sponsored interpretations aimed at appropriating the history of the region. In particular, north-eastern Armenia is presented as the historical homeland of nomadic Azerbaijani settlers, while the indigenous Armenian population is portrayed as a people resettled by Russia in the 19th century. In books published in recent years, Azerbaijani authors, by distorting and arbitrarily interpreting historical facts, elevate the lamentable traditions of their own historiography to new "heights".³² Concurrently with all this, in the territories under their control, Armenian cultural heritage is deliberately being eliminated, with the aim of excluding the presence of any evidence of Armenianness.

From the first decade of the 17th century, Safavid Iranian dominance was firmly established in the region. It is well known that the Safavid dynasty rose to power with the support of the Qizilbash Turkmen tribes, some of which gradually settled throughout the territories incorporated into the Safavid state, including the

³² See *Şəmşəddil nahiyəsinin Kameral təsviri. 1860-ci il* (Tərcümə, tərtib, ön söz və qeydlərin müəllifi Nazir Əhmədli). Bakı: 2019, see *Gəncə-Qarabağ əyalətinin icmal dəftəri*, Layihənin rəhbəri və ön sözün müəllifi: Yaqub Mahmudov, Bakı, 2010, see also **Kadim Vatan Karabağ**, *Divan Kitap*, Editörler: K. Yerdelen, A. Yalçınkaya, İ. Memmedova, Baski, 2022, see **Ya. Makhmudov, T. Mustafazade**, et al., *The Irevan Khanate, the Russian invasion and resettlement of Armenians in the territory of Northern Azerbaijan*, Baku, 2010.

Transcaucasus. In certain areas, political authority was exercised through these tribes, which effectively functioned as representatives of the central government. As a result, the Armenian population gradually withdrew from the lowland regions occupied by Turkic tribes and retreated into the foothill and mountainous zones. Concentrated in the highlands, the Armenian population was able to maintain a degree of economic and cultural development under comparatively peaceful conditions.

From the beginning of the 18th century, Iran entered a period of gradual weakening, accompanied by plundering raids by Lezgin groups into the region. As a result of these developments, the Ottoman Empire, competing with Iran, succeeded in conquering the Transcaucasus, including Eastern Armenia, in 1725.

Sources and Literature Review

As one of the border districts of Armenia, Tavush has largely remained outside the main focus of contemporary historiography. Nevertheless, the *History* of Arakel Davrizhetsi offers insights that allow, in general terms, the clarification of the circumstances under which the region was largely spared from the Shah Abbas I's deportations.³³ The work of Zakaria Kanakertsi constitutes a valuable primary source for the period of relative peace following the Persian–Ottoman wars.³⁴ The *History* of Catholicos Yesayi Hasan-Jalalyan of Caucasian Albania contains rich material on the political developments

³³ **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, *Book of History*, edited by **Khanlaryan L.**, Yerevan, 1990 (hereafter: **Arakel Davrizhetsi**).

³⁴ **Zakaria Kanakertsi**, *History*, prepared for publication by **A. Virabyan**, Yerevan, 2015 (hereafter: **Zakaria Kanakertsi**).

of the region in the first quarter of the 18th century, as well as on the Lezgin plundering raids.³⁵

Significant evidence concerning the administrative structure of Safavid Iran, as well as the nomadic tribes that appeared in north-eastern Armenia, can be found in the chronicle of Iskandar Monshi, the official court historian of the Safavid dynasty.³⁶ The most important source on the administrative and fiscal policies of the Safavid shahs is the document “*Tazkirat al-muluk*” (*Memoirs of the Kings*).³⁷

In addition, a substantial portion of the primary source base for this study consists of manuscript colophons copied in the scribal centres of north-eastern Armenia, both published and unpublished.³⁸

For the study of the history of the Tavush district in the 16th to 18th centuries, Ottoman and Georgian sources are of key importance,

³⁵ **Yesayi Hasan-Jalalyants**, *An Outline of Aghvan History*, introduction and annotations by **A. Martirosyan**, Stepanakert, 2007 (hereafter: **Yesayi the Historian**).

³⁶ **Eskandar beg Monshi**, *History of Shah Abbas the Great*, vol. I, II, Boulder, Colorado, 1978.

³⁷ **Mirza Sami'a**, *Tazkirat Al-Muluk*, translated with notes by **K. P. Kostikyan**, **J. V. Meshkanbaryans**, Yerevan, 2019. Cf. **Tadhkirat Al-Muluk**, *A manual of Safavid administration*, translated and explained by **V. Minorsky**, London, 1943.

³⁸ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, compiled by **V. Hakobyan** and **A. Hovhannisyan**, Yerevan, 1974; *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1621–1640)*, vol. II, compiled by **V. Hakobyan** and **A. Hovhannisyan**, Yerevan, 1978; *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1641–1660)*, vol. III, compiled by **V. Hakobyan**, Yerevan, 1984. *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of the Mashtots Matenadaran*, vol. I, compiled by **O. Yeghanyan**, **A. Zeytunian**, and **P. Antabian**, Yerevan, 1984; *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of the Mashtots Matenadaran*, vol. III, compiled by **O. Yeghanyan**, Yerevan, 2007; *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of the Mashtots Matenadaran*, vol. IX, edited by **G. Ter-Vardanian**, Yerevan, 2017. *Matenadaran*, (hereafter: MM), manuscripts nos. 365, 3813, 4331, 6705, 6822, 7501.

without which it would be impossible to clarify a number of issues.³⁹ Among the Ottoman sources, the brief⁴⁰ and extensive defters of the Ganja (Gandzak)⁴¹–Karabakh eyalet of 1593 and 1727 are of exceptional value.⁴² These registers make it possible to examine the ethno-religious composition of the region, the areas of settlement of the Armenian population and newly established Turkic nomadic tribes, the administrative divisions of the territories under consideration, the volume of taxation, and the overall economic conditions.

The study of the region's epigraphs and the comparison of their data with that of manuscript copies contributes to the clarification of a number of important historical questions. In this regard, it is worth noting that the epigraphs of the present-day consolidated Berd community have never been fully studied.⁴³ This gap is partially addressed by the data published by Kajikian in his *“Travel Memoirs”* in the *“Ardzagank”* weekly in Tiflis at the end of the 19th century, in which the author provides detailed descriptions of the monuments of

³⁹ **Vakhushti Bagrationi**, *History of the Kingdom of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 1976. **Melikset-Bek L.**, *Georgian Sources on Armenia and the Armenians*, vol. III (18th–19th centuries), Yerevan, 1955. **Safrastyan A. Kh.**, *Turkish Sources on Armenia, the Armenians, and Other Peoples of the South Caucasus*, vol. I, Yerevan, 1961; *Ottoman Laws in Western Armenia (16th–17th-century kanunnames)*, translation, introduction, and annotations by **Safrastyan A. Kh.** and **Zulalyan M. K.**, Yerevan, 1964.

⁴⁰ *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi*, Gence-Karabağ Eyaleti'nin İcmal Defteri, Tapu-Tahrir Defteri (TT. d.), No. 699.

⁴¹ The toponyms *Ganja* and *Gandzak* are used interchangeably in this text, where *Ganja* represents the Persian form.

⁴² *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi*, Gence-Karabağ Eyaleti'nin Mufassal Defteri, (TT. d.), No. 903.

⁴³ Perhaps the sole exception was the scholarly expedition carried out in 1935 under the leadership of Karo Ghafadaryan, the materials of which were published posthumously. See **Ghafadaryan K.**, *The Archaeological Expedition of Shamshadin in 1935*, Pages of Medieval Armenian Culture and History, Yerevan, 2007, pp. 231–307.

north-eastern Armenia, their inscriptions, and the manuscripts colophons preserved on site.⁴⁴ Comparable valuable information is also provided by Makar Barkhudaryants in his work.⁴⁵

The study by Samvel Karapetyan is of particular significance.⁴⁶ Travelling across north-eastern Armenia, including areas now within the Republic of Azerbaijan, he presented readers with decipherments of hundreds of inscriptions as well as plans of monuments. Consequently, his work also possesses primary source value.

Although certain aspects of the medieval history of north-eastern Armenia have received attention from scholars,⁴⁷ no study specifically addressing the 17th and 18th centuries has yet been published. Various aspects of the history of the Tavush district have been discussed by Ruben Simonyan.⁴⁸ In his study on the scribal centres of north-eastern Armenia, Tamara Minasyan also touches upon several issues concerning the history of the district.⁴⁹

During the period under consideration, the Tavush district was part of the Safavid state; therefore, studies devoted to the administrative structure, as well as the political and economic conditions of that polity, are of considerable importance for the present

⁴⁴ **Kajikian**, *Travel Memoirs*, "Ardzagank", no. 7, Tiflis. pp. 86–90.

⁴⁵ **Bp. Makar Barkhudaryants**, *The Land of Aghvank and the Neighbors*, Artsakh, Yerevan: Gandzasar, 1999 (hereafter: **Barkhudaryants**).

⁴⁶ **Karapetyan S.**, *Northern Artsakh*, Yerevan, 2004.

⁴⁷ **Shahnazaryan A.**, *The Principality of the Vahramyans*, Yerevan, 1990; *Uti Region*, "Review of Armenian Studies", 2020, no. 2, pp. 26–42; *Tavush Fortress*, "Issues of Armenian Studies", 25(1), 2022, pp. 33–42. Within the context of the history of the Lori Kyurikids, Ruben Matevosyan also addressed the branch of the dynasty that had established itself in Tavush. See **Matevosyan R.**, *Observations on the History of the Kyurikyans*, "HPHJ", 1968, no. 3.

⁴⁸ **Simonyan R.**, *Tavush Province*, Yerevan, 2012.

⁴⁹ **Minasyan T.**, *Scriptoria of Utik Province*, Yerevan, 2020.

research. In this regard, the works of Rudi Matthee merit particular attention.⁵⁰ Also noteworthy is the monograph by Ilya Petrushevsky,⁵¹ in which, among other issues, the author examines the causes and chronology of the appearance of various Muslim tribes in the region. Within the corpus of similar studies, the works of Armenian scholars Leo,⁵² Hakob Papazyan,⁵³ Manvel Zulalyan, Aram Safrastyan,⁵⁴ Husik Najaryan,⁵⁵ Kristine Kostikyan,⁵⁶ and Artak Maghalyan⁵⁷ are of

⁵⁰ See **R. Matthee**, *Persia in crisis, Safavid decline and the fall of Isfahan*, Chapter 4, Monetary policy and the disappearing mints, 1600–1700, London, 2012; *The politics of trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for silver, 1600–1730*, Cambridge, 1999; *Relations between the center and the periphery in Safavid Iran*, *The Historian*, vol. 77, № 3, (2015) Published By: Taylor & Francis, pp. 431–463; *Was Safavid Iran an Empire?*, *Journal of the economic and social history of the orient*, Published by Brill, № 53 (2010), pp. 233–265; *The Ottoman-Safavid war of 986-998/1578-90: motives and causes*, *International journal of Turkish studies*, 2014, vol. 20, pp. 2–20; *Safavid Iran and the “Turkish question” or how to avoid a war on multiple fronts*, *Iranian Studies*, 2019, vol. 52, № 3–4, pp. 513–542.

⁵¹ **Petrushevsky I.**, *Essays on the History of Feudal Relations in Azerbaijan and Armenia in the 16th–Early 19th Centuries*, Leningrad, 1949.

⁵² **Leo**, *History of Armenia*, vol. III, book I, Yerevan, 1969; *History of Armenia*, vol. III, book II, Yerevan, 1973.

⁵³ **Papazyan H.**, *Articles*, v. I, II, Yerevan, 2020.

⁵⁴ **Ottoman Laws in Western Armenia (16th–17th-century kanunnames)**, **Zulalyan M.**, *The Turkish–Persian Wars on the Territory of Armenia and Their Consequences (1500–1555)*, “*Bulletin of Social Sciences*”, 1959, no. 3, pp. 49–60; *Armenia during the Turkic-Persian Wars*, *History of Armenia*, vol. II, book II, Yerevan, 2014; *Historical Questions of the Armenian People in the 13th–18th Centuries according to European Authors*, Book I, Yerevan, 1990.

⁵⁵ **Najaryan H.**, *The Turko-Iranian War of the Early 17th Century and the Deportation of Armenians*, Yerevan, 1959; *Turko-Iranian Relations in the 16th Century and the First Half of the 17th Century and Armenia*, Yerevan, 1961.

⁵⁶ **Kostikyan K.**, *On the History of Melik-Shahnazaryans, The Meliks of Gegharkuni*, “*The Countries and Peoples of the Near and Middle East*”, 2005, v. XXIV; *The information on account of some issues of 17th century history of Eastern Armenia in the Chronicle of Fazli Beg Isfahani*, *Proceedings of the International Conference*

particular value. With regard to the approximate estimation of the size of the Armenian population during the period in question, the studies of Ashot Melkonyan,⁵⁸ Gor Yeranyan,⁵⁹ and Mikayel Malkhasyan⁶⁰ are of significant importance.

In the present study, we have sought to address the following research questions:

1. what impact did the Persian–Ottoman wars have on the region;
2. whether Tavush, following the example of many districts of Armenia, was subjected to the large-scale forced deportations carried out by Shah Abbas;
3. what impact the prolonged period of Persian–Ottoman peace had on Tavush, and which favourable factors accounted for the existence of an Armenian melikdom in the district;
4. which new tribes appeared in the region during the Safavid period and how they altered the ethnic composition of the district;

Dedicated to the 90th Anniversary of the Birth of the Armenologist and Orientalist Aram Ter-Ghevondyan (1928–1988), Yerevan, 2019.

⁵⁷ **Maghalyan A.**, *The Melikdoms of Artsakh and the Melik Houses in the 17th–19th Centuries*, Yerevan, 2007; *The Melikdoms of Artsakh and the Emergence of the Karabakh Khanate*, “The Problems of the History of Armenia”, no. 10, Yerevan, 2009, pp. 87–112.

⁵⁸ **Melkonyan A.**, *The Armenian Population of the Erzurum Province in the First Three Decades of the 19th Century (A Historical-Demographic Study)*, Yerevan, 1994.

⁵⁹ **Yeranyan G.**, *The Average Number of Armenian Family Members According to the 15th Century Colophons in Armenian Manuscripts (Vaspurakan’s Example)*, Yerevan, 2015.

⁶⁰ **Malkhasyan M.**, *The Trends and Features of the Demographic Processes in Armenia in the First Half of the 17th Century*, “Armenological Issues”, 1 (7), 2016, pp. 94–104.

5. what impact the weakening of Iran at the beginning of the 18th century, the Lezgin raids, and the subsequent Turkish conquest had on Tavush.

The study is concluded with an analysis of the data relating to the Tavush district contained in the *“Extensive Defter of Ganja-Karabakh Eyalet”* of 1727. On the basis of these materials, an attempt has been made to outline the population composition of the district at that time, its ethno-confessional profile, socio-economic conditions, and the number of settlements. By correlating the available primary sources, we have also sought, insofar as possible, to determine the locations of these settlements.

CHAPTER I

THE PERSIAN–OTTOMAN WARS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES IN THE TAVUSH DISTRICT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY

a) The Consequences of Previous Wars

In the 16th century, Armenia found itself within the sphere of confrontation between two major Muslim powers – the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran.⁶¹ Unlike the former, which had already reached the peak of its power, Safavid Iran was still going through the formative period.⁶²

By making use of the authority and influence of the Safavid house, Ismail I (1502–1524) succeeded in uniting under his rule a number⁶³ of Turkic tribes,⁶⁴ also known as the Qizilbash.⁶⁵ The state

⁶¹ On the first phase of the Persian–Ottoman War; see **Zulalyan M.**, *The Turkish–Persian Wars on the Territory of Armenia and Their Consequences (1500–1555)*, “Bulletin of Social Sciences”, 1959, no. 3 pp. 49–60.

⁶² A number of scholars, subject to certain reservations, classify Safavid Iran as an empire. See **R. Matthee**, *Relations between the center and the periphery in Safavid Iran*, *The Historian*, vol. 77, № 3 (2015), p. 433; *Was Safavid Iran an Empire?*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, № 53 (2010), pp. 233–265, cf. **D. Streusand**, *Islamic gunpowder empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*, Published by Westview Press, 2011, p. 135.

⁶³ At the Safavid court, the colloquial language was the so-called Azerbaijani, or Qizilbash Turkic, whereas Persian was employed concurrently in official written communication; see **W. Floor, H. Javadi**, *Role of Azerbaijani Turkish in Safavid Iran*, Cambridge University Press, Iranian Studies, (2013) vol. 46, Issue 4, pp. 569–581.

⁶⁴ On the aforementioned tribes; see **Don Juan of Persia**, *A shi'ah catholic, 1560–1604*, translated and edited with an introduction by G. Le Strange, London, 1926, p. 45.

formation that emerged was essentially a confederation of Qizilbash tribes, in which Turkic (Turkmen) tribes occupied a dominant position.⁶⁶ Subsequently, various nomadic tribes also came under Safavid rule, thereby augmenting the ranks of the Qizilbash. Shah Ismail succeeded in defeating the Ak-Koyunlu and establishing his authority throughout Iran.⁶⁷ As a result, the greater part of Eastern Armenia came under Iranian rule.

The strengthening of the Safavids posed a challenge to the Ottoman Empire; consequently, military confrontations between the two powers soon commenced, unfolding primarily on the territory of Armenia.

Under the Peace of Amasya of 1555, Armenia was divided between Safavid Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Together with Eastern Armenia, which passed under Iranian rule, the Tavush district was likewise incorporated into the Safavid state. It was included within the Ganja–Karabakh beylerbeylik, the administrative centre of which was the city of Gandzak.⁶⁸ From preceding centuries, owing to their geographical position, the districts of north-eastern Armenia had maintained close connections with Gandzak. It suffices to note that the principal commercial routes leading to Gandzak passed through the lowland areas comprising the lower basin of the Tavush River.⁶⁹ The Armenian population of the neighbouring districts was profoundly

⁶⁵ **Petrushevsky I.**, *Essays on the History of Feudal Relations in Azerbaijan and Armenia in the 16th–Early 19th Centuries*, Leningrad, 1949, p. 68.

⁶⁶ **D. Streusand**, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires*, Boulder, 2011, p. 135.

⁶⁷ **Hovhannisyan A.**, *Episodes from the History of Armenian Liberation Thought*, Book II, Yerevan, 1959, p. 16.

⁶⁸ **Tadhkirat Al-Muluk**, *A manual of Safavid Administration*, p. 101.

⁶⁹ See **Simonyan R.**, *Medieval Roads of Tavush Province*, “Etchmiadzin”, 2001, no. 5, pp. 94–107.

connected to Gandzak in terms of economy and trade. Further evidence of this is provided by the tradition, attested in written sources from various regions of north-eastern Armenia, of referring to Gandzak as the capital.⁷⁰ Taking all this into account, it may be argued that the generalised designation “the land of Gandzak” (*Gandzaki yerkir*), encountered in colophons of Armenian manuscripts and in other sources, also encompassed Tavush and the adjacent districts.

The Peace of Amasya did not prove to be long-lasting. Taking advantage of Iran’s internal instability, Ottoman forces under the command of Lala Mustafa Pasha invaded Eastern Armenia in 1578.⁷¹ In the initial phase, Hamza Mirza, the heir apparent and son of the Safavid shah Khudabanda (1578–1587), resisted the Ottomans with considerable success.⁷² Nevertheless, within a few years the Ottomans managed to achieve tangible gains. Farhad Pasha, who replaced Lala Mustafa Pasha, captured the greater part of Eastern Armenia and Georgia in 1582. However, a significant portion of the Ganja–Karabakh beylerbeylik still remained under the control of the heir apparent Hamza Mirza. Shah Khudabanda was also present there. In view of the balance of forces, they were inclined to conclude an armistice with the Ottomans. In this way, they would gain time and, while retaining a substantial part of their territories, bring a number of dissatisfied Qizilbash tribal leaders into submission. Soon thereafter, however,

⁷⁰ **Gandzaketsi**, p. 200. The perception of the region as a centre is also evidenced by the wording found in an inscription discovered during excavations of a church located within the Tavush fortress, where Gandzak is described as “*the world-renowned city of Gandzak*”. See **Yesayan H., Saghumyan S., Shahnazaryan A.**, *The Excavations of Tavush Fortress*, “Herald of Social Sciences”, 1991, no. 2, p. 137.

⁷¹ **R. Matthee**, *The Ottoman-Safavid war of 986-998/1578-90: motives and causes*, International journal of Turkish studies, 2014, vol. 20, № 1–2, pp. 16–17.

⁷² See **Eskandar beg Monshi**, *History of Shah Abbas the Great*, vol. 1, pp. 444–455.

Hamza Mirza was killed in the vicinity of Gandzak,⁷³ and Shah Khudabanda, having withdrawn to Khorasan, shortly afterwards abdicated in favour of his other son, Shah Abbas I (1587–1629).⁷⁴

The crisis that arose within the Safavid state as a result of the centrifugal tendencies of some influential Qizilbash tribes contributed to the successful military operations of the Ottoman Empire. As one contemporary Armenian primary source relates, Sultan Murad III (1574–1595) ordered Farhad Pasha, the new commander of the Ottoman forces, to proceed to Gandzak and expel from there the *Karmraglukhner*⁷⁵ (“red heads”) – the remnants of the Safavid troops.⁷⁶ The beylerbey of Ganja from the Ziyadoğlu branch of the Qajar tribe, Muhammad Khan Ziyadoğlu, together with his tribesmen, abandoned the city without resistance and withdrew.

The leader of the Qazakhlu tribe, Nazar Sultan Qazakhlu, who was settled in the lower valley of the Aghstev River to the north-west of the Tavush district, likewise declared his submission and went over to the Ottoman side,⁷⁷ being rewarded with the title of pasha.⁷⁸ The

⁷³ **Eskandar beg Monshi**, *History of Shah Abbas the Great*, vol. I, p. 484.

⁷⁴ **Leo**, *History of Armenia*, vol. III, book I, p. 200.

⁷⁵ The Safavid troops wore red headgear, from which the designation “Qizilbash” originated. In contemporary Armenian sources, the variants “red cap”, “red head”, and “red-headed” are also attested.

⁷⁶ “*And in the year 1588, a command was again issued by Murad Khan to a certain man called Farhad, the conqueror and builder of Yerevan, who before the Ottomans had held the supreme command of the eastern regions after Lala, and now was again granted his former authority. He was sent against Ganja to expel the remaining “Karmiraglukhs” (i.e., Qizilbashes) who were there, to build a fortress, and then to return. He duly arrived with a large army and carried out the khan’s command*”; see *Minor Chronicles, XIII–XVIII centuries*, vol. II, compiled by **V. A. Hakobyan**, Yerevan, 1956, p. 246.

⁷⁷ The leaders of this tribe, discerning the likely victor at the decisive moments of warfare, repeatedly shifted their allegiance; see **Hovhannisyan A.**, *Episodes from the*

Ottomans succeeded in capturing Gandzak, after which they set about constructing defensive fortifications: “*And year after year they built many strong fortresses in Tiflis, in Gori, and in Tomanis (i.e., Dmanisi), in Tabriz, and in Ganja, in Shamakhi and in many other places, numbering twenty-five fortresses*”.⁷⁹ Seeking to consolidate their successes and, at the same time, to guard against possible subsequent attacks by the Qizilbash, the Ottomans constructed or restored fortresses of strategic importance throughout the region.

There can be little doubt that these fortifications were built with the involvement of the local population, as a result of which the inhabitants were deprived of the opportunity to attend to their economic needs. Consequently, the Tavush district must likewise have found itself in an unfavourable position in this respect. It may be assumed that the epidemic and famine raging in 1579–1580, mentioned by Hovhannesik Tsaretsi, also manifested themselves in Tavush, although there is no direct evidence to confirm this.⁸⁰

History of Armenian Liberation Thought, Book I, Yerevan, 1957, p. 460. It should be noted that in the 1720s, following the Turkish advance into the region, they once again submitted to Turkish rule; see *Turkish Sources on Armenia, the Armenians, and Other Peoples of the South Caucasus*, vol. I, p. 153. It is noteworthy that, notwithstanding the extant evidence, some Turkish and Azerbaijani scholars portray the Qazakhlu tribe as having been persecuted by the Safavids; see, for instance, **Türkler**, Cilt 7, Orta Çağ, editörler: Hasan Celal Güzel, Kemal Çiçek, Salim Koca, Ankara, 2002, p. 23. M. Zulalyan maintains that the Qazakhlu, Borchalu, and Shamsaddinlu tribes rose in an anti-Turkish uprising; however, the defection of the Qazakhlu to the Ottoman forces is a well-established fact; see **Zulalyan M.**, *The Turkish–Persian Wars on the Territory of Armenia and Their Consequences (1555–1595)*, “Bulletin of Social Sciences”, 1961, no. 3, p. 47.

⁷⁸ **Eskandar beg Monshi**, *History of Shah Abbas the Great*, vol. II, Boulder, Colorado, 1978, p. 583.

⁷⁹ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, p. 217.

⁸⁰ *Minor Chronicles, XIII–XVIII centuries*, vol. II, pp. 242–244.

In 1590, a peace treaty was concluded in Constantinople between Safavid Iran and the Ottoman Empire, under the terms of which Armenia, Georgia, Shirvan, and Azerbaijan (i.e., Atropatene, Ādharbāyjan) passed to the latter.⁸¹ Together with the Ganja–Karabakh beylerbeylik, the Tavush district also came under Ottoman rule. While maintaining the existing administrative boundaries of the beylerbeylik, the Ottoman authorities further fortified Gandzak by stationing a garrison there.⁸² In addition to the construction of fortresses, they undertook practical measures aimed at introducing their laws into the newly conquered territories. Following the conquest of any territory by the Ottoman Empire, a general land survey was customarily conducted, on the basis of which taxes and dues, administrative divisions, and other matters were determined.⁸³ The majority of these cadastral registers, which contain extensive information on Armenia and other lands within the Ottoman Empire, are preserved in the archives of the Republic of Turkey.⁸⁴

The data of the land survey carried out in north-eastern Armenia are summarised in the *Ganja–Karabakh Eyalet Brief Defter* of 1593.⁸⁵ According to this register, the Ganja–Karabakh Eyalet was divided into seven sanjaks (districts): Gandzak, Khachen, Gargar, Aghstabad, Varanda, Dizak, and Hakari. The sanjaks, in turn, were subdivided

⁸¹ **R. Matthee**, *Safavid Iran and the “Turkish question” or how to avoid a war on multiple fronts*, *Iranian Studies*, 2019, vol. 52, № 3–4, p. 525.

⁸² *Turkish Sources on Armenia, the Armenians, and Other Peoples of the South Caucasus*, vol. II, p. 148.

⁸³ **Safrastyan A.**, *Administrative Division of the Ottoman Empire in the 17th Century*, “*Collection of Oriental Studies*”, 1960, No. 1, p. 291.

⁸⁴ See **Osman Gümüüşçü**, *The Ottoman tahrir defters as a source for Historical Geography*, *Belleten, Türk Tarih Kurumu*, Ankara, Aralık 2008, Cilt 72, p. 911.

⁸⁵ *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi*, Gence-Karabağ Eyaleti'nin İcmal Defteri, Tapu-Tahrir Defteri (TT. d.), No. 699.

into smaller administrative units, namely *nahiyes* (groups of villages). The largest of the sanjaks was Gandzak, which was divided into the *kazas* (sub-districts) of Gandzak and Barda. Together, these comprised twenty-five *nahiyes*; Khachen had five *nahiyes*, Gargar three, Aghstabad six, Varanda one, while Dizak and Hakari each had four *nahiyes*. Within the Gandzak *kaza*, Tavush is also mentioned as a separate *nahiye*. The tax register likewise contains information on various nomadic tribes settled in the region and the territories they occupied.

b) The Tavush District during the Years of the Shah Abbas Forced Deportations

Unwilling to come to terms with the extensive territorial losses, Shah Abbas undertook measures aimed at recovering what had been lost. Soon thereafter, the Jelali rebellions broke out within the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁶ Having strengthened his army, Shah Abbas, taking advantage of the favourable circumstances, launched military operations in 1603. During the summer, the Qizilbash forces captured Tabriz, followed by Nakhijevan, and on 28 May 1604 they took possession of the fortress of Yerevan.⁸⁷

Developments unfolded differently in north-eastern Armenia. Prior to the capture of the Yerevan fortress, Shah Abbas dispatched a military detachment to north-eastern Armenia under the command of one of his commanders, Amir Guna Khan. The latter was to weaken

⁸⁶ See **Zulalyan M.**, *The Movement of the Jalalis and the Condition of the Armenian People in the Ottoman Empire*, Yerevan, 1966, p. 45.

⁸⁷ **Zulalyan M.**, *Armenia during the Turkic-Persian Wars*, History of Armenia, vol. II, book II, Yerevan, 2014, p. 60.

the garrison of Gandzak through offensive operations, so as to prevent it from launching a surprise attack against the main Persian forces advancing towards Yerevan. The shah's instructions were carried out with precision. For two months, Amir Guna Khan ravaged Gandzak and its environs, inflicting heavy losses on the Ottoman troops and the local population: *"And he went and came to Ganja for two months, and when he learned that the Ottomans were weak and unable to take it, then he gave the land of Gandzak – wherever he could reach, to fire and the sword, slaughtered some, devastated others, and carried off captives with their kins and families, bringing them to Yerevan for the enrichment and luxury of the Persian army"*.⁸⁸ It is evident that this campaign placed the population of Gandzak and the neighbouring districts in a dire situation. Since the Ottoman garrison had taken refuge in the fortress of Gandzak, the Armenian settlements of the region suffered most severely.⁸⁹ Mikayel Malkhasyan suggests that the local population may have attempted resistance in the direction of Gandzak, as a result of which the Persian forces carried out partial massacres in these areas.⁹⁰

There are no data concerning the number of captives. However, the information provided by Arakel Davrizhetsi, and in particular his reference to the fate of the captives in the phrase *"in abundance and for the enrichment and luxury of the Persian army"* suggests that the events in question cannot be regarded as a systematic forced deportation. The Persian army took the population captive with the aim of subsequently selling or employing them in various forms of hard

⁸⁸ **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, p. 70.

⁸⁹ **Ibid.**

⁹⁰ **Malkhasyan M.**, *The Trends and Features of the Demographic Processes in Armenia in the First Half of the 17th Century*, "Armenological Issues", 1 (7), 2016, p. 52.

labour. From Davrizheti's account, it may also be inferred that women constituted a significant proportion of the captives.

After the capture of the Yerevan fortress, the Persian forces advanced towards Kars; however, upon reaching Shirakavan, they received news that the Ottoman forces under the command of Jelaloğlu Sinan Pasha were already in the city of Erzurum.⁹¹ To avoid a battle, Shah Abbas ordered a retreat via Yerevan towards Tabriz, the burning of grain reserves, and the deportation of the population to the rear. The possible route of the Ottoman military advance was devastated and laid waste, while the population was driven into the Ararat plain and subsequently towards Iran.

Arakel Davrizhetsi left no reference to the captivity and forced deportation of the population from Tavush, while those displaced from north-eastern Armenia were precisely the captives whom Amir Guna Khan had brought to the military camp already during the siege of Yerevan. It is likely that they had been taken captive from the Armenian settlements in the vicinity of Ganja. According to Arakel Davrizhetsi, this population had been transferred to Persia even before the Great Deportation of 1604.⁹²

The very fact of displacement and the references to it already indicate that these people constituted a certain number. Nevertheless, it may be argued that Tavush, as well as north-eastern Armenia as a whole, largely remained unaffected by deportation. In a colophon written in 1614, the scribe, in addition to the districts listed by Arakel Davrizhetsi, also mentions other regions. In particular, according to him, the inhabitants of Shaki, Shirvan, and Gandzak were likewise

⁹¹ **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, p. 77.

⁹² See **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, pp. 75–76.

deported in 1604.⁹³ We consider this information to be of limited reliability, since in a significant part of the listed settlements Qizilbash forces had not yet been present in 1604. Moreover, the colophon was written in Van, whereas the manuscript colophons from the years relevant to the period under consideration present a different picture. Our view is also supported by the fact that a considerable number of khachkars (cross-stones) and tombstone inscriptions dating from the late 16th century and the second half of the first decade of the 17th century have been preserved in various settlements of the Tavush district. For instance, in the old cemeteries located within the territory of the consolidated community of Berd in Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia, tombstones dating to the early 17th century may be found. This constitutes yet another important indication that north-eastern Armenia largely remained free from the forced displacement of the population. It should also be noted that in various land tracts of the community there are numerous abandoned village sites, as well as the ruins of churches and chapels, dating to the period following the Shah Abbas-era forced deportations.

Although Amir Guna Khan initially raided the environs of Gandzak, the capture of Gandzak itself was not part of the Qizilbash plans as long as the fortress of Yerevan had not yet fallen. When the Persian forces began to retreat, the Ottomans who had taken refuge in Gandzak gained freedom of action. Having long been cut off from any supplies, they began to plunder the surrounding areas. Settlements that had escaped deportation were subjected to looting by the Ottoman garrison. This reality is reflected in a colophon of a manuscript written in 1604. A priest named Hakob, describing the devastation caused by

⁹³ *Catalogue of Manuscripts Published in the Periodical "Handes Amsorya"*, edited by **H. Voskian**, Vienna, 1976, p. 114.

the Turks, notes: *"I, the sinful [Akob], the elder, wrote this book in bitter and grievous times, when Shah Abbas went to Khorasan and laid waste the Armenian lands from Arzrum (i.e., Erzurum) to Shirvan. The Ottomans twice went into the land of Gegham, taking many captives, among priests and deacons, Gospels and books. They took them to the city of Gandzak and sold sons to fathers, wives to husbands – some for 100 marchils, some for 50, more or less".*⁹⁴

Hence, the Turkish forces did not confine themselves to the vicinity of Gandzak but reached the land of Gegham as well. The expanded geography of the Ottoman garrison's plundering may suggest that, as a result of Amir Guna Khan's campaign, the areas around Gandzak had already been looted and devastated; consequently, the Ottoman troops penetrated the comparatively less affected Sevan basin. Hakob priest's account is corroborated by Bishop Davit in the colophon of a Gospel he copied in 1606. He writes: *"When the shah departed from the land of Armenians, the merciless Ottoman nation was unleashed upon those remaining in the land of Gegham, whom the Persians had been unable to carry away..."*⁹⁵

Thus, the districts stretching from Gandzak to the Sevan basin, which had not been subjected to deportation, suffered heavy losses from the plundering of Turkish forces.

Upon entering Eastern Armenia, Sinan Pasha encountered deserted and devastated settlements. Realising that further advance was dangerous and that there was a threat of being completely cut off from his rear, he retreated to Van to winter there.⁹⁶ The following

⁹⁴ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, p. 134.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁹⁶ **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, p. 89.

year, Sinan Pasha's initiatives met with no success. The decisive battle between the warring sides took place not far from Tabriz, near the village of Sofian, where the Ottoman forces were crushed.⁹⁷ Sinan Pasha fled to Amid, where he soon died.⁹⁸

After Sinan Pasha's defeat, in the spring of 1606 Shah Abbas set about the conquest of north-eastern Armenia. The Qizilbash forces occupied most of the region and laid siege to the fortress of Gandzak. Eventually, the fortress was captured, and its Turkish garrison of 2,500 surrendered. Leaving a large Qizilbash force in place, Shah Abbas once again entrusted Gandzak to the Qajar Ziyadoğlu tribe.⁹⁹

It is noteworthy that, unlike the previous campaign, the Persian troops on this occasion adopted a more lenient attitude toward the population. The shah himself ordered the army not to resort to persecution: "...*having issued a command to his troops not to harass anyone and not to oppress the inhabitants of the land*".¹⁰⁰ Moreover,

⁹⁷ **Najaryan H.**, *The Turko-Iranian War of the Early 17th Century and the Deportation of Armenians*, p. 63.

⁹⁸ **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, p. 103.

⁹⁹ The Qajar tribe constituted one of the prominent Qizilbash confederations. During the reign of Tahmasp I (1524–1576), a branch of the tribe established itself in Gandzak and its environs. Leaders of the Ziyadoğlu branch of the Qajars held, by hereditary right, the office of Beylerbey of Gandzak–Karabakh. Following the Ottoman occupation of the region, this branch, wielding considerable military and political strength and unwilling to acquiesce to the loss of their territories, undertook measures to reclaim Gandzak. While Shah Abbas, newly ascended to the throne, was engaged in negotiations with the Ottoman Empire, Muhammad Khan Ziyadoğlu laid siege to Gandzak. In response to Ottoman protests, Shah Abbas was compelled to instruct Muhammad Khan to lift the siege. By consolidating their presence more firmly in the region, this branch of the Qajars maintained control over Gandzak and its surroundings, with only intermittent interruptions, until 1804. See **Altman M.**, *Historical Essay on the City of Ganja*, part 1, Baku, 1949, pp. 44–46, cf. **Petrushevsky I.**, *op. cit.*, pp. 122–124.

¹⁰⁰ **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, p. 112.

as noted above, the Ottoman forces had inflicted severe hardships on the surrounding settlements, and due to heavy taxation the population had found itself in intolerable conditions. Therefore, it was not accidental that in many places Shah Abbas received assistance from the local Armenian elders.¹⁰¹ In certain regions, Armenian meliks possessed specific domains and, during Shah Abbas's campaigns, by rendering various services to him, managed to preserve their rights. The local population was largely not deported into the depths of Persia. Intending subsequently to campaign against Georgia and Shirvan, the shah was probably disinclined to devastate the routes of his future military movements. Having taken control of Gandzak, he proceeded to Georgia and entered Tiflis without encountering resistance: *"for there was unity between the Persians and the Georgians"*.¹⁰² Upon completing his campaign, the shah returned to Tabriz via Gegharkunik. Thus, in 1606 Tavush and the entirety of north-eastern Armenia once again passed under Safavid control. The Ganja-Karabakh beylerbeylik was restored, and its administrative center, the city of Gandzak, was rebuilt and fortified.

Several years of military operations left a negative impact on Tavush and the adjacent districts. Proximity to Georgia also had a significant influence on the region. Recurrent anti-Iranian uprisings in Kartli and Kakheti frequently disrupted normal life in the area, leading to captivity, destruction, and plundering.

¹⁰¹ Melik Shahnazar of Gegharkunik, noted for his valour in engagements against the Ottoman forces, succeeded in safeguarding the inhabitants of his domain from Turkish captivity and massacres. Shah Abbas personally honoured the melik by visiting his residence and presenting him with gifts. For further details, see *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1621–1640)*, vol. II, p. 219.

¹⁰² **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, p. 114.

In this regard, particular mention should be made of the powerful uprising that erupted in Georgia in 1625 under the leadership of Giorgi Saakadze.¹⁰³ The scale and initial success of the rebellion are attested by the fact¹⁰⁴ that at least three prominent Persian commanders were killed by the Georgians.¹⁰⁵ The rebels began driving Persian forces out of their country and pursuing them, after which military operations continued in north-eastern Armenia. Giorgi Saakadze ravaged Gandzak and the surrounding villages and then advanced toward Barda.¹⁰⁶ Taken by surprise and scattered, the Persian forces were unable to offer serious resistance. The Georgian rebel troops, while pursuing and harassing the Safavid forces and the tribes loyal to them, indiscriminately massacred and enslaved the Armenian population as well, and set Armenian settlements ablaze.¹⁰⁷

This is attested in the colophon of an Armenian manuscript: *“I wrote it in the year when the people of Georgia, [whose leader] was called Movrav¹⁰⁸ by name, for the sake of our sins, arrived with a numerous cavalry force at Gandzak, which is now called Ganja. And no one among that people was Qizilbash, for when they learned of the*

¹⁰³ **Ibid.**, p. 481.

¹⁰⁴ *Turkish Sources on Armenia, the Armenians, and Other Peoples of the South Caucasus*, vol. I, p. 59. See *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1621–1640)*, vol. II, p. 186, cf. **Samuel Anetsi and Continuators**, *The Chronicle*, prepared by **K. Matevosyan**, Yerevan, 2014, p. 331.

¹⁰⁵ Amir Guna Khan, the prominent beylerbey and military commander of Yerevan, hastened to provide assistance in order to suppress this uprising; however, he soon succumbed to the wounds he had sustained in battle.

¹⁰⁶ *Turkish Sources on Armenia, the Armenians, and Other Peoples of the South Caucasus*, vol. I, p. 91.

¹⁰⁷ See *Minor Chronicles, XIII–XVIII centuries*, vol. I, compiled by **V. Hakobyan**, Yerevan, 1951, pp. 145, 146.

¹⁰⁸ Giorgi Saakadze is mentioned in contemporary Armenian, Georgian, and Turkish sources under the forms “Movrav” and “Maghrav”.

*Georgians' arrival, they fled like fugitives from them. And the lawless people of Georgia attacked our Armenian people, together with Getashen, as far as Parsum, and a whole day took captives in the fields and on the mountains, Armenians and Turks (i.e., Qizilbashs) together. // And by the hand of those who fell upon them, some they killed, some they wounded, and many they carried off into captivity – countless in number, laying great devastation upon my land".*¹⁰⁹

Since the route of the rebels advancing toward Gandzak and Barda passed also through the lowland areas of Tavush and Zakam, the aftermath and severity of these military operations were undoubtedly felt by the inhabitants of these territories as well.

Despite the initial successes of the rebels, the Persians ultimately managed to suppress the uprising.¹¹⁰ Safavid authority was re-established in the region. However, several years later, in 1629, Teimuraz I (1605–1648), king of Kakheti, launched a large-scale plundering campaign into the Ganja–Karabakh beylerbeylik. According to the Georgian historian Vakhushti, Teimuraz devastated and depopulated the territories beyond the Araxes, including Barda, Karabakh, Qazakh, and Shamshadin.¹¹¹ The Catholicos of Gandzasar, who met him in Gandzak, urged him to cease the seizure and plundering of Armenians and to advance toward Persia. In that case, the Catholicos also promised to provide auxiliary forces from the Armenian meliks of Karabakh. However, these appeals produced no

¹⁰⁹ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1621–1640)*, vol. II, p. 206.

¹¹⁰ **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. II, p. 1250.

¹¹¹ See **Bagrationi V.**, *op. cit.*, p. 86, cf. **Melikset-Bek L.**, *Georgian Sources on Armenia and the Armenians*, vol. III (18th–19th centuries), Yerevan, 1955, p. 68.

effect. Instead, Teimuraz also took the Catholicos captive, bringing him along with his army to Gori.¹¹²

Thus, it can be concluded that, as a result of Amir Guna Khan's reconnaissance campaign, a portion of the Armenian population from the vicinity of Gandzak in north-eastern Armenia was captured and deported. Although Tavush bore the burden of military operations, it largely escaped systematic forced deportation. Nevertheless, some scholars include Tavush among the districts subjected to Shah Abbas's forced relocations,¹¹³ a claim not corroborated by source material. These reports are mostly orally transmitted accounts from later periods, according to which the depopulation of a particular settlement is traditionally attributed to Shah Abbas's deportation policies.¹¹⁴

That Tavush remained unaffected by displacement is also suggested by the fact that, in the years following Shah Abbas's forced deportation, a number of Tavush settlements are repeatedly attested in the colophons of Armenian manuscripts. Thus, Berd is mentioned in 1608, Chinchin in 1619, and in subsequent years the village of Tavush, among others. The fairly long lists of names of scribes or of the

¹¹² **Leo**, *History of Armenia*, vol. III, book II, Yerevan, 1973, p. 15, cf. **Melikset-Bek L.**, *Georgian Sources on Armenia and the Armenians*, vol. II, Yerevan, 1936, p. 112. Leo and Melikset-Bek, drawing this information from the 17th-century Georgian author Parsadan Gorgijanidze, do not mention the name of the patriarch. It is known, however, that between 1606 and 1634 the Catholicos throne of Caucasian Albania (Gandzasar) was occupied by Hovhannes. See *The Persian Documents of the Matenadaran: Firmans*, fascicle II (1601–1650), compiled by **Papazyan H.**, Yerevan, 1959, pp. 84, 110. See **Maghalyan A.**, *Chronological Table of Catholicoses of Aghvank (Gandzasar)*, “HPHJ”, 2008, № 3, p. 270.

¹¹³ See *National Atlas of Armenia*, vol. II, Yerevan, 2008 p. 51, cf. *Atlas of Armenian History* (Part I), Yerevan, 2005, 2006, p. 89, also: **Ter-Grigoryan A.**, *Tavush (Shamshadin)*, Yerevan, 2013 p. 61.

¹¹⁴ **Barkhutariants**, p. 329. See **Gharakhanyan G.**, *Chinari at the Beginning of the New Millennium*, Yerevan, 2005, p. 13.

relatives and family members of patrons recorded in these colophons once again serve to substantiate our claim that forced deportation did not take place from these particular villages.¹¹⁵

Owing to their proximity to the Georgian kingdoms, Tavush and the adjacent regions regularly suffered from the periodically intensifying Georgian–Iranian relations. Lying along the routes of the Georgian and Qizilbash forces fighting one another, local settlements suffered equally from the devastation inflicted by both armies. In certain respects, the Georgian–Iranian conflict also accounts for the fact that Turkic tribes, who had settled in the region already in the previous century and were patronised by Shah Abbas, gradually began to emerge as an important factor in the area. Fearing Georgian unrest, Shah Abbas sought to further strengthen the authority of Turkic tribes along the Armenian–Georgian frontier.¹¹⁶ As a result of these developments, the regions encompassing the lower courses of the Tavush, Aghstev, Zakam, and Varagajur (Hakhum) rivers witnessed a gradual increase in the Muslim Turkic-speaking population between the 16th and 18th centuries.

c) The Settlement of Foreign Ethnic Elements in North-Eastern Armenia

The Safavid state, a patchwork of major and minor tribes, had a distinctive system of governance. In particular, the most important court offices were occupied by the leaders of the most influential Qizilbash

¹¹⁵ See *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, p. 284, pp. 688–689.

¹¹⁶ **Zulalyan M.**, *The Turkish–Persian Wars on the Territory of Armenia and Their Consequences (1500–1555)*, “Bulletin of Social Sciences”, 1959, no. 3, pp. 47–48.

tribes. The administration of provinces and districts was entrusted to tribal leaders of comparatively lesser influence, in accordance with the boundaries and revenue potential of the given territories. As a rule, these lands were granted to them as hereditary domains called *olka*.¹¹⁷

Within this framework, a number of tribal leaders received *olka* grants from the Safavids in the territory of Armenia and settled there together with their tribes.¹¹⁸ As a consequence, the demographic composition of these regions began to change.¹¹⁹ Occupying more favorable areas and enjoying privileged conditions, these tribes gradually consolidated their position and increased in number. As a result, the indigenous Armenian population increasingly concentrated in locations that were advantageous from a defensive standpoint but less suitable for economic activity.

¹¹⁷ *Olka*, derived from Old Turkic, literally means “land” or “country”. It referred to a type of landed domain granted as a fief to the leaders of nomadic tribes and to high-ranking military officials. See *The Persian Documents of the Matenadaran: Firmans*, fascicle I (15th–16th centuries), compiled by **Papazyan H.**, Yerevan, 1956 p. 123. As a general pattern, Qizilbash tribal leaders largely avoided service at the royal court, instead striving by all means to secure hereditary domains in which they exercised de facto control over all affairs and derived substantially greater revenues. See **Papazyan H.**, *State and Court Lands and the Administration of Their Revenues in Eastern Armenia in the 16th–17th Centuries*, “Herald of Yerevan University”, no. 2, Yerevan, 1967, p. 97.

¹¹⁸ **Papazyan H.**, *Social and economic relations in Eastern Armenia in the 16th–18th centuries, Articles*, vol. I, p. 379.

¹¹⁹ V. Ivanenko notes that these tribes, whose number reached 35,000, were settled along the border with Georgia by the Safavid rulers to prevent potential anti-Iranian uprisings in Kartli and Kakheti; see **Ivanenko V. N.**, *Civil Administration of the Transcaucasus from the Annexation of Georgia to the Governorship of Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolayevich: A Historical Essay*, Tiflis, 1901, p. 26.

Despite the fact that during the reign of Shah Abbas measures were undertaken to curb the influence of tribal leaders,¹²⁰ those settled in the peripheral regions of the realm nevertheless retained their influential positions. In some cases, their centrifugal tendencies often led to their being granted domains in the borderlands of the state, which enabled the Safavid authorities to keep them at a distance from the royal court.

The administration of the Ganja–Karabakh beylerbeylik of the Safavid Empire had already been entrusted by Shah Tahmasp I (1524–1576) to the Ziyadoğlu branch of the prominent Qajar Qizilbash tribe.¹²¹ The districts within the beylerbeylik were granted as *olkā* to the leaders of smaller tribes, who were subordinate to the Qajar beylerbeys. These officials were known as *hakims* and bore the title of *sultan*. The administrators of smaller administrative units, groups of villages, who came from lower social strata, were called *nāyib* or *mirboluk* and held the title of *bey (beg)*.¹²²

During the Safavid period, the territories encompassing the lower course of the Aghstev River were granted as *olkā* to the Qazakhlu tribe. As noted above, under Ottoman rule the leader of the Qazakhlu, Nazar Sultan Qazakhlu, accepted Ottoman suzerainty and was awarded the title of pasha. One of his sons, Muhammad Khan Qazakhlu, received Lori from the Ottomans and remained loyal to them until the capture of Gandzak by Iranian forces. Subsequently, perceiving the imminent threat and anticipating the harsh reprisals of Shah Abbas, he presented himself before the shah and was granted a pardon. Nevertheless, Muhammad Qazakhlu did not thereafter

¹²⁰ R. Matthee, *Relations between the center and the periphery in Safavid Iran*, *The Historian*, vol. 77, № 3, p. 440.

¹²¹ See Petrushevsky I., *op. cit.*, p. 122.

¹²² Papazyan H., *Articles*, vol. I, p. 382.

distinguish himself by loyalty to the Safavids. Ultimately, he met his death at the hands of Georgian nobles.

In discussing the circumstances of his assassination, Monshi provides noteworthy details. According to his account, Muhammad Qazakhlu, being thoroughly familiar with the surrounding regions, had actively assisted the Ottomans in the conquest and devastation of Georgia. Moreover, together with members of his tribe, he repeatedly carried out raids into Georgian territory, taking women and children captive.¹²³

Following the killing of Muhammad Khan Qazakhlu, his brother Mustafa likewise failed to demonstrate loyalty to the Safavid state. With the approval of Shah Abbas, this leader of the Qazakhlu was executed in Shamkor by Deli Muhammad Shamsaddinlu.¹²⁴ In describing the betrayals of this tribe and its leaders, Monshi makes no attempt to conceal his hostility, repeatedly emphasising their apostasy and treachery.

Taking into account the persistent disloyalty of the Qazakhlu as well as the strategic importance of the territories under their control, Shah Abbas appointed as the new leader of the tribe Shamsi Khan Qazakhlu, who had remained loyal to him.¹²⁵ The shah subsequently ordered him to relocate with his tribe to the province of Fars in Iran. Monshi's later narrative, however, makes it clear that this decision was

¹²³ **Eskandar beg Monshi**, vol II, p. 1066.

¹²⁴ **Ibid.**, p. 1097.

¹²⁵ The latter had also cooperated with the Turks, but during Shah Abbas's campaign to Yerevan, he presented himself to the shah and, in addition to receiving pardon, was awarded the title of khan. Unlike other leaders of his tribe, Shamsi Khan Qazakhlu remained loyal to the Safavids and also took part in the conquest of Shirvan. See **Eskandar beg Monshi**, vol. II, pp. 862, 839.

subsequently reconsidered. Indeed, Shamsi Khan Qazakhlu soon thereafter also received the strategically vital fortress of Akhaltsikhe.¹²⁶

Thus, notwithstanding the Qazakhlu tribe's recurrent acts of betrayal, they retained control over the lower valley of the Aghstev River, progressively extending the boundaries of their holdings. Established in the immediate vicinity of Tavush, this tribe, whose members regularly conducted raiding expeditions into Georgia and carried off its inhabitants into captivity, can hardly be assumed to have spared the comparatively less defensible Armenian districts. In the ensuing period, the lower Aghstev valley gradually became known by the name of this tribe, Qazakh.¹²⁷

The Qizilbash Zu'l-Qadar¹²⁸ tribal confederation, together with its Shamshaddinlu sub-branch, had already been settled in the basin of the Zakam River¹²⁹ during the reign of Shah Ismail I (1502–1524), initially occupying its lower reaches. The Zu'l-Qadars were among the most prominent and powerful tribes of Safavid Iran and, in addition to the Shamshaddinlus, comprised numerous smaller subgroups. Originally relocated from Asia Minor,¹³⁰ this tribe became firmly established in north-eastern Armenia under Safavid rule.¹³¹ Following the example of the Qazakhlu, the leaders of the Shamshaddinlu likewise submitted to

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1284.

¹²⁷ This is also reported by the French traveler Jean Chardin, who passed through these areas in the second half of the 17th century. **Chardin J.**, *Chardin's Travels in Transcaucasia in 1672–1673*, Tiflis, 1902, pp. 237–238.

¹²⁸ See **Zulalyan M.**, *The Turkish–Persian Wars on the Territory of Armenia and Their Consequences (1555–1595)*, "Bulletin of Social Sciences", 1961, no. 3, p. 47.

¹²⁹ See **Petrushevsky I.**, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹³⁰ Centuries later, Zulkadarov Bek, one of the representatives of this tribe, presented Makar Barkhudaryants with a fairly detailed account of the migration route of his ancestors; see **Barkhutariants**, p. 189.

¹³¹ **Bakikhanov A.**, *Gulistan-i Iram*, Baku, 1991, pp. 48–49.

Ottoman authority during the Turkish campaign of 1590, while remaining in possession of their domains.¹³² Their act of defection similarly went unpunished, as Shah Abbas refrained from taking reprisals against them.¹³³

Moreover, one of the Shamshaddinlu tribal leaders, Ali Khan Sultan, in addition to his holdings in the districts of Tavush and Zakam, received further *olkā* grants from Shah Abbas in Shirvan.¹³⁴ After the Safavid forces captured the fortress of Akhaltsikhe from the Ottomans, Ali Khan Sultan's successor, Selim Khan Shamshaddinlu, likewise assumed control of that stronghold.¹³⁵

The territory occupied by the Shamshaddinlu initially corresponded to the lands west of Gandzak, primarily the regions stretching from Tavush toward Shamkor;¹³⁶ subsequently, they appear in the lower courses of the Aghstev and Varagajur rivers.

The name of Ali Khan Sultan has been preserved in the colophon of a manuscript copied in the village of Mets (Great) Gharamurat in the district of Zakam. The colophon states: *"This book was written by the hand of the sinful and ignorant scribe David, falsely named bishop, and the unworthy elder Hovasap in the Armenian year 1059 (1610), in*

¹³² **Eskandar beg Monshi**, vol II, p. 593.

¹³³ **Ibid.**, p. 839.

¹³⁴ See **Petrushevsky I.**, *op. cit.*, p. 135. The tribes relocated to north-eastern Armenia have been discussed by Arshaluis Gyurjinyan. The author, however, distinguishes between the Zu'l-Qadar and Shamshaddinlu tribes (**Gyurjinyan A.**, *Shamshadin (Tavush): Historical-Geographical and Educational-Enlightening Overview*, Yerevan, 1989, p. 11), whereas the latter is in fact a branch of the Zu'l-Qadar tribe. Referring to the size of these tribes, Israel Changlyan, without citing a source, wrote that their number reached 350,000, a figure that is undoubtedly greatly exaggerated (see **Changlyan I.**, *Shamshadin*, Yerevan, 2011, p. 64).

¹³⁵ See **Petrushevsky I.**, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

¹³⁶ See *Gəncə-Qarabağ əyalətinin icmal dəftəri*, p. 10.

*the land of Zakam, in the village of Gharamurat, during the catholicosate of Ter Hovhannes and the episcopacy of Ter Melkiset, who was the spiritual and bodily lord of this land, and of Ter Grigor, in the reign of Shah Abbas and under the khanate of the lord of this land, Ali Khan Sultan, in bitter and grievous times which cannot be set down in writing...".*¹³⁷ From this testimony it is clear that Zakam lay under the authority of Ali Khan Sultan. Since Tavush is frequently mentioned during this period as forming part of Zakam, it may be reasonably inferred that Tavush likewise fell within the bounds of his domain.

Occupying districts of north-eastern Armenia of considerable strategic importance for the Safavids, the Qazakhlu and Shamshaddinlu tribes were, to a certain extent, also rivals. It is therefore hardly coincidental that Mustafa Qazakhlu was killed precisely at the hands of the Shamshaddinlu tribal leader Deli Muhammad Shamshaddinlu.¹³⁸ During this period, the Shamshaddinlu succeeded in consolidating greater influence. One of their leaders, Salim Khan Shamshaddinlu, held control over the fortresses of Lori and Akhaltsikhe.¹³⁹ Later, however, this chieftain did not prove himself, and Akhaltsikhe once again came under the representative of the Qazakhlu.¹⁴⁰

Aiming to subjugate Georgia, Shah Abbas not only refrained from punishing these chieftains for their previous cooperation with the Ottomans but also granted them more extensive territories. Although

¹³⁷ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, p. 363.

¹³⁸ This tribal leader also served as governor in Tiflis for a certain period; see **Eskandar beg Monshi**, vol II, p. 910.

¹³⁹ **Ibid.**, p. 1229.

¹⁴⁰ **Ibid.**, p. 1284.

they were formally subordinate to the beylerbey of Gandzak, their domains and authority were hereditary.¹⁴¹ The favorable conditions created for these nomadic tribes led to the predominantly lowland areas of the region being settled by a Muslim population. Occupying the low-lying areas along the Kura River, they would move during the summer months to the Miapor Mountains in order to make use of the local pastures. The routes taken by these tribes in their ascent to Miapor passed through Armenian-inhabited regions. Armenian settlements located along the paths of the nomads' flocks, herds, and their leaders suffered significant damage. It should be noted that even up to the early years of the Soviet period, nomadic migrations remained a significant issue. Due to these movements, the sedentary population suffered substantial losses of land and crops, frequently giving rise to conflicts and clashes between farmers and nomads.

The tribal leaders established in north-eastern Armenia were officially subordinate to the beylerbey in Ganja; however, as governors of the peripheries of their domains, they wielded virtually unlimited local authority. Accustomed to a nomadic way of life and possessing territories in multiple regions, these tribes would abandon dangerous areas during military campaigns, waiting for conditions to stabilise. As a result, the local Armenian population bore the brunt of taxes and the burdens of war, finding themselves in a precarious situation. Over time, these nomadic, seasonally pastoral tribes, by occupying more fertile lands, began to show tendencies toward sedentary settlement.

Moreover, the arrival of these tribes gradually altered the Armenian toponyms of the region. Under the influence of Turkic speech, the archaic Armenian toponyms underwent phonetic

¹⁴¹ See **Petrushevsky I.**, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

Turkicisation. These toponyms were subjected to literal translation, or were progressively replaced by newly formed Turkic toponyms, many of which later became more deeply rooted.¹⁴² In accordance with this logic, most of the Aghstev River basin came to be known as Qazakh, while the basins of the Tavush and Zakhm rivers became known as Shamshadin.

d) The Identification of the Tavush–Shamshadin Toponyms

As noted above, Tavush and the adjacent regions, passed as a hereditary domain into the possession of the chieftain of the Shamsaddinlu sub-branch of the Zu'l-Qadar tribe. Nevertheless, owing to their nomadic way of life, representatives of this tribe continually changed their areas of residence. The territory occupied by the Shamsaddinlus initially corresponded to the regions lying northwest of Gandzak;¹⁴³ subsequently, they appear in the area of the lower courses of the Aghstev and Varagajur rivers.¹⁴⁴

In addressing the issue of the identification of Tavush and Shamshadin, scholars have regarded the following testimony of Catholicos Yesayi as pivotal: *“And thus, stirred up, year after year, they spread out on raids to this side and that side of the Kura River,*

¹⁴² A striking example of this is the Turkicised forms of “Tavush”, namely “Tayuz”, “Tavuz”, and “Tovuz”.

¹⁴³ See *Gəncə-Qarabağ əyalətinin icmal dəftəri*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁴ In the context of examining a document dating to the early 18th century, George Bournoutian notes that the territory of Shamshadin was inhabited by Armenians and Shamshaddinlis; see *Russia and the Armenians of Transcaucasia, 1797–1889: A documentary record, annotated translation and commentary* by George Bournoutian, Costa Mesa, California, Mazda Publishers, 1997, p. 65.

into the lands of Shaki, Ghabala, and the province of Gasan, even unto the vicinity of the city of Shamakhi. And on this side, to the whole province of Qazakh, which is Akhstev, and to **to the land of Amirsham Shatinlu, which are the Zakams** (emphasis mine – A. Ye.)”.¹⁴⁵

Alishan identified “Amirsham Shatinlu” with Shamshadin.¹⁴⁶ Relying on the aforementioned testimony of Catholicos Yesayi, Petrushevsky concluded that the reference concerns some *amir*, that is, the chieftain of the Shamsaddinlu tribe.¹⁴⁷

It may be assumed that we are dealing with a scribal error, and that the correct form should perhaps be emended to “Amir Shamsaddinlu”. In this case, Catholicos Yesayi most likely had in mind the domains (*olkā*) of the amir, the chieftain of the Shamsaddinlus. Although the historian mentions only Verin (Upper) and Nerkin (Lower) Zakam, we are inclined to believe that, in addition to the Zakams, this territory also included the Tavush and Miapor districts. Nevertheless, it is still premature to fully identify Tavush with Shamshadin, since Shamshadin as a toponym begins to be attested only in later periods, from the second half of the 18th century onward.

From the perspective of examining this issue, Georgian primary sources of the 18th century are of particular importance, as they contain references to the toponym Shamshadin (Shamshadili). However, the localisation of Shamshadin as indicated in Georgian

¹⁴⁵ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 51.

¹⁴⁶ See **Alishan Gh.**, *Topography of Armenia, Uti*, “Bazmavep”, Venice-St. Lazarus, 1990, nos. 3–4, p. 353.

¹⁴⁷ See **Petrushevsky I.**, *op. cit.*, p. 135, fn. 2.

primary sources clearly demonstrates that these references pertain to regions situated at a considerable distance from Tavush.¹⁴⁸

Our hypothesis is corroborated by data contained in the 1727 “*Extensive Defter of Ganja-Karabakh Eyalet*”. According to the compilers of this document, Shamshadin was located in the vicinity of the Qasamal stream, in the north-eastern part of the Qazakh sanjak.¹⁴⁹ The mention of the toponym Shamshadin in this source, together with its localisation between the lower courses of the Aghstev and Varagajur rivers, makes it evident that at least until 1727 it had not yet been transferred to Tavush. Thus, we may state with confidence that in the 1727 tax register the toponym Shamshadin is not used in reference to Tavush. Moreover, the Ottoman official document preserves the district’s ancient name – Tavush–Tavus. The latter appears in the tax register as a distinct group of villages and corresponds to the entire basin of the Tavush River, that is, to a significant part of the Tavush canton as defined in the *Ashkharhatsuyts*.

Bringing together the foregoing observations, it may be concluded that the toponym *Shamshadin* derives from the name of the Shamsaddinlu tribe. The Armenian toponym *Tavush* continued to be in use in both Armenian and non-Armenian sources until the end of the first quarter of the 18th century, while during the same period *Shamshadin* referred to a locality situated at a considerable distance

¹⁴⁸ See **Melikset-Bek L.**, vol. II, p. 136, vol. III, pp. 17, 20, 25–26, see **Bagrationi V.**, *History of the Kingdom of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 1976, pp. 96–97. At the same time, Georgian authors, often when describing events of the 17th century, retrospectively use the toponym Shamshadin instead of Zakam and Tavush, even though this name only came into common use in the 18th century.

¹⁴⁹ See *T. C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivleri*, TT_d, sira nu: 903, Tapu Tahrir Defteri, p. 237.

from Tavush. This, in turn, raises the question as to when the district of Tavush began to be designated by the name *Shamshadin*.

In late 1735, at the *qurultai* (assembly of the nobility) convened in the Mughan Plain, the beylerbey of Ganja¹⁵⁰ opposed the coronation of Nadir Shah (1736–1747). This stance taken by the Qajar tribal leader prompted the newly enthroned shah to deprive him of his extensive domains. Nadir Shah carried out a new administrative division, whereby a number of districts of north-eastern Armenia were removed from the authority of the Ganja Qajars and placed under the jurisdiction of Georgia.¹⁵¹ As a result, the Qajar Ziyadoğlu clan of Gandzak retained only the city of Gandzak and its immediate surroundings,¹⁵² while the districts of Tavush and Zakam passed under the authority of the kings of Kartli.

In the years of dynastic struggles and anarchy following the assassination of Nadir Shah, several khanates and smaller semi-independent entities emerged within the territory of the Ganja-Karabakh beylerbeylik. Among these was the entity referred to as the “*Sultanate of Shamshadin*”, which included Tavush, Miapor, and the greater part of the Verin and Nerkin Zakam districts.¹⁵³ From the second half of the 18th century onward, the toponym Shamshadin predominates in the sources; nevertheless, the district name Tavush did

¹⁵⁰ At the *qurultai*, the representative of Gandzak was Uğurlu Khan; see **Abraham Kretatsi**, *History. Critical text*, Russian translation, introduction, and annotations by **Ghorganyan N. K.**, Yerevan, 1973, p. 48.

¹⁵¹ See **Mirza Adigeozal-Bek**, *Karabakhname*, prepared by **A. Maghalyan**, Yerevan, 2016, pp. 36–37.

¹⁵² **Hovhannisyan A.**, *Episodes from the History of Armenian Liberation Thought*, Book II, Yerevan, 1959, p. 335.

¹⁵³ See *Map of the Caucasus Showing Its Political Situation up to 1801*, Acts Collected by the Caucasian Archaeographic Commission (ACAC), vol. 1, Tiflis, 1866, inset map, p. 818.

not fall into oblivion and remained in use even in the 19th century: “Numerous Armenians from Tavush (Shemshetin) and Qazakh, with all their households, crossed the Kura River and found shelter in Georgia...”¹⁵⁴

On 12 September 1801, together with Georgia, a number of districts of north-eastern Armenia were incorporated into the Russian Empire.¹⁵⁵ The Russian authorities, abolishing this sultanate, created a new administrative unit, the *Shamshadin district (okrug)*. Subsequently, the Elisavetpol Governorate was established,¹⁵⁶ within which the Shamshadin district constituted part of the Qazakh uezd. It encompassed Tavush, Miapor, Verin and Nerkin Zakam, and several adjacent areas.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the toponym Shamshadin acquired official status during the period of Russian rule. Moreover, in the Soviet period the name was transferred to the Berd consolidated community of the Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia, remaining in use until November 1990.

¹⁵⁴ See **Vardan Odznetsi**, *New Political and Ecclesiastical History of the Armenian World, Greater and Lesser*, MM, no. 4331, line 86a. In the cited passage, the author describes the flight of the Armenian population from a number of districts as a result of the campaign of the Persian shah Agha Mohammad at the end of the 18th century.

¹⁵⁵ **Diloyan V., Sarukhanyan N.**, *The Beginning of the Process of Northeast Armenia's Incorporation into Russia*, History of Armenia, vol. III, book I, Yerevan, 2010, p. 188.

¹⁵⁶ *Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire*, vol. XLII, part 2 p., 383, (45259) <https://runivers.ru/bookreader/book9950/#page/384/mode/1up>, retrieved on 10/09/2023.

¹⁵⁷ In a manuscript written in 1837–1844, we read: “*Division of the district (gavar) of Shamshadin: 1. Gharaghaya, that is Ghrghi, 2. Turgianlar, 3. Nerkin Zeagam, 4. Yal mahal, 5. Krzen, 6. Akhnchi, 7. Tavuz, 8. Hasansu*”. Thus, it follows that the Russian authorities incorporated the districts of north-eastern Armenia into a single administrative unit, designating it as Shamshadin; see MM, no. 7501, p. 230.

CHAPTER II

THE TAVUSH DISTRICT WITHIN SAFAVID IRAN (1606–1725)

a) The Conclusion of Military Operations and the Establishment of Long-Term Peace

Although the Perso-Ottoman wars persisted from the beginning of the 17th century, the districts of north-eastern Armenia were for some time spared the direct devastation of the opposing forces, owing to the fact that Mesopotamia constituted the principal theatre of military operations.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the situation deteriorated markedly in 1635, when Ottoman forces captured Yerevan, causing extensive damage to the Ararat plain and the adjacent districts.¹⁵⁹

These circumstances prompted a segment of the local population to seek refuge in comparatively safer areas. Thus, according to the testimony of Zakaria Kanakertsi, a certain degree of population movement toward north-eastern Armenia took place: *“And they departed from their dwellings and were scattered – some to the land of Georgians, others to Aghuank [Caucasian Albania], to Zakam, to Gandzak, to Khachen, to Varanda, and wherever else they were able”*.¹⁶⁰ This evidence allows us to infer that a number of settlements in Tavush were likewise replenished by incoming settlers. As noted

¹⁵⁸ **Newman A.**, *Safavid Iran, rebirth of a Persian Empire*, New York, 2009, pp. 73–75.

¹⁵⁹ **Arakel Davrizhetsi**, p. 260.

¹⁶⁰ **Zakaria Kanakertsi**, p. 95.

above, in Armenian narrative sources the district was frequently, and often in a generalised manner, subsumed under the designation of the Gandzak province. During the period under consideration, several settlements of Tavush are repeatedly attested in the sources as forming part of Zakam.

Negotiations between the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran soon followed, culminating in the conclusion of the Treaty of Kasre Shirin in 1639, by which Eastern Armenia was incorporated into the Safavid state. Unlike earlier agreements, this treaty was distinguished by its longevity. The ensuing period of sustained peace contributed significantly to the recovery of Armenia and to the improvement of its demographic situation, affording a war-ravaged land the opportunity for gradual stabilisation. A contemporary chronicler, reflecting on the peace that followed the armistice, notes in particular: *“For from the year 1639 until the year 1698, in which we now live, there has been peace and tranquillity; for travel from Constantinople to Isfahan proceeds without fear or dread”*.¹⁶¹ During this period, economic life, long disrupted by continuous warfare, likewise began to revive and regain momentum.¹⁶²

b) The Armenian Melikdom of Tavush

The Armenian settlements located in the highland zones of Tavush, which had remained unaffected by the Shah Abbas deportations, constituted a distinct melikdom in the course of the 17th century.

¹⁶¹ **Ibid.**, p. 104.

¹⁶² **Torosyan H.**, *From the History of Agriculture in Eastern Armenia (17th–18th Centuries)*, “Herald of Social Sciences”, 1991, no. 1, p. 112.

It should first be noted that, during the period under consideration, the title *melik* was applied both to the administrators of villages, towns, and boroughs, whose principal function was tax collection,¹⁶³ and to feudal lords holding domains in the mountainous regions of Armenia.¹⁶⁴ For instance, in the understanding of Zakaria Kanakertsi, the *melik* was effectively equivalent to a provincial governor: “*And he appointed provincial governors, that is, meliks*”.¹⁶⁵ The meliks were subordinate either to the royal court or to the beylerbey of the respective province and performed various services; however, in internal affairs, such as tax collection, judicial proceedings, and related matters, they enjoyed full autonomy.¹⁶⁶ Melik authority was hereditary, although it was formally confirmed by shah-issued decrees (*firman*s).¹⁶⁷

During Shah Abbas I's Georgian campaigns of 1606 and 1614, the meliks of Artsakh and the territories surrounding Gandzak provided him with support.¹⁶⁸ Following these campaigns, the shah expressed his gratitude by granting estates and conferring melik status upon those who had distinguished themselves.¹⁶⁹ In addition to members of the hereditary aristocracy, Shah Abbas also promoted individuals of

¹⁶³ **Leo**, vol. III, Book I, p. 81.

¹⁶⁴ **R. Hewsen**, *The Meliks of Eastern Armenia*, Revue des Études Arméniennes IX, Paris, 1972, p. 294.

¹⁶⁵ See **Zakaria Kanakertsi**, p. 64, see also p. 48.

¹⁶⁶ See **Maghalyan A.**, *The Melikdoms of Artsakh and the Melik Houses in the 17th–19th Centuries*, p. 32; *The Melikdoms of Artsakh and the Emergence of the Karabakh Khanate*, “The Problems of the History of Armenia”, no. 10, Yerevan, 2009, p. 88.

¹⁶⁷ **Leo**, vol. III, Book II, p. 17.

¹⁶⁸ **Kostikyan K.**, *The information on account of some issues of 17th century history of Eastern Armenia in the Chronicle of Fazli Beg Isfahani*, p. 38.

¹⁶⁹ See **Raffi**, *The Melikdoms of Khamsa (1600–1827)*, *Collected Works*, vol. 10, Yerevan, 1964, p. 162.

common origin,¹⁷⁰ who lacked distinguished lineage, within the Safavid administrative system.¹⁷¹ Besides Tavush, several melikdoms were formed in the neighbouring districts of Miapor, Zakam, the Aghstev valley, and the environs of Gandzak, where a dense network of Armenian settlements existed.¹⁷² The existence of these melikdoms in north-eastern Armenia was primarily conditioned with the fact that these regions were largely spared from the Shah Abbas deportations of 1604–1606.

Concerning the melikdom that existed in the Tavush district at the beginning of the 17th century, a manuscript colophon records the following: *“In the year 1608, in the village called Berd, in the land called Tayuz, I, Melik Alikhan, together with my consort Khoistrov, purchased this Holy Gospel with our lawful means, in memory of our souls and of the souls of our parents ...”*¹⁷³ It is noteworthy that this colophon was written not long after the Shah Abbas deportations and approximately two years after the region had been conquered by the shah. The reference to a melikdom in Tavush, as well as the mention of the numerous lineage of Melik Alikhan, corroborates our assertion that Tavush did not experience large-scale deportation. The settlement of Berd attested in the colophon corresponds to the present-day town of Berd in Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia.

Indirect evidence concerning the melikdom of Tavush is also found in the building inscription of the church of Berd, which was completely

¹⁷⁰ *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. VI, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 364.

¹⁷¹ **Zakaria Kanakertsi**, p. 51.

¹⁷² See **Yesayan A.**, *The Melikdoms of North-Eastern Armenia in the 17th Century*, “Bulletin of Matenadaran”, 2020, № 29, pp. 388–400.

¹⁷³ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. I, p. 1229.

destroyed in the second half of the 1930s.¹⁷⁴ The inscription was recorded by M. Barkhudaryants¹⁷⁵ and by Kajikyan, a correspondent of the newspaper “*Ardzagank*”. The comparatively more successful decipherment of the church inscription belongs to Kajikyan. There we read: *“In the name of God, I, mghtsi (i.e., pilgrim) Chitakhyants Khoja Sorlis from Tiflis, built this church by the hand of Bishop Hovhannes of Khoranashat and with the allowance of Melik Ghorkhmaz of the land of Tavuz, in memory of my soul and of the souls of my parents Taghin bek Sultan and my consort Darejan, and of my sons Stepanos and his consort Aslezat, Harutyun and his consort Peki Khatun, the deacon Poghos, and of my daughters, the penitent Anna and Hripsime, Shahrupan and her daughter Ketevan, my son-in-law Melkon and his daughter, the consort of Peki Sultan”.*¹⁷⁶

The non-Armenian character of the melik’s name led Makar Barkhudaryants to assume that *Ghorkhmaz* was not his baptismal name but a sobriquet (meaning “fearless” or “brave”). Taking into account the fact that in the 17th century *Ghorkhmaz* was also used among Armenians as a personal name,¹⁷⁷ we cannot share Barkhudaryants’s assumption.

¹⁷⁴ This church bore the name of Saint Gregory and, during the Soviet period, initially functioned as a warehouse and subsequently as a hall. Thereafter, the authorities chose to demolish it completely. It was located in the vicinity of the present-day police building of the town of Berd. The existence of inscriptions inside the church was also known to Karo Ghafadaryan, who visited the Berd region with an expedition in 1935. However, he was unable to read the inscriptions: *“The large church of the village of Berd likewise has inscriptions, but the church has been converted into a warehouse and is filled with wheat; therefore, it was not possible to read the inscriptions that were inside”*. See **Ghafadaryan K.**, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

¹⁷⁵ **Barkhutariants**, p. 329.

¹⁷⁶ **“Ardzagank”**, 1888, no. 7, p. 88.

¹⁷⁷ **Acharyan H.**, *Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names*, vol. III, index 1, Yerevan, 1946, p. 146. See also *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th*

Without, for the moment, addressing the question of the date of the undated inscription, let us attempt to clarify the approximate boundaries of the melikdom of the “*land of Tavuz*”. The “*land of Tavuz*” mentioned in the above inscription represents a phonetic variant of the toponym *Tavush*. The toponyms “*in the land of Tavush*” and “*in the land of Tayush*”, attested in the colophons of manuscripts known from Tavush dating to that period, were among the written forms of the name Tavush in circulation at the time.¹⁷⁸

Melik Ghorkhmaz is also mentioned in an early 18th-century colophon appended to a Gospel copied by the priest Avetis in the village of Kamal in Tavush. There we read in particular: “*I, Avak, Hovhan, Nazlukhan, Khoistrov, I, Shiraz, I, Hurum, gave a deed to Lord Sargis. God is witness, we, the tchamiat (i.e., community) of Navur, are witnesses, that [it concerns] the house and property, land and mahle, and the deed. I, Melikghurkhmaz, am a witness; I, Ata, am a witness; I, Mayil, am a witness; Arutin is a witness; Napi is a witness ...*”.¹⁷⁹

Century (1641–1660), vol. III, p. 868; see *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1621–1640)*, vol. II, p. 221; see “**Ararat**”, 1910, no. 3, p. 231; see *Colophon of the Monastery of Sanahin (The Keotuk Sanahin)*, edited by P. Muradyan, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2007, pp. 136, 151, 144.

¹⁷⁸ Addressing popular etymology, H. Acharyan notes: “*There is a kind of resemblance that arises when a word is paired with another phonetically similar word, and, mistakenly believing it to be derived from it, the form of that word is attributed to it*”. See Acharyan H., *Complete Grammar of the Armenian Language*, vol. VI, Yerevan, 1971, p. 728. In this context, addressing toponyms, he adds: “*In popular etymologies, toponyms occupy a prominent place. The Turks (Tatars), having conquered Armenia and adapting Armenian toponyms to the words of their own language, formed ... Tavush = Tovus, ‘peacock,’*” see *ibid.*, p. 732.

¹⁷⁹ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. II, Yerevan, 2004, p. 276. It is not superfluous to note here that in the “*Grand Catalogue*” the term “*Navuri tchamiat*” was erroneously recorded as “*Navus tchamiat*.” In the original manuscript of the colophon, however, it is clearly written as “*Navur*”. This correction also clarifies the

The village of Kamal corresponds in territory to the present-day village of Norashen within the Berd consolidated community.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, there are grounds to assert that the domains of Melik Ghorkhmaz encompassed Berd and the neighbouring villages, the exact number of which is difficult to specify due to the scarcity of sources.

It is noteworthy that the above-mentioned colophon also mentions, for the first time, the village of Navur, which was likewise included in the melikdom. The settlement undoubtedly corresponds to the village of Navur within the Berd consolidated community.

Melik Ghorkhmaz exercised considerable influence, as evidenced by the fact that a church was constructed with his “allowance”. Moreover, it is difficult to conceive that someone whose authority was limited to a single settlement would present themselves as the melik of the “*land of Tavuz*”. This circumstance constitutes a significant indicator, particularly when one takes into account the frequent mentions of local Muslim rulers in the building inscriptions of churches elsewhere in the region during the same period.¹⁸¹ Accordingly, it may be asserted that the meliks of Tavush were endowed with a certain degree of local autonomy. The absence of sources, however, precludes a definitive determination as to whom he was directly subordinate, likely either the beylerbey of Gandzak or a lesser local Muslim authority. Similarly, due to the scarcity of primary sources, it is

overall meaning of the expression “*Navuri tchamiat*”, that is, the community of Navur. See MM, no. 365, 237a.

¹⁸⁰ In one of our publications, the localisation of this village was determined with a slight error. The emergence of new sources has made it possible to correct this; see **Yesayan A.**, *The Melikdoms of North-Eastern Armenia in the 17th Century*, “Bulletin of Matenadaran”, 2020, № 29, p. 392.

¹⁸¹ See, for instance, *Corpus of Armenian Epigraphy*, vol. V, Artsakh, compiled by **Barkhudaryan S.**, Yerevan, 1982, p. 269; **Barkhutariants**, p. 183.

impossible to ascertain whether melik authority in Tavush was hereditary.

Thus, by remaining largely unaffected by forced migration and forming a chain of exclusively Armenian settlements, Tavush still possessed an Armenian melikdom from the first decade of the 17th century. It may be inferred, following the example of other districts in north-eastern Armenia, that the local grandees in Tavush also provided assistance to the forces of Shah Abbas, through which they were able to obtain certain privileges and melik rights. The relatively favourable and peaceful conditions of subsequent years further enhanced the viability of this melikdom.

c) The Spiritual and Cultural Life of Tavush District

Owing to prolonged wars and the devastations wrought by successive conquerors, the ecclesiastical institutions of Tavush, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Aghvank (Gandzasar) Catholicosate, suffered severely. A portion of these institutions had ceased functioning, and the monastic brethren had been dispersed. Compounding this were the ongoing disputes and rivalries surrounding the Catholicosate, which, naturally, adversely affected the subordinate dioceses.¹⁸² Based on the fragmentary information preserved in the sources, it can be inferred that the Diocese of Khoranashat had likewise ceased to operate as an independent episcopate, likely having been incorporated into the diocese of the neighbouring Zakam district. This interpretation is further supported by the firman issued by Safavid

¹⁸² See in detail **Mkrtumyan L.**, *The Catholicosate of Caucasian Albania (Gandzasar) in the 17th–18th Centuries*, Yerevan, 2006, pp. 54–78.

Shah Tahmasp I to Catholicos Michael of Sebastia (December 1548–January 1549), in which Tavush is not mentioned as a separate diocese.¹⁸³

According to this firman, the dioceses adjacent to Tavush in north-eastern Armenia were placed under the jurisdiction of Etchmiadzin. It appears that in the first decade of the 17th century the Tavush diocese resumed its activity, with Khoranashat as its centre.¹⁸⁴ After a prolonged hiatus, spiritual life here was reactivated, and the activities of the monastic community were reestablished. Several manuscripts copied in Tavush during the period under consideration have survived to the present. From the perspective of reconstructing the history of the district, the colophons of these manuscripts are of inestimable value. In a manuscript copied in 1620, after the long interruption, the renowned Khoranashat Monastery in the Tavush district is once again mentioned. A priest named Hakob records in the colophon of the Gospel he copied: *“Behold, this holy, God-speaking herald, which is called the Gospel*

¹⁸³ *The Persian Documents of the Matenadaran: Firmans*, fascicle I (15th–16th centuries), compiled by **Papazyan H.**, Yerevan, 1956 p. 59.

¹⁸⁴ The latest attestations of the episcopate of Khoranashat date to the 1760s. During this period, a crisis arose within the Aghvank Catholicosate (Catholicosate of Caucasian Albania), as two catholicoi simultaneously occupied the throne: Israel in Gandzak and Hovhannes in Gandzasar. In a letter addressed to Simeon Yerevantsi, dated 12 November 1765, supporters of Catholicos Israel also included the signature of Israel, Archbishop of Khoranashat. See **Priest Giwt Aghanyants**, *Corpus of Armenian History*, Book III, Memorial of Catholicos Simeon, Tiflis, 1894 p. 1733, cf., *“Ardzagank”*, 1886, no. 15, p. 227; See **Simeon Yerevantsi**, *Jambr*, Introduction, Study, Critical Text and Annotations by **H. Ohanyan**, Yerevan, 2022, p. 132 (hereafter: *Jambr*); See **Mkrtumyan L.**, *op. cit.*, p. 14. Supporters of Israel, a few months later (9 January 1766), also addressed a letter to King Heraclius II of Georgia (1762–1798), requesting his assistance for Israel to assume the catholicosal throne of Caucasian Albania. Among the diocesan prelates who signed this letter was Petros, Archbishop of Khoranashat. See MM, Matenadaran, Catholicosal Chancery, file 257, document 250.

was written. It was written by the unworthy and sinful and impure scribe named Hakob, who is called false elder, at the door of the Holy and Highly Renowned Khoranashat, under the protection of St. Astvatsatsin, Saint Vanakan Vardapet. Vardapet Grigor, and Saint Hovhannes, in the valley of Zakam, in my village which is called Lgharak".¹⁸⁵ Note that the scribe places Khoranashat within the territory of the Zakam district.

From the 1630s onward, the scribe Yesayi was very active in the Tavush district. His colophons indicate that he was a native of the village of Tavush. His father was the priest Israel,¹⁸⁶ and his mother was named Khondagh. He had a large family, consisting of three sons, six daughters, and two grandchildren;¹⁸⁷ one of his sons, Seneqarim, was a deacon.¹⁸⁸

Of the eight manuscripts by this prolific scribe known to us, five were copied in the village of Tavush, two, most probably, in Khoranashat, and the last in the Leghan hermitage of Shamkor. In chronological terms, the earliest manuscript known to have been copied by him is a Psalter and Horologion. Commissioned by the priest Khachatur, Yesayi copied it in the village of Tavush, beginning in 1630 and completing the manuscript the following year. In the colophon, the scribe mentions his birthplace, the village of Tavush in the land of

¹⁸⁵ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, p. 725. In subsequent decades, the village appears under the name "Bada"; see **Karapetyan S.**, *op. cit.*, p. 457.

¹⁸⁶ See *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1641–1660)*, vol. III, p. 73.

¹⁸⁷ **Ibid.**, p. 182.

¹⁸⁸ **Ibid.**, p. 73.

Tavush: "...in the land of Tayush, in the village called Tavush"¹⁸⁹ and then urges that his siblings be remembered.

Two of his manuscripts – a Mashtots and a Miscellany, were copied in 1637. In the colophon of the first manuscript, Yesayi notes that the Mashtots was copied at the St. Nahatak Church in the village of Tavush, subsequently enumerating the members of his family individually by name. The colophon of the second manuscript differs little from the first.¹⁹⁰ The next manuscript known to us, a Gospel, is dated 1639. The colophon of this manuscript is noteworthy in that the author, repeating the formulation of the priest Hakob of Lgharak places Khoranashat within the territory of the neighbouring Zakam district rather than within Tavush itself.¹⁹¹

In 1640, the scribe Yesayi copied a Mashtots,¹⁹² in 1642 a Psalter,¹⁹³ and in 1645 a Gospel.¹⁹⁴ Of particular interest is the colophon

¹⁸⁹ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of the Mekhitarist Library in Venice*, vol. I, compiled by **Fr. Barsegh V. Sargsian**, Venice–St. Lazarus, 1914. Cf. *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1620–1640)*, vol. II, p. 466. Here, the name of the village is given in the form "Tawuz".

¹⁹⁰ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. VII, Yerevan, 2012, p. 83. We consider it not superfluous to note that the date 1637 of this manuscript is likely the result of a scribal error, as it is given as 1657 in T. Minasyan's work. See **Minasyan T.**, *op. cit.*, p. 104. Guided by this misconception, the author dates the activity of the scribe Yesayi to 1630–1657; however, as we shall see, the latest manuscript known to have been written by him is dated to 1650 (see the following page).

¹⁹¹ Judging from this and other evidence, it may be assumed that during the Safavid period the administrative unit of Zakam occupied a more extensive territory, including the valleys of the Tavush, Getik, and Varagajur rivers.

¹⁹² *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1620–1640)*, vol. II, p. 809.

¹⁹³ See *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1641–1660)*, vol. III, p. 72.

¹⁹⁴ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1641–1660)*, vol. III, pp. 181–182.

of the Gospel copied in 1645. Unlike the preceding manuscripts, Khoranashat is not mentioned in this codex. It was copied in Tavuz (Tavush) village *“under the patronage of St. Nahatak”*. The scribe Yesayi provides noteworthy information regarding the religious persecutions of the Iranian state, specifically noting: *“In the Armenian year 1645, under the patriarchate of Ter Grigor, under the patronage of St. Nahatak, in my land of Tayush, in my village called Tavuz, in that year, and according to our sins, were subjected to the evil of impiety imposed upon us by the Persians, who, by exacting [from us] the levy of service and torturing [us], compelled [us] to convert to their false faith”*.¹⁹⁵

Religious persecutions intensified in Safavid Iran, particularly under Shah Abbas II (1642–1666).¹⁹⁶ This testimony by the scribe Yesayi confirms that the Tavush district did not escape these widespread persecution.

The manuscripts copied in Tavush by the scribe Yesayi and extant to us are as follows. The activity of this prolific Tavush scribe was not confined solely to his native district. In 1650, in the Gheghan (Leghan)¹⁹⁷ hermitage within the Shamkor river basin, Yesayi copied the *“Book of Counsels”* (*Khratagirk*) and *“Book of Fables”* (*Arakagirk*), the latter being the last manuscript of his known oeuvre. The colophon of this manuscript is entirely distinct from the preceding ones. Having

¹⁹⁵ **Ibid.**, p. 182.

¹⁹⁶ See **Davrizhetsi**, p. 97; *“...their sole concern was, by any means whatsoever, to convert the Armenians to the faith of Muhammad”*. See also **Papazyan H.**, *On the Issue of the Assimilation of Safavid Iran*, “Bulletin of Matenadaran”, 1956, no. 3, pp. 85–99.

¹⁹⁷ According to S. Karapetyan, “Gheghan” is the result of a typographical error, considering the correct form of the toponym to be “Leghan”. See **Karapetyan S.**, *op. cit.*, p. 493, fn. 3627.

achieved mastery in the scribal arts and attained full maturity, Yesayi exhibited his prowess within the realm of versification:

*“O Saint Gregory the Illuminator,
Who art the intercessor for the world,
Have mercy upon us all,
By whose grace we became auditors of the Word.
Vouchsafe yet more to me, Yesayi,
Who inscribed these sacred characters;
And whosoever findeth grace in this deed,
May he be a son of the Kingdom.
May the Lord grant them bounty,
Whoever remembereth me, the unworthy Yesayi”.*¹⁹⁸

In the Tavush district, manuscripts were copied not only by the scribe Esayi, but also by the priest Avetis. A native of the village of Kamal, Avetis copied a Gospel there in 1668. Through the colophon of this volume, we learn of the functioning St. Astvatsatsin Church in that locale.¹⁹⁹ The scribe further commemorates Bishop Hovhannes, the prelate of Khoranashat, alongside the numerous members of his own kin. Another extant manuscript by the priest Avetis, a Mashtots, was produced in 1674 at Khoranashat.²⁰⁰

The final manuscript bequeathed to us by his hand was compiled in 1679 at the Harants Hermitage in Gharamurat borough, within the district of Zakam: *“This Holy Gospel was written in these bitter times, from a fine and select exemplar, in the land of Verin Zakam at the*

¹⁹⁸ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1641–1660)*, vol. III, p. 409.

¹⁹⁹ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. II, p. 275.

²⁰⁰ See MM, no. 3536, 134a, 134b.

Harants Hermitage of Gharamurat, by the hand of the sin-weary monk Avetis, who hails from the land of Tavush, from the village of Kamal..”.²⁰¹

At the end of this colophon, though omitting the specific circumstances, the priest laments the untimely passing of his sons.

When addressing the manuscript tradition of Tavush district, it is also appropriate to mention the Gospel manuscript no. 6822 preserved in the Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran. It was copied by the priest Mkrtich in 1499 at Haghbat.²⁰² In 1619, the codex was purchased by a priest named Matevos, who commissioned another priest, Margar, to write one of the manuscript’s colophons.²⁰³ In this colophon, Matevos provides a detailed account of his large extended family and urges remembrance also of the headman (*tanuter*) of Chinchin, stating: “*Again remember the headman of Chinchin, lord Gulamir, and his consort, lady Khanagh...*”²⁰⁴ Within the extensive list of individuals recorded in this colophon, the presence of as many as five priests is particularly noteworthy. This circumstance provides grounds for asserting that, during the years in question, Chinchin had a substantial Armenian population and an active church (or possibly churches).

This spiritual and cultural revival of the district was undoubtedly connected with the intensification of the activities of the Diocese of Khoranashat, and in particular with the efforts undertaken by its incumbents. By correlating the fragmentary evidence derived from

²⁰¹ MM, no. 6705, 264a, 264b.

²⁰² MM, no. 6822, 313b.

²⁰³ **ibid.**, 316a.

²⁰⁴ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. 1, p. 689.

manuscripts and epigraphic sources, an attempt may be made to clarify who the leaders of the Diocese of Khoranashat were during the period under consideration.

In the colophons of the manuscripts copied by the scribe Yesayi and by Avetis Kamaletsi, passing references to Hovhannes, Archbishop of Khoranashat, occur repeatedly. According to the colophons of the manuscripts copied by Yesayi in 1630 and 1637, an archbishop named Yohan (Hovhannes) is mentioned as the prelate of Khoranashat. Moreover, in 1637, a certain priest Hakob is recorded as co-incumbent.²⁰⁵ Two years later, in 1639, Hovhannes and Barsegh are attested as archbishops holding the see of Khoranashat.²⁰⁶ Subsequently, in 1642, Yesayi again mentions Archbishop Hovhannes, this time attributing to him the epithet "illustrious".²⁰⁷ The scribe Avetis Kamaletsi likewise refers to Bishop Hovhannes in 1668.²⁰⁸

In 1888, a correspondence from the village of Ghulali²⁰⁹ was published in the Tiflis periodical "*Nor Dar*". In addition to providing certain details about the village, the author reproduced the colophons of handcopies preserved in the Church of St. Hovhannes. In one such colophon dated 1669, a certain Archbishop Grigor²¹⁰ is mentioned as the head of Khoranashat. As the present location of this manuscript is unknown, it is not possible to confirm or refute this report.

²⁰⁵ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1620–1640)*, vol. II, p. 708.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 786.

²⁰⁷ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1641–1660)*, vol. III, p. 73.

²⁰⁸ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. II, p. 275.

²⁰⁹ It is the village of Aygedzor of the consolidated Berd community.

²¹⁰ See "*Nor-Dar*", 1888, no. 95, p. 3.

References to Bishop Hovhannes of Khoranashat subsequently appear in epigraphic inscriptions from churches in various settlements of Tavush. These testimonies indicate that he distinguished himself through his building and restorative activities.²¹¹ In the inscription of the Church of St. Hovhannes in the village of Choratan, Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia, we read: *“In the year 1682, in the name of God, this holy church was built by the hand of the sinful Bishop Ovanes of Khoranashat”*.²¹²

On the basis of his reading of the semi-effaced building inscription of the church in the village of Verin Karmiraghbyur, within the consolidated Berd community of Tavush Province, Kajikyan notes that it too was built through the efforts of Bishop Hovhannes.²¹³ However, there exists an alternative view according to which the church was constructed earlier, and Hovhannes merely carried out its renovation.²¹⁴ The church was completely destroyed in the second half of the 1930s, further obscuring the precise date of its original construction.

Referring to this church, Makar Barkhudaryants writes: *“...the church, St. Hovhannes, with a wooden roof;*

“I, Ter Vardan, built this church by the hand of Muradkhan, in the year 1701”.

²¹¹ See **Darbinyan S.**, *Archbishop Hovhannes Shinarar*, “Etchmiadzin”, 1991, nos. I–VII, pp. 119–123.

²¹² See **“Ardzagank”**, 1888, no. 7, p. 88, cf. **Barkhudaryants**, p. 328. Barkhudaryants mistakenly gives the date as 1683 (ՌՎԼԲ). In 1935, K. Ghafadaryan visited the village and recorded the inscriptions of the church, which had been converted into a club. See **Ghafadaryan K.**, *op. cit.*, pp. 277–278.

²¹³ See **“Ardzagank”**, 1888, no. 7, p. 88. This view is also shared by H. Kartashyan, who cites Kajikyan's account; see **Kartashyan H.**, *The Architectural Complex of Khoranashat*, “HSS”, 1986, no. 4, p. 51, fn. 63.

²¹⁴ See **Melyan B.**, *Kamal–Gunash–Norashen*, “Banber”- Bulletin of Yerevan University, 2001, № 3 (105), p. 203.

"Holy Cross for Khanagh".

*"[I], bishop Ovanes built this church by the hand of Ter Grigor".*²¹⁵

At present, two fragments of the church's inscription are preserved in the village museum (figs. 1, 2). On the comparatively larger fragment one reads: *"Karmir Aghbyur (Red Source) Ghzbulagh, the inhabitants are natives, the land is royal; I, Ter Vardan, built this church by the hand of Muratkhan; this holy cross is intercessor for Khanagh".*²¹⁶ This inscription undoubtedly corresponds to the one cited by Barkhudaryants; however, the year 1701 mentioned by him is absent here, and, moreover, the word *"intercessor"* found in the final line is missing from Barkhudaryants's version.

The other inscribed fragment preserved in the museum is more concise, as the remaining sections are broken. From this fragment one can read: *"...by the hand of ...ob, in the year 1601"*. It follows that a functioning church existed in the village already from the beginning of the 17th century. No information has been preserved regarding its original builder. Most probably, the church was destroyed and renovated several times. Kajikyan's observation, made with commendable meticulousness in the reading of inscriptions, that the church was built through the efforts of Archbishop Hovhannes allows one to suppose that Hovhannes most likely carried out a thorough renovation of the church, leaving an inscription to that effect. Accordingly, Barkhudaryants's assertion that the church was constructed in 1701 is not corroborated by an examination of the sources currently available.

²¹⁵ **Barkhudariants**, p. 328.

²¹⁶ This inscription, albeit with minor inaccuracies, was also published by Balabek Melyan (see **Melyan B.**, *Karmiraghbyur*, Yerevan, 2001, p. 27). The author erroneously failed to identify the version deciphered by Barkhudaryants with the one preserved in the museum, treating them as two separate inscriptions.

*The inscriptions of the Church of St. Hovhannes in the village of
Karmiraghbyur*

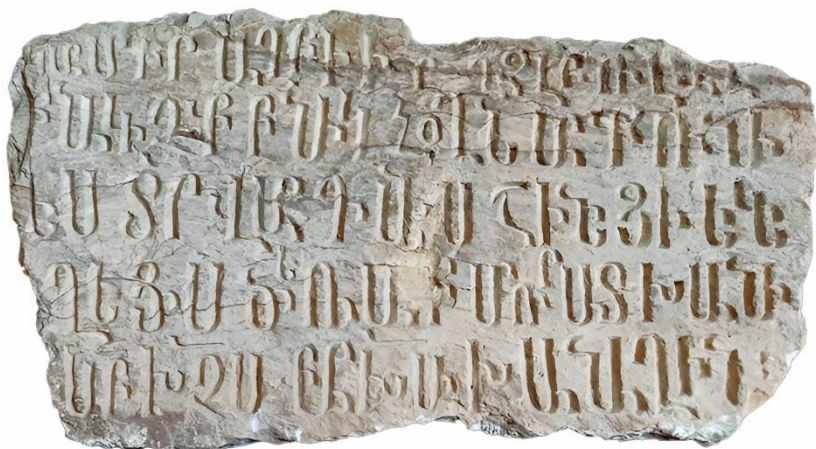


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2

The building inscription of the Church of St. Gregory in Berd attests that, in addition to Melik Ghorkhmaz, Archbishop Hovhannes also contributed to its construction: *“by the hand of Hovhannes, bishop of Khoranashat”*.²¹⁷ An examination of other construction projects undertaken by the Tiflis-based Chitaghyan family, which financed the building of the church, may assist in establishing at least an approximate date for this undated inscription. The Chitaghyan, merchants active in Tiflis who had accumulated considerable wealth, renovated the monasteries on the island of Sevan and made donations. One epigraphic inscription attesting to this activity is dated to 1654, while two others are dated to 1664.²¹⁸ An inscription on the exterior western wall of St. Astvatsatsin Church in Haghartsin indicates that it too was renovated by the Chitaghyan in 1681.²¹⁹ Thus, the earliest dated evidence of Chitaghyan activity relates to 1654, and the latest to 1681. It may therefore be assumed that the construction of the church in Berd also took place within this interval.

Upon reading the inscription of the church in Berd, Kajikyan wrote: *“The church is stone-built and was constructed at the expense of the Tiflis-based Chitakhyants merchant Sorlis and through the agency of Archbishop Hovhannes of Khoranashat, as indicated by the inscription; thus, it was built more than 200 years ago, insofar as the date of the church in Choratan inscription reveals the period during which the aforementioned Archbishop Hovhannes lived”*.²²⁰ Kajikyan

²¹⁷ *“Ardzagank”*, 1888, no. 7, p. 88.

²¹⁸ **Bishop Hovhannes Shahkhatunyants**, *Description of the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin and the Five Provinces of Ararat*, Etchmiadzin, 2014, p. 351, cf. *“Ararat”*, 1871, no. V, p. 261.

²¹⁹ *Corpus of Armenian Epigraphy*, vol. VI, Ijevan District, compiled by **Avagyan S.** and **Janpoladyan H.**, Yerevan, 1977, p. 49.

²²⁰ *“Ardzagank”*, 1888, no. 7, p. 88.

penned these lines on 9 July 1885.²²¹ It follows that he regarded the approximate date of the church's construction as 1685. It is difficult to determine whether Kajikyan relied on any additional oral testimony; nevertheless, his assumption may well be correct. Support for this view is provided by the fact that Melik Ghorkhmaz, mentioned in the church inscription, is also referred to in the colophon of a manuscript dating to the early 18th century.²²²

With regard to the identity of the Hovhannes mentioned in manuscript colophons and epigraphic inscriptions, two hypotheses may be advanced. According to the first, the Hovhannes repeatedly mentioned by the scribe Yesayi and the Hovhannes who assisted in the construction or restoration of the aforementioned churches are one and the same individual. This would imply that he enjoyed exceptional longevity;²²³ accordingly, at the time of the construction of the church in Choratan he must have been approximately eighty-five years old. It is also possible, however, that two different clerics bearing the same name are involved. If the latter interpretation is adopted, it may be assumed that the first of these figures held the episcopal see until 1668–1669, after which Archbishop Grigor occupied the see for a certain period. Subsequently, from the final quarter of the 17th century, the see was held by Archbishop Hovhannes, who is identified as the patron

²²¹ Kajikyan's "Travel Memoirs" consist of diary-like notes made by the author while accompanying the head of the Diocese of Georgia and Imereti during a journey to the settlements and ecclesiastical institutions of north-eastern Armenia. Their journey began on June 10, 1885, in the city of Gandzak. Subsequently, after traveling through the settlements of Gardman, they entered Tavush district on July 5. See "**Ardzagank**", 1886, no. 13, p. 195.

²²² *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. II, p. 276.

²²³ According to the "canonical statute" adopted at the Sis ecclesiastical council of 1243, a cleric who had reached the age of 30 could be ordained as a bishop; see **Gandzaketsi**, p. 304.

of the construction and restoration of the aforementioned churches. In all cases, however, the extant source material does not permit a definitive preference for either of these hypotheses.

Setting aside the aforementioned disputed views, it may be noted that Archbishop Hovhannes, diocesan primate of Khoranashat, made a significant contribution to the revitalisation of the region's spiritual and cultural life. During his tenure, the activities of the Khoranashat monastic community were brought into order. Through Hovhannes's efforts, new religious institutions were established in various settlements of the district. This circumstance indicates that these localities possessed a considerable population and, consequently, a need for new churches and clergy. Numerous village sites and traces of cemeteries²²⁴ dating to the same period likewise reflect the dense settlement of the district during this time.

There is a view that the church of the eponymous village of Tavush was constructed in the early 17th century.²²⁵ Undoubtedly, a church was functioning in Tavush village during the period under consideration, as is repeatedly attested in the colophons of the scribe Yesayi. It was in this very church that he copied several of his manuscripts. No further references to the church are preserved in other sources, making it difficult to ascertain the date of its construction. It was likely destroyed in the 17th century and ceased to function. The present church of Tavush village, the construction of which is attributed to the 17th century, was presumably built on the site of the former church or upon its ruins being St. Astvatsatsin.

²²⁴ See **Ghafadaryan K.**, *op. cit.*, pp. 231–307.

²²⁵ **Ter-Grigoryan A.**, *op. cit.*, p. 64, p. 193. The author does not cite any sources; therefore, this assertion requires substantiation.

As evidence for this, one may point to the fact that Barkhudaryants enumerates in detail all the sacred sites, ruins, and chapels in Tavush village and its surroundings, yet he does not mention any ruin or pilgrimage site under the name of St. Nahatak. Subsequently, referring to St. Astvatsatsin Church, he notes: *“On the northern side of the church there is a separate small altar (apart from the small altar) which serves as a pilgrimage site. None of the villagers knows what kind of pilgrimage site it is”*.²²⁶ If our hypothesis is correct, it may also be inferred that the site cited by Barkhudaryants was the surviving altar of the Church of St. Nahatak, which continued to function as a pilgrimage site.

In Tavush district, St. Astvatsatsin Church in Kamal, attested by priest Avetis in 1668, was also in operation. During the 18th century, the village was depopulated as a result of Lezgian raids that affected the north-eastern Armenian districts, and St. Astvatsatsin Church was destroyed and ceased to function. In the second half of the 19th century, the rural settlement was repopulated by Armenians arriving from Gyunash,²²⁷ and St. Astvatsatsin Church was restored.²²⁸

Referring to an inscription preserved in the rural settlement of Old Hakhum,²²⁹ Artak Ter-Grigoryan notes that it is a building inscription

²²⁶ **Barkhudaryants**, p. 329.

²²⁷ This settlement was located in close proximity to the villages of Nerkin Karmiraghbyur and Aygepar in the Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia, near the village of Alibeylu in the Republic of Azerbaijan. After relocating to Kamal, the inhabitants continued for many years to cultivate the orchards of their former settlement. In the early years of Soviet rule, these lands were, however, allocated to the neighbouring Azerbaijani villages.

²²⁸ See **Darbinyan S.**, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

²²⁹ It is located 1.5 km southeast of Varagavan village, on the right bank of the Varagajur River.

of a church, dated to 1633.²³⁰ In the area of the now partially dilapidated chapel, khachkars and epitaphs dating to the 17th century are still visible; however, no building inscription is present. Such an inscription is also not mentioned by Ghafadaryan,²³¹ so it can be assumed that Ter-Grigoryan erroneously interpreted the khachkars as a building inscription.

In Tavush, to this day there survive exquisitely crafted khachkars and epitaphs dating from the 17th and 18th centuries – the handiwork of stone-carving masters who once enjoyed great renown throughout Armenia. Among these is the celebrated master-carver (*kazmogh*) Kiram, whose works are preserved across several regions of Armenia, including the khachkars in ancient cemetery of the town of Berd. Upon one such khachkar, the inscription reads: “*Kiram, the carver, [in the year] 1610*”.²³² According to Barkhudaryants, a khachkar crafted by Kiram was located in the church of Tavush village.²³³ Numbered among the legacies bequeathed to the Tavush district by this illustrious master is a fragment of a khachkar, dated 1611, located within the Shkhmurat monastic complex.²³⁴ Within the narthex of the church, there stands a further, relatively well-preserved khachkar, bearing the date 1619.²³⁵

²³⁰ Ter-Grigoryan A., *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²³¹ See Ghafadaryan K., *op. cit.*, p. 306.

²³² Barkhudaryan S., *Medieval Armenian Architects and Stonemasters*, Yerevan, 1963, p. 166.

²³³ Barkhutariants, p. 329.

²³⁴ In examining Kiram's activities in the Tavush district, we were assisted by Sevak Arevshatyan, a staff member of the “Scientific Research Center of Historical and Cultural Heritage” CJSC, to whom we express our sincere gratitude.

²³⁵ Sargsyan G., *The Monastery of Shkhmurat*, “Etchmiadzin”, 1956, no. 3, p. 24.

It appears that, in addition to Kiram, other masters were likewise active within the Tavush district. Specifically, khachkars by the carver Khachatur have been preserved in Berd, while the church of Tavush village houses two khachkars by the carver Vardan, both bearing the date 1618.

CHAPTER III

THE WEAKENING OF SAFAVID IRAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN NORTH-EASTERN ARMENIA

a) The Military-Political Situation at the End of the 17th Century – Beginning of the 18th Century

Following the campaigns of Shah Abbas of the 17th century, the favorable conditions that emerged in north-eastern Armenia greatly facilitated the region's socio-economic and spiritual-cultural revival. Older settlements began to expand, and new ones were established. The population likewise started to increase, a development also attested by the founding of new churches and ecclesiastical institutions in various localities. Summarising these realities of the preceding century, Catholicos Yesayi of Aghvank (Caucasian Albania) notes: *"...all ruined villages and towns were rebuilt, and the lands of the Armenians and the Persians [were restored]"*.²³⁶ As a result of these processes, the country was put in good order, the population grew denser, and taxation was regulated: *"...greater peace prevailed in the land, the ruins were rebuilt, the population increased, justice and equity were ensured by judges, moderation was introduced in tax exactions, and order was established in all affairs and practices"*.²³⁷

However, by the end of the 17th century, signs of instability and weakening became evident in Safavid Iran. The Safavids' long-standing

²³⁶ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 44.

²³⁷ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 45.

adversary, the Ottoman Empire, was quick to take advantage of this situation. At the same time, Russia, gaining strength and expanding under Peter I (1682–1725), was also taking decisive steps toward asserting control over the Transcaucasian region, seeking to enlist the support of the local Armenian population. In this context, the activities of Israel Ori, who maintained active contacts with the tsarist court, merit particular attention. Russia also made systematic efforts to win over the Georgian kings subject to Iran. Another factor influencing these processes was the Lezgins, who, having carried out several successful plundering raids in Shirvan, began, with Ottoman support,²³⁸ to keep Iran's northern frontiers in a state of persistent insecurity and chaos.

During the reign of the Safavid shah Sultan Hosayn (1694–1722), the tax burden increased substantially. Iran's economic and fiscal policy was, by its nature, antiquated. Already by the mid-17th century, numerous problems had emerged, the resolution of which the Safavid court sought in the introduction of successive new taxes.²³⁹ In 1699–1702, Shah Husayn carried out an unprecedented census²⁴⁰ accompanied by persecution and violence. According to Catholicos Yesayi, taxes were also imposed on the clergy and monasteries: *“Thereupon taxes were levied upon the registered, with a threefold increase over the previous assessment; and upon ecclesiastical servicemen, which had never been previously subject to taxation, they*

²³⁸ See **A. Bakikhanov**, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

²³⁹ **R. Matthee**, *Persia in crisis, Safavid decline and the fall of Isfahan*, Chapter 4, Monetary policy and the disappearing mints, 1600–1700, London, 2012, pp. 75–108.

²⁴⁰ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 45.

*laid a burden tenfold heavier than that imposed upon secular people”.*²⁴¹

In the districts of north-eastern Armenia, the process of tax collection was carried out by the grand vizier Mirzatahir, who, with his contingent of 1,100 men, conducted the census of the Ganja–Karabakh beylerbeylik.²⁴² Detailed information on the results of this census has not survived, information that would have made it possible to clarify a number of issues relating to the history of north-eastern Armenia.

The system of governance of the state had likewise stagnated and weakened. The appointment to various offices through bribery, as well as the rapid turnover of officials, had become commonplace.²⁴³

In the frontier districts, local Muslim rulers, established with their tribes, began to appropriate increasingly extensive prerogatives, thereby rendering life intolerable for the Armenian population. Living primarily a nomadic lifestyle, they gradually seized new territories, compelling the local inhabitants to leave in search of new settlements.

Soon, uprisings erupted in various regions of Iran. These events appear to have advanced the objectives of Israel Ori, who had promoted a plan for the liberation of Armenia. In Karabakh, his ally was Catholicos Yesayi. In Israel Ori’s 1699 “Palatinate” plan for the liberation of Armenia, in addition to other Armenian districts, the Zakam district-administrative unit is also mentioned. According to the plan, a force of 5,000 troops was to be assembled from Zakam to

²⁴¹ **Ibid.**, p. 46.

²⁴² **Ibid.**

²⁴³ **Ibid.**, p. 47.

liberate Armenia.²⁴⁴ Ashot Hovhannisyan mistakenly identifies the Zakam mentioned by Israel Ori with Shamshadin, the present-day Berd consolidated community in the Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia.²⁴⁵ It is more likely that the Zakam administrative unit referred to by Ori included the districts of Tavush, Verin Zakam, and Nerkin Zakam.

The direct repercussions of the aforementioned processes were likewise evident in Tavush, a frontier district of the Safavid state. In this context, we shall briefly depart from the principal subject to trace the military-political developments of the early decades of the century, which decisively reshaped the regional balance of power. These developments were particularly conditioned by Russia's pronounced and sustained interest in the region.

b) The Lezgian Raids in North-Eastern Armenia

Exploiting the instability within the Safavid State, the Lezgins, led by Surkhay Khan and Haji Dawud, launched an assault on the city of Shamakhi in 1712. Approximately three hundred Russian merchants

²⁴⁴ See **Hovhannisyan A.**, *Episodes from the History of Armenian Liberation Thought*, Book II, Yerevan, 1959, p. 374. A. Hovhannisyan rightly notes that the numerical data provided by Ori are grossly exaggerated; see *ibid.*, pp. 376–382.

²⁴⁵ A. Ayvazyan, citing Hovhannisyan, states: "...*Zagyam (i.e. Shamshadin = the Tavush district)...*". It remains unclear what the author means by "the Tavush district", since no such administrative unit exists (or existed); see **Ayvazyan A.**, *Demography of the Eastern Armenians in the XVII-XVIII Centuries and the Strength of the Armenian Army in the 1720s*, Yerevan, 2022, p. 43. Addressing the size of the forces formed from the districts in a separate table, the author, on this occasion, relies on the explanation of Catholicos Yesayi regarding the localisation of Zakam, which makes the author's erroneous understanding of the geography of the district-administrative unit even more apparent; see p. 46, fn. 65.

likewise fell victim to this incursion.²⁴⁶ Fearing retaliatory measures, the Lezgin leaders appealed to the Ottoman Empire for support. By a special firman of Sultan Ahmed III (1703–1730), Haji Dawud was appointed Governor of Shirvan, while Saru Mustafa Pasha was instructed to provide armed assistance to the Lezgins should the necessity arise.²⁴⁷ Aiming to subjugate the area and forestall the Russian Empire's advancement in the region, the Ottoman government rendered aid to the Lezgins while simultaneously awaiting a propitious occasion for an overt military invasion.

The Lezgin incursions began to assume a periodic nature, and the frontiers of their predations gradually expanded.²⁴⁸ Having ravaged the regions on the left bank of the Kura, the highlanders would cross the river to lay waste to and plunder Artsakh and the districts of north-eastern Armenia. As testified by Yesayi, Catholicos of Aghvank (Caucasian Albania): *“And thus, stirred up, year after year, they spread out on raids to this side and that side of the Kura River, into the lands of Shaki, Ghabala, and the province of Gasan, even unto the vicinity of the city of Shamakhi. And on this side, to the whole province of Qazakh, which is Akhstev, and to the land of Amirsham Shatinlu, which are the Zakams”.*²⁴⁹

From the Catholicos's account, it is evident that the Aghstev Valley, Tavush, and both Verin and Nerkin Zakam suffered grievous devastation. From these locales, the highlanders pressed on into Kartli.

²⁴⁶ **Leviatov V.**, *Essays on the History of Azerbaijan in the 18th Century*, Baku, 1948, p. 50.

²⁴⁷ **A. Bakikhanov**, p. 63.

²⁴⁸ See *Minor Chronicles, XIII–XVIII centuries*, vol. II, p. 430.

²⁴⁹ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 51.

An anonymous Georgian author writes: “In 1712... the Lezgins were desolating Kartli, Qazakh, Shamshadin, Karabakh, and Shirvan”.²⁵⁰

Continuing their pillaging raids, the highlanders reached as far as the Lake Sevan basin.²⁵¹ They had also planned to launch an incursion into the Ararat Plain, but, fortunately for the settlements of the province of Yerevan, this notion of the highlanders never came to fruition.²⁵² A segment of the population was led into slavery, while those who sought refuge in the mountains and other secure locations barely preserved their existence at the cost of severe deprivation. The local tribal chieftains, who were, in effect, functionaries of Safavid Iran, proved incapable of organising effective resistance against the Lezgins, and isolated attempts at defence were consequently thwarted. Thus, Hasan Khan of Shamakhi pursued the Lezgins with a substantial force, but the latter, through a sudden assault, crushed his troops, and the Khan himself was slain.²⁵³ Considerable booty fell into the hands of the Lezgins,²⁵⁴ yet they remained unsatisfied. Following this victory, the Lezgins once again proceeded to lay waste to the districts of north-eastern Armenia. The local Khans, most likely bearing in mind Hasan Khan's ignominious defeat, preferred to retreat to safe havens, leaving the region entirely unprotected.

²⁵⁰ **Melikset-Bek L.**, *Georgian Sources on Armenia and the Armenians*, vol. III (18th–19th centuries), p. 68.

²⁵¹ See **Samuel Anetsi and Continuators**, p. 350. See **Chamchyants M.**, *History of Armenia*, vol. 3, Yerevan, 1984, p. 784.

²⁵² See *The Chronicle of Petros di Sargis Gilanentsi*, “Krunk Hayots Ashkharhin”, 1863, № 3, p. 193.

²⁵³ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 52; cf. **Bagrationi V.**, *History of the Kingdom of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 1976, p. 97.

²⁵⁴ See **Bagrationi V.**, *op. cit.*, p. 97. Vakhushti notes that the booty was so abundant that the mountaineers sold a camel for approximately four roubles.

A colophon from a manuscript concerning the Lezgin devastations in the Zakam district reads: *“In the year 1720, on the 26th of July. O reader, it behoves you to heed what is in this newly-printed book: it was written in the aforementioned time at the encampment of Blovlyk, which belongs to the Lezgin. They rose up and pillaged the land of Zakam, taking women [and children] captives and leading them to Lezgistan to sell them... the Khan was Mehrali Khan; he didn't stand against them. They made representation to the Shah, the Shah was Sultan Hosayn, who iussed a decree against the Lezgins, but the outcome rests with God”.*²⁵⁵

The aforementioned Mehrali Khan, who governed several districts of north-eastern Armenia,²⁵⁶ likewise failed to organise any resistance.²⁵⁷ According to the Georgian historiographer Vakhushti, there were instances where the Kakhetians, motivated by the prospect of richer spoils, incentivised and persuaded the Lezgins not to enter their own territory, instead guiding their forces towards the Aghstev Valley, Tavush, and thence into Artsakh and Shirvan.²⁵⁸ To halt the Lezgins, the Persian Shah commanded the beylerbeys of Yerevan and Gandzak to organise a military expedition against them. In the autumn of 1721, the combined thirty-thousand-strong forces reached Partav, pitching camp on the banks of the Kura River. However, while they

²⁵⁵ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. III, p. 434.

²⁵⁶ MM, no. 3813, 496b.

²⁵⁷ Judging by the testimony of earlier sources, according to which the governors of Zakam and Tavush were the same individual and the districts are consistently mentioned together under the name Zakam, we are inclined to conclude that Tavush was also under the authority of Khan Mehrali.

²⁵⁸ See **Bagrationi V.**, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

were encamped, the Lezgins, employing their characteristic sudden-strike tactics, put the united armies to flight.²⁵⁹

The following year, Lezgin detachments once again ravaged Artsakh, redirecting their advance towards Gandzak. The populace of Gandzak sought assistance from King Vakhtang of Kartli, who promised aid. Fortifying themselves within the city, the inhabitants of Gandzak resisted for twenty days. When King Vakhtang arrived in Shamkhor with forty thousand troops, the Lezgins abandoned their siege of the city and withdrew.

Vakhtang pitched his camp in the southern part of Gandzak.²⁶⁰ Under the pretext of supplying the army, the Georgian forces commenced the plunder and spoliation of the region. The settlements situated between Zakam and Artsakh suffered particularly heavy losses: *"...they spread out into the mountains and ravines and exposed places of the land of Zakam, Shamkor, Ganjapasan, Voskanapat, Kurakchai, and Partav, as far as the village of Gulistan and the River Drdu"*.²⁶¹

The Georgian army pillaged every settlement encountered on its route, irrespective of the ethnic affiliation of the inhabitants. Describing this spoliation, Catholicos Yesayi writes: *"And this they did not only to the aforementioned Mahometans; nay, but mingling with them, they plundered all the Armenian districtss from the land written above, seizing both movable and immovable property. And it would happen sometimes that a regiment of the Georgian forces would approach a Christian village, and the inhabitants, with priests and*

²⁵⁹ **Zulalyan M.**, *Historical Questions of the Armenian People in the 13th–18th Centuries according to European Authors*, Book I, 1990, p. 193.

²⁶⁰ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 60.

²⁶¹ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 61.

*people, would come forth to meet them with crosses, vestments, bells, and tapers, as befits Christians. But the Georgians would fall upon them, pillaging their vestments, the church itself, the books, and all the vessels. They seized men and women, and all the possessions of the village, stripped them bare, plundered them, and went their way; and thus they rendered all the districts and churches of the environs of Gandzak desolate and empty of all wealth, and filled their camps therewith".*²⁶²

The chronicler notes that while the Georgians were not particularly known for widespread killing or taking captives, they nevertheless drove all the livestock, even the birds and dogs, back to their encampment.²⁶³ Despite the lack of direct testimony, it is likely that parts of the Tavush settlements, being closer to the route of the Georgian troops, also suffered from this spoliation. The Georgian forces remained in Gandzak for a duration of four months. Subsequently, Vakhtang returned to Tiflis, leaving behind a small contingent in Gandzak. Catholicos Yesayi accompanied him on his return to the city. Throughout this period, the Catholicos of Caucasian Albania and King Vakhtang maintained an active correspondence with the Russian Imperial Court in anticipation of military assistance.²⁶⁴

c) The Turkish Conquests in Transcaucasia

In the geopolitical race to dominate the region, the interests of the Ottoman State, Iran, and Russia collided. The Ottoman Empire,

²⁶² **Ibid.**, p. 62.

²⁶³ **Ibid.**

²⁶⁴ **Ezov G. A.**, *Correspondence of Peter the Great with the Armenian People, Documents*, Saint Petersburg, 1898, p. 332, document No. 213, p. 332.

seeking various pretexts, prepared to invade Eastern Armenia, attempting in every way to draw Vakhtang to its side. Tsar Peter I, for his part, assured the Georgian king that he intended to liberate Georgia from Iranian suzerainty. In a letter addressed to King Vakhtang, Peter I urged him to wait with his troops at Shamakhi in the autumn of 1722, where, according to the initial plan, he himself was to join them with the Russian army.²⁶⁵

Vakhtang marched his troops towards Gandzak, while Catholicos Yesayi, who was in Tiflis, proceeded to Karabakh even earlier. There, in concert with the Armenian meliks, he organised a regiment of approximately 10,000 men and advanced to meet the Georgian forces. Both sides were convinced that Peter I's troops would soon join them and that the hour of Christian liberation was at hand.²⁶⁶ The united Georgian-Armenian forces waited for the Russian army for twenty-five days, only to receive news that Tsar Peter, having captured Derbent, had returned.

The other power with aspirations in the region, the Ottoman Empire, carefully monitored the developments unfolding around the Safavid State, awaiting a propitious moment for an assault. Consequently, the Turkish side incited the Lezgins to carry out further incursions, aiming to accelerate the collapse of Safavid Iran and create favourable conditions for their subsequent invasion.

Deeming the moment ripe, Turkish troops invaded Georgia in the summer of 1723 and captured Tiflis with virtually no resistance.

²⁶⁵ See **Mirzabekyan G.**, *On the Assessment of the Political Situation in Transcaucasia in the 20s of the XVIII Century*, "Armenological Issues", 2 (11), 2017, p. 61.

²⁶⁶ **Yesayi the Historian**, p. 66.

The prospect of the impending Turkish conquest of north-eastern Armenia held no appeal for certain local Muslim potentates who, as the de facto rulers of the Iranian borderlands, were accustomed to their autonomy. It was presumably for this reason that they allied with the converted King of Kakheti, Mohammad Quli, who remained loyal to the Safavids, and successfully repelled the Turkish troops marching upon Gandzak. Furthermore, even Turkish sources testify that, upon swiftly seizing Tiflis and the greater part of Georgia, the Ottoman forces became notorious for their numerous atrocities.²⁶⁷

The Armenian population of the north-eastern Armenian districts likewise participated in the battles against the Turkish forces. With combined efforts, they managed to crush the Turkish troops besieging the regional centre of Gandzak and put the Lezgins, who were rushing to their aid, to flight. It should also be noted that the besieged still harboured hopes of assistance from the Russian troops stationed in Baku, but none was forthcoming. After a twenty-day unsuccessful siege, the Turks, having suffered heavy losses, abandoned Gandzak and returned to Tiflis.²⁶⁸ They only managed to capture the Armenian quarter. It was thoroughly looted; a part of the population was massacred, another part was taken captive, and yet others sought refuge in the *sghnakhs* (fortified strongholds) of Artsakh. The Turks were not satisfied with the captives taken from Gandzak. On their retreat route to Georgia, they devastated Armenian settlements, forcibly displacing a further 3,000 Armenians to Tiflis.²⁶⁹ The majority

²⁶⁷ See *Turkish Sources on Armenia, the Armenians, and Other Peoples of the South Caucasus*, compiled by **A. Safrastyan**, vol. I, p. 136.

²⁶⁸ *Armenian-Russian Relations in the First Third of the 18th Century*, Collection of Documents, vol. II, part II, Yerevan, 1967, p. 48.

²⁶⁹ See *Turkish Sources on Armenia, the Armenians, and Other Peoples of the South Caucasus*, vol. I, p. 138.

of these captives were likely the Armenian inhabitants of the villages surrounding Gandzak and the Shamkhor basin.

The Russian side signed a treaty with the Turks in June 1724,²⁷⁰ retaining only the Caspian littoral regions they had conquered from Iran, while recognising Georgia, Armenia, and the northern Iranian provinces as a Turkish sphere of influence. The Turks set about the conquest of these designated territories with renewed vigour. Ottoman troops captured Nakhijevan in August 1724, and Yerevan thereafter. Failing to conquer north-eastern Armenia completely that same year and encountering resistance, they finally seized Qazakh, Shamshadin, and Lori-Borchalu in 1725.²⁷¹ Capitalising on their success, they captured the city of Gandzak, the region's centre, after two days of fighting with large forces in October of the same year.²⁷² As a result of the Turkish incursion and military operations, a significant portion of the population of the north-eastern Armenian districts was taken captive and sold as slaves in Constantinople.²⁷³

Thus, the collapse of Safavid Iran, which began at the end of the 17th century, presaged a series of events whose devastating impact was felt throughout Tavush and the entirety of north-eastern Armenia. Shah Sultan Hosayn's cruel tax policy dealt a heavy blow to Iran's economic life. The Ottoman state and the strengthening Russia hastened to take advantage of the rebellions and the weakening of central authority. The incessant attacks by the Lezgins, allies of the

²⁷⁰ **Ormanian M.**, *Azgapatum*, vol. 2, Etchmiadzin, 2001, p. 3267.

²⁷¹ See **Abrahamyan A.**, *A Page from the History of the Peoples of the Transcaucasus and Armenian-Russian Relations: (Study and Documents)*, Yerevan, 1953, p. 114.

²⁷² **Ibid.**, p. 118.

²⁷³ **Chamchyants M.**, *op. cit.*, p. 783. See "Ararat", 1888, no. 1, p. 32. See **Samuel Anetsi and Continuator**s, p. 351.

Ottoman Empire, also inflicted immense damage on the settlements of north-eastern Armenia. They were plundered, and the population was either taken captive or massacred.

The Lezgin incursions, which persisted until the region's annexation by Russia in 1801, left a profound imprint upon the collective memory of the local populace. To this day, various settlements within the consolidated community of Berd, in the Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia, retain oral traditions concerning bride-kidnappings and predatory raids associated with the Lezgins. Furthermore, numerous microtoponyms named after these Lezgins remain prevalent.²⁷⁴ In the wake of the highlanders' incursions, a portion of the abandoned Armenian villages passed into the possession of certain Muslim nomadic tribes who were then transitioning to a sedentary way of life.

Situated at the focal point of the continuous clashes between Turkish, Iranian, and Georgian forces, and subjected to the repeated forays of the Lezgins, the districts of north-eastern Armenia, whose population had previously grown dense, suffered significant depopulation. A segment of the inhabitants fled to secure locations, while others fell into captivity or were slain. Regarding the consequences of these incessant wars and Lezgin devastations, Martiros di Arakel notes: *“And the helpless nation of Greater Armenia – whether in the lands of Shamakhi and Shirvan, or Ganja and the districts unto Tiflis, and from Yerevan unto Ardabil, Tabriz, Chors, and Maragha, whether by the Lezgins, the rebels, or these Ottomans,*

²⁷⁴ **Ghanalanyan A.**, *Armenian Traditional Narration*, Yerevan, 2022, pp. 241, 406–407, 500.

were so overthrown that the greater part of the Armenians fell by the sword or were led into captivity, as we witness even now".²⁷⁵

Simultaneously, the spiritual institutions of the region suffered a grievous blow. A portion of the churches, which had been renovated or newly constructed in the preceding century, was plundered and demolished, while the majority of the monastic brethren were killed, taken captive, or dispersed. A deacon named Martiros, in the colophon of a miscellany he transcribed, describes the calamities besetting Armenia from all sides: "...and from the north came the Lezgin, who were the Ozbek, who led many of the Armenian nation into captivity and razed churches; they were a most cruel executioner of the Christian nations, and they slew many of the vardapets of the church and left many half-dead..."²⁷⁶

According to the testimony of Catholicos Simeon Yerevantsi (1710–1780), during the highlanders' incursions that afflicted Armenia in those years, the local Muslim tribes followed their example and also began to plunder and destroy the settlements and churches of Armenia.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ **Martiros di Arakel**, *Chronicle*, "Collection of Scholarly Materials of the Matenadaran", 1941, no. 1, p. 99, cf. *Minor Chronicles, XIII–XVIII centuries*, vol. II, p. 433.

²⁷⁶ "**Ararat**", 1888, no. I, p. 30.

²⁷⁷ See *Jambr*, p. 80.

CHAPTER IV

THE TAVUSH DISTRICT ACCORDING TO THE 1727 “EXTENSIVE DEFTER OF THE GANDZAK- KARABAKH EYALET”²⁷⁸

a) General Information on the Document

In the newly conquered regions, the Ottoman Empire set about establishing its own laws and administrative system. Following the example of other territories, the Turkish authorities carried out a census in north-eastern Armenia. The results of this census are summarised in the 1727 “*Extensive Defter of the Gandzak–Karabakh Eyalet*”.²⁷⁹ This tax register may be considered a unique summary of the ethno-demographic and socio-economic picture of a region that had been in the whirlwind of intense military and political processes for nearly a quarter of a century.

To date, the tax register has been studied and partially published by the Azerbaijani author Hussamaddin Mammadov. It should be noted that, unlike the Muslim population, the author²⁸⁰ did not present the names of the Christian inhabitants, providing only the headcount of the tax-paying population in the case of Armenian-populated villages.

²⁷⁸ In contrast to the 1593 defter, the 1727 defter is more extensive and detailed.

²⁷⁹ *Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi, Gence-Karabağ Eyaleti'nin Mufassal Defteri*, (TT. d.), No. 903 (hereafter: COA, No. 903). We express our gratitude to Georgi Mirzabekyan for ensuring a high-quality translation of the original text.

²⁸⁰ This publication was discussed in an article by Pavel Chobanyan; see **Chobanyan P.**, *On Ottoman Primary Sources for the History of Armenia*, “Journal of Armenian Studies”, 2017, no. 1, p. 209.

Addressing the composition of the general eyalet population, Hussamaddin Mammadov extracted the names of 19,395 taxpayers from the register. By assuming an average family size of five, he arrived at a total population figure of 96,975²⁸¹ for the eyalet, while accepting that this represents the minimum number of inhabitants. Simultaneously, this figure does not include the Ottoman military personnel, the clergy, or the service staff. Christians are also mentioned in the document by the word “*gebran*” (the Ottoman equivalent for “Christian”).²⁸²

According to the author, the demographic picture of the overall eyalet is as follows: 11,818 Muslims (of whom 11,068 are Turkish and 750 Kurdish) and 7,577 non-Muslims (Armenians).²⁸³ The author’s emphasis on the numerical superiority of the Muslim population is perplexing, given that the document pertains to the entire beylerbeylik, a vast territory stretching from the Caucasus Mountains to Azerbaijan (i.e., Atropatene, Ādharbāyjān).

The defter begins with a *kanunname*, a book of laws. The *kanunname* of this specific defter has been translated into Armenian and published by Manvel Zulalyan and Aram Safrastyan.²⁸⁴ It initially presents a general description of the region’s territory and borders, followed by information regarding the population.²⁸⁵ According to these authors, the lowland villages, which are rich, are inhabited primarily by Muslims. Addressing the mountainous

²⁸¹ See *Кәнчә-Гарабаг әяләтинин муфәссәл дәфтәри*, Нусамәддин Мәммәдов (Гараманлы), Бакы, 2000, p. 12.

²⁸² See *ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁸³ **Ibid.**

²⁸⁴ *Ottoman Laws in Western Armenia (16th–17th-century kanunnames)*, pp. 120–123.

²⁸⁵ COA, No. 903, pp. 4–5.

settlements, the document notes: *“The inhabitants of the mountainous villages are of the Armenian ethnos; wheat, barley, oats, and millet are their crops, while they [mountainous villages] have no rice, silk, or fruits”*.²⁸⁶

The compilers of the document remark on the poor economic condition of the Armenian villages established in the mountainous locales over the centuries due to circumstances: *“By comparison with Arran, the lands of the mountainous Armenian-populated villages being scarce and barren, and the settlements of no value, they rendered in the Ajem (Persian – A. Ye.) era a tenth as tithe and a fifteenth as bahra”*.²⁸⁷

The authors of the tax register also indicate the types and quantities of the taxes collected. The amount of the taxes received, which had been set as early as the Safavid era, was often left unchanged.

The primary tax paid by the Armenian population to the Ottoman treasury was the *“ispenje”*, which was levied on the non-Muslim populace.²⁸⁸ To form a clearer picture of this tax, let us detail its nature. In his study of the tax obligations of non-Muslim subjects – *rayahs*, the renowned historian Halil Inalcik argues that both linguistically and semantically, the view proposed by the scholar Hammer, that *“ispenje”* is derived from the word *“penjik”* (from the Persian for “five”) – is untenable.²⁸⁹ He does not rule out the possibility that *“ispenje”* was introduced into the Ottoman tax system after the

²⁸⁶ *Ottoman Laws in Western Armenia (16th–17th-century kanunnames)*, p. 120.

²⁸⁷ **Ibid.**

²⁸⁸ **Ibid.**

²⁸⁹ See Halil Inalcik, *Osmanlılarda Raiyyet Rüşumu*, Belleten, 1959, XXIII/92, p. 602, fn. 127.

conquest of Thrace towards the end of the 14th century.²⁹⁰ Testimonies regarding “*ispenje*” are rarely encountered in Thrace and the western provinces of the Empire; instead, the “*chiftlik*” (çift-resmi) tax was collected in those locales. “*Ispenje*” likely became more prevalent in newly conquered territories during the 15th century, gradually evolving into a customary tax across Western Armenia, Mesopotamia, Georgia, and those areas of Eastern Armenia that periodically fell under Ottoman rule.²⁹¹

Every adult non-Muslim, whether Christian or Jewish, paid the “*ispenje*”. The tax generally stood at 25 akches, as recorded in numerous official Ottoman documents, including the kanunnames of Mardin and Kharberd (1518), Diyarbekir (1540), and Chmshkatsag (1541).²⁹² However, the amount varied across time and space.²⁹³ During the 17th century, the sum of collected taxes generally increased, reaching up to 120 akches in certain places, as evidenced in the 1727 *Extensive Defter (Register) of the Ganja-Karabakh Eyalet* – a detail which did not escape the attention of researchers Omer Lutfi Barkan and Halil Inalcik.²⁹⁴

Furthermore, the *ispenje* was paid not only by peasants but also by the Christian population of cities and towns.²⁹⁵ The tax was customarily collected in the month of March.²⁹⁶ Halil Inalcik refers to

²⁹⁰ **Ibid.**, p. 603.

²⁹¹ **Ibid.**, pp. 606–607.

²⁹² **Ibid.**, p. 606.

²⁹³ See **Levon Vardan**, *Taxes in the Ottoman and Persian Empires, 15th–16th Century*, Yerevan, 2004, pp. 495–505.

²⁹⁴ **Halil Inalcik**, *Osmanlılarda Raiyyet Rüşumu*, p. 607.

²⁹⁵ **Halil Inalcik**, *Osmanlılarda Raiyyet Rüşumu*, p. 604.

²⁹⁶ **Ibid.**, p. 607.

the *ispenje* as a customary poll tax.²⁹⁷ In certain parts of the Empire during the 18th century, its collection was prohibited on the grounds that it contradicted the *Sharia*. The issue was that the collection of a second poll tax named *ispenje*, alongside the *jizya*, was considered *bidat* – an innovation introduced later,²⁹⁸ and thus contrary to Islamic law.

However, some Ottoman jurists compared or even equated the *ispenje* with the *chiftlik* (*çift-resmi*), attempting, so to speak, to “shariatise” it or attribute an Islamic origin to it. For this reason, it was sometimes considered a land tax, like the “*çift-resmi*”, and sometimes the equivalent of the *bennak* tax (officially designated as the *bennak resmi*). In Ottoman kanunnames, one can encounter the stipulation that if a non-Muslim converted to Islam, they ceased paying the *ispenje*, paying instead the *bennak* (officially named *bennak resmi*).²⁹⁹ Generally, the *bennak* is referred to as a poll tax in the Ottoman tax system; hence, the *ispenje*, which was perceived as its equivalent in the case of Christians, can also be considered a poll tax.

Thus, according to the data in the tax register, the *ispenje* in the Ganja-Karabakh beylerbeylik amounted to 120 akches. It is noteworthy that according to the defters belonging to the Yerevan vilayet from the same period, the rate of 25 akches for the *ispenje* was still maintained there.³⁰⁰

It appears that in the case of the Ganja-Karabakh eyalet, the *ispenje* was collected at a rate three times higher. It is known that local customs and specific regional conditions were also taken into account

²⁹⁷ **Ibid.**, p. 603.

²⁹⁸ **Ibid.**

²⁹⁹ **Ibid.**, pp. 603–604.

³⁰⁰ **Papazyan H.**, *The Turkish Tax Registers of the Village of Vagharshapat from 1725 and 1728*, “Bulletin of Matenadaran”, 1960, no. 5, p. 444.

when establishing taxes for a given area.³⁰¹ The Ottoman authorities probably chose to leave the higher taxes imposed during Shah Sultan Hosayn's reign unchanged, having observed that they were, in fact, being paid.

The document contains rich material concerning the demography and economy of north-eastern Armenia, Artsakh, and the adjacent districts. Below, we shall address the data pertaining to Tavush within the tax register (*defter*) and present the population statistics village by village. Due to insufficient source materials, precisely locating some of the settlements is challenging. Nevertheless, we shall attempt to use the available data to conduct a proximate geolocation of these settlements.

In the tax register, the regions of north-eastern Armenia are encompassed within the *liwa* (sanjak/district) of Khylykhyna. This was, in turn, subdivided into nine *nahiyes* (sub-districts): Khylykhyna, Hasansu, Tavus (Tavush), Akhnja, Asrik, Gharaghaya, Turganlar, Verin Zakam, and Nerkin Zakam.³⁰² The area of the Tuchkatak-Tavush canton, as known from the *Ashkharhatsuyts*, roughly corresponds to the modern *nahiyes* of Tavus (Tavush), Akhnji, Hasansu, and Asrik³⁰³. In some instances, for example, in the case of the Hasansu *nahiye*, regions were included within the administrative unit that had never previously been part of the historical Tavush district. In all likelihood, the Ottoman authorities did not implement significant administrative

³⁰¹ See **Papazyan H.**, *Ottoman Chancery Documents of the "Cyril and Methodius" National Library of Sofia*, "HPHJ", 1984, no. 3, p. 199.

³⁰² COA, No. 903, pp. 1-2.

³⁰³ The Asrik *nahiye* geographically encompasses the basin of the Asrik tributary of the Tavush River. The *nahiye* corresponds to the southeastern section of the Tuchkatak place in *Ashkharhatsuyts* and lies along the border with the Gardman canton. Consequently, a narrow strip of land in the southeastern section fell within the territory of Gardman.

changes but largely preserved the existing Safavid units.³⁰⁴ The right bank of the lower reaches of the Aghstev River, where Armenian population had long ceased to reside, was incorporated into the Hasansu and Tavus *nahiyes*.

These administrative units geographically encompass the basins of the eponymous rivers: Tavush, Akhnji, Varagajur (Hakhum, Hasansu), and Asrik. Of these rivers, the Tavush and Varagajur originate in the Miapor Mountains and flow into the Kura River. The Akhnja *nahiye* is situated around the upper reaches of the Akhnji River, a right tributary of the Tavush River, while Asrik is located in the basin of the eponymous Asrik River. The latter two *nahiyes*, in contrast to the former ones, were smaller in area. The Tavush and Hasansu *nahiyes* occupied more extensive territories. The borders between these *nahiyes* are easier to determine in the high-altitude zones because, by encompassing the aforementioned river basins, they are separated by watershed mountains. This refers to the mountain ridges of Paytapar, Kenats, Tavush, and Khndzorut. These mountain ranges begin at Miapor and extend almost parallel to each other in a north-easterly direction, gradually descending thereafter to merge with the Kura plain.³⁰⁵ According to our approximate calculations, the four mentioned *nahiyes* together covered an area of approximately 1,400 square kilometres.

Below, we shall examine the data found in the tax register for these four *nahiyes*, village by village. First, we shall present the

³⁰⁴ It should be noted that, unlike the 1593 abridged defter, the number of *nahiyes* has slightly increased. This can also be explained by the fact that, due to the number of tribes settled here in the preceding decades, new territories were allocated for them.

³⁰⁵ *Physical Geography of the Armenian SSR*, Yerevan, 1971, p. 57.

Armenian-populated villages, indicating the names of the taxpayers; subsequently, the settlements with Muslim populations and the nomadic tribes registered within those *nahiyes* will be presented. We shall also examine the types of taxes collected in order to form an approximate picture of the region's economic situation.

b) The Armenian Population and Settlements of the Tavus (Tavush) Nahiyе

According to the tax register, the first village of the nahiyе was Ghochalu, which had 41 taxpayers.³⁰⁶ The list of taxpayers is as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Nerses, son of Melikset | 23. Yengibar, son of |
| 2. Parsadan, his brother | Charkhan |
| 3. Manucher, his brother | 24. Vardan, son of Bayandur |
| 4. Grigor, son of Nerses | 25. Sargis, son of Tarkhan |
| 5. Melikbek, son of Parsadan | 26. Mkhitar, son of |
| 6. Mirza, son of Mkhitar | Khachatur |
| 7. Arutin, son of Shmavon | 27. Amirbek, son of Movses |
| 8. Aleksan, his brother | 28. Grigor, his son |
| 9. Khachatur, son of Jaghum? | 29. Avag, son of Tavansar |
| 10. Yengibar, son of Budagh | 30. Sarhad, son of Ghazaros |
| 11. Bagh, son of Marut | 31. Nazarbek, his son |
| 12. Pedros, his son | 32. Sargis, son of Tavansar |
| 13. Eskandar, son of Tuman | 33. Khachatur, his brother |
| 14. Sardar, his brother | 34. Arakel, son of Karapet |
| 15. Sargis, his brother | 35. Sargis, his son |

³⁰⁶ COA, No. 903, p. 249.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 16. Vardan, his brother | 36. Sarun, son of Tavansar |
| 17. Arutin, son of Eskandar | 37. Petros, his son |
| 18. Sharmazan, son of Khachatur | 38. Avag, son of Kurajan |
| 19. Bagh, his son | 39. Hovhannes, his son |
| 20. Khachatur, son of Kusar | 40. Hovhannes, son of priest
Ohan |
| 21. Kuli, his son | |
| 22. Bayandur, son of Sargis | 41. Hovhannes, son of priest
Nerses |

From the types of crop taxes levied upon this village, it may be inferred that it was a high-altitude settlement. Furthermore, the precise localisation of the subsequent villages in the register allows for the assumption that it was situated in the vicinity of the present-day village of Navur in the Tavush Province. It is known that the settlement of Navur was also referred to as Novchalu; thus, considering the similarity between Ghochalu and Novchalu, we may surmise that these were perhaps the same village.

The *ispenje* collected from the village amounted to 4,520 akches. In this instance, the *ispenje* per capita stood at approximately 110 akches. The total sum of all taxes collected from the village of Ghochalu amounted to 25,000³⁰⁷ akches.³⁰⁸ The remaining taxes primarily accrued from the harvests of the crops (wheat, barley, millet, oats, etc.), rendered as specific monetary sums.

The village of Armudlu had 17 taxpayers:

³⁰⁷ When the various types of taxes mentioned are summed, considerable discrepancies are often observed. As a rule, these discrepancies tend to be to the detriment of the taxpayers. This phenomenon is also evident in the tax registers of other localities. See **Papazyan H.**, *The Turkish Tax Registers of the Village of Vagharshapat from 1725 and 1728*, "Bulletin of Matenadaran", 1960, no. 5, pp. 444–445.

³⁰⁸ COA, No. 903, pp. 249–250.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Sargis, son of Davit | 10. Mikayel, son of Hovhannes |
| 2. Mkhitar, son of Avag | 11. Sargis, his son |
| 3. Margare, his son | 12. Sargis, son of Miskham |
| 4. Gaspar, son of Sarkhan | 13. Hakob, son of Mrav |
| 5. Balasan, his brother | 14. Ohan, his son |
| 6. Babas, his son | 15. Sahak, son of Sargis |
| 7. Arakel, son of Poghos | 16. Baghi, son of Arakel |
| 8. Sargis, his brother | 17. Arslan, son of Miskham ³⁰⁹ |
| 9. Ohan, son of Shmavon | |

The translation of the village name (meaning “place of pears” or “pear orchard” in Turkish; in Armenian – Tandzut), alongside the precise localisation of the subsequent village in the defter, facilitates an understanding of its topography. It must have been situated not far from the road leading from the village of Tavush to Chinchin, in the Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia. Until the Soviet era, this locality, known as Tandzut, served as a wintering station.³¹⁰ The *ispenje* tax collected from the village of Armudlu (Tandzut) amounted to 2,040 akches, calculated at 120 akches per capita. Other taxes, combined with the *ispenje*, totalled 18,000 akches.³¹¹

The village of Chinchin had 32 taxpayers:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Atabek, son of Manuchehr | 17. Balasan, son of Taban? |
| 2. Karadash, his brother | 18. Abraham, son of Markos |
| 3. Hovhannes, son of Dogher? | 19. Bayandur, his son |
| 4. Sargis, his brother | 20. Avag, son of Khachik |

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³¹⁰ **Hakobyan T. Kh., St. T. Melik-Bakhshyan, Barsegyan H. Kh.**, *Dictionary of Toponymy of Armenia and Adjacent Territories*, v. 5, Yerevan, 2001 p. 34. See **Korkotyan Z.**, *The Population of Soviet Armenia in the Last Century (1831–1931)*, Yerevan, 1932, p. 74.

³¹¹ COA, No. 903, p. 250.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 5. Nazarbek, his son | 21. Kirakos, his son |
| 6. Baghi, son of Karakhan | 22. Priest Ghazar, son of Hovhannes |
| 7. Sargis, his brother | 23. Matevos, son of Baghdasar |
| 8. Mkhitar, his son | 24. Baghi, son of Sarkis |
| 9. Mkrtich, son of Bayandur | 25. Hovhannes, son of Vrtanes |
| 10. Piram, his brother | 26. Arutin, son of Manuk |
| 11. Babakhan, son of Hovhannes | 27. Alikhan, son of Sargis |
| 12. Arakel, his brother | 28. Dogher?, son of Dolukhan |
| 13. Mkhitar, son of Babakhan | 29. Kirakos, his brother |
| 14. Sargis, son of Davit | 30. Manuchehr, son of Davit |
| 15. Alikhan, son of Aghbali | 31. Arutin, son of Ayyvaz |
| 16. Karakhan, his brother | 32. Grigor, son of Khachatur |

The settlement corresponds to the village of Chinchin in the Tavush Province. Judging by the presence of old abandoned village sites within its territory, it may be inferred that this is one of the rather ancient settlements of Tavush. As previously noted, the village is attested in the colophon of a Gospel dating to 1619.³¹² The taxpayers of Chinchin village paid 3,020 akches in *ispenje*, amounting to approximately 95 akches³¹³ per capita. In total, the village rendered 17,000 akches to the Ottoman treasury.³¹⁴

The village of Tavus (Tavush), together with the Sokut mazra,³¹⁵ had 41 taxpayers³¹⁶:

³¹² See *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, pp. 688–689.

³¹³ Compared to the other villages, the *ispenje* collected from Chinchin is the lowest.

³¹⁴ COA, No. 903, p. 251.

³¹⁵ A location that has no permanent population.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Tarsam?, son of priest
Sarkis | 21. Azat, son of Sargis |
| 2. Nazar, his brother | 22. Melkom, his brother |
| 3. Khosrov, his son | 23. Vardan, son of Azat |
| 4. Priest Sargis, son of Adibek | 24. Arutin, son of Shmavon |
| 5. Agham, his son | 25. Abraham, his brother |
| 6. Petros, son of Pirkar | 26. Balasan, son of Aghibar |
| 7. Baghi, son of Amirkhan | 27. Martiros, his brother |
| 8. Balasan, son of Ada | 28. Hovhannes, son of Mkrkich |
| 9. Khosrov, his son | 29. Matevos, his brother |
| 10. Mkhitar, son of Mirza | 30. Sargis, son of Anton |
| 11. Hovsep, his brother | 31. Mkhitar, son of Karagyoz |
| 12. Martiros, son of Grigor | 32. Arutin, his son |
| 13. Shmavon, son of
Hovhannes | 33. Gaspar, son of Vartan |
| 14. Mkrkich, his brother | 34. Sutabar?, son of Ohanes |
| 15. Martiros, son of Shmavon | 35. Kirakos, son of Ohan |
| 16. Hakob, son of Alikhan | 36. Grikor, his son |
| 17. Ghazar, his brother | 37. Ovanes, son of Balasan |
| 18. Manuchehr, son of
Khachum | 38. Shmavon, son of Mardiros |
| 19. Sarkhan, son of Mardi?
(Martiros) | 39. Ovanes, his brother |
| 20. Aslibek, son of Karapet | 40. Shahnazar, son of Nerses |
| | 41. Mirza, son of Serdar |

The settlement is among the most ancient villages of the district, being mentioned as early as the 9th century under the name Tus. In the 17th century, a scribe named Yesayi transcribed several manuscripts here, in the colophons of which the settlement is also referred to as "Tayuz" and "Tavuz". The taxpayers of Tavush village paid 4,920 akches in *isperje*, at the rate of 120 akches per capita. Within the list of taxes levied upon the village crops, the presence of

taxes on cotton and silk³¹⁷ is particularly noteworthy. Owing to a milder climate compared to other settlements in the district, the variety of crops in this village was more extensive. Furthermore, there were seven functioning watermills in the village, which collectively rendered 1,680 akches in tax. The total sum of all taxes collected from the settlement amounted to 27,000 akches.³¹⁸

The village of Movses, together with the Movses mazra, had 11 taxpayers:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Martiros, son of Matevos | 7. David, son of Hanes |
| 2. Sargis, son of Khachatur | 8. Hakob, his brother |
| 3. Adibek, son of Manas | 9. Vardum, son of Kirakos |
| 4. Jahi?, his brother | 10. Vardan, son of Poghos |
| 5. Hakob, son of Isakhan | 11. Davit, his son |
| 6. Murad, son of Vardan | |

The settlement is undoubtedly the village of Movses in the present-day Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia, of which there are no other mentions in written sources. Nevertheless, the presence of ancient monuments and cemeteries within the village

³¹⁷ It is worth noting that silk was in great demand during the specified period. Within the context of Persian–Ottoman relations, silk occupied a particularly significant position, and it is no coincidence that peace treaties concluded between the two states consistently included specific clauses addressing the export of silk from Iran to Turkey. See **Papazyan H.**, *The Role of Armenians in the Silk Industry of Turkey and the Agreement Concluded in Tabriz in 1729*, "Bulletin of Matenadaran", 1969, no. 9, pp. 244–245, cf. **Matthee R.**, *The politics of trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for silver, 1600–1730*, Cambridge, 1999. Gandzak and its surrounding areas were considered one of the most important centres for raw silk production. Analysis of the tax registers indicates that certain Armenian villages, located in lower-lying zones with milder climatic conditions, engaged in sericulture. Silk production in Tavush village continued to develop even during the Soviet period; see **Parsadanyan V.**, *The Experience of Leading Sericulturists of Tovuz Village, Shamshadin*, Yerevan, 1958.

³¹⁸ COA, No. 903, p. 253.

territory allows for the conclusion that it is one of the district's oldest settlements. There is no information regarding the *isperje* collected from this locale. Two watermills were in operation in the village, from which 240 akches were levied. In total, the village of Movses rendered 18,000 akches to the Ottoman treasury.³¹⁹

The village of Ghalatavus, with the Chay mahalle (quarter), had 74 taxpayers:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Avag, son of Atabek | 39. Sargis, son of Avanes |
| 2. Hovhannes, his son | 40. Balasan, son of Hakob |
| 3. Sargis, son of Hovhannes | 41. Hakob, son of Shmavon |
| 4. Aghabek, his brother | 42. Nazar, his son |
| 5. Mehriar, son of Martiros | 43. Sargis, son of Arakel |
| 6. Arutin, his son | 44. Avanes, son of Kirakos |
| 7. Tadevos, son of Martiros | 45. Nazar, his son |
| 8. Sevaknas, son of Baghi | 46. Baghi, son of Sarkis |
| 9. Avag, his son | 47. Khachum, son of Altun |
| 10. Muradkhan, son of Margare | 48. Avanes, his son |
| 11. Hovhannes, his brother | 49. Aleksan, son of Sarukhan |
| 12. Khachatur, his son | 50. Andon, his brother |
| 13. Davit, son of Kirakos | 51. Arutin, son of Avanes |
| 14. Sargis, son of Ulubek | 52. Hakob, son of Sargis |
| 15. Ulubek, his son | 53. Nuri, his brother |
| 16. Ayvazkhan, son of Gusan | 54. Baghi, son of Arakel |
| 17. Arakel, his son | 55. Ghazar, his brother |
| 18. Markos, son of Sargis | 56. Sargis, son of Saham |
| 19. Hovhannes, his son | 57. Priest Miramkhan, son of
Kuli |
| 20. Davit, son of Balasan | 58. Saribek, son of Vardan |
| 21. Hovhannes, son of Martiros | |

³¹⁹ **Ibid.**, p. 255.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 22. Eskandar, son of Manuk | 59. Avanes, son of Matevos |
| 23. Daniel priest, son of Azaria | 60. Kuki, his son |
| 24. Adibek, son of Kurghamar? | 61. Balasan, son of Matevos |
| 25. Kurghamar?, his son | 62. Sarda, son of Hovhannes |
| 26. Melikset, son of Hovhannes | 63. Eskandar, his son |
| 27. Ghazar, his brother | 64. Mkhitar, son of Hovhannes |
| 28. Manuel, son of Melikset | 65. Sala?, son of Maghos |
| 29. Minas, son of Sahak | 66. Hovhannes, son of
Baghdasar |
| 30. Sarkis, his son | 67. Gaspar, his son |
| 31. Atabek, son of Timur | 68. Khosrov, son of Saham |
| 32. Ayvaz, son of Mkrtych | 69. Melikset, son of Baghi |
| 33. Mkrtych, son of Martiros | 70. Sahak, his brother |
| 34. Ohan, son of Karamurad | 71. Babakhan, his son |
| 35. Azaria, son of Sahak | 72. Ohan, son of Babakhan |
| 36. Avag, his brother | 73. Ohan, son of Mkrtych |
| 37. Mkhitar, son of Avanes | 74. Galust, his brother |
| 38. Avanes, his son | |

The village of Ghalatavus³²⁰ corresponds to the town of Berd in the Tavush Province of the Republic of Armenia. Within the same page of the tax register, the village is also attested as “Ghala”, which translates as “Fortress” – “*Berd*”. Despite the fact that the Tavush fortress had long since been in ruins, the adjacent settlement essentially bore the name Tavush Fortress (translated from Turkish) or simply Berd. As previously noted, the settlement is found under the name Berd in Armenian primary sources within a colophon of a Gospel dated 1608.³²¹ In the ensuing years, the village continued to expand, and a church was constructed there. Also noteworthy is the mention of the “Chai” (River)

³²⁰ After the incorporation of the region into the Russian Empire in 1801, the settlement continued to bear the name Tovuzkala for many years.

³²¹ *Grand Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts*, vol. I, p. 1229.

quarter associated with the settlement. To this day, the area in the town of Berd adjacent to the Tavush River is similarly called the “River Quarter” (“*Keti tagh*” in the local dialect). The taxpayers of Berd paid 8,880 akches in *ispenje*, at a rate of 120 akches per capita. There were also five functioning watermills in Berd, from which 600 akches were levied. The total taxes collected from the village amounted to 40,000 akches. The *mazras* (arable lands) of Aytalasin and Chanak also belonged to Berd.³²²

The village of Kirzan (Krzen), located in the lowland area, was the only settlement in the region with a non-Muslim population. A total of 9 taxpayers were recorded there:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Alikhan, son of Atan | 6. Abraham, his son |
| 2. Velikhan, his son | 7. Khachem, son of Kadim |
| 3. Mirzaxhan, son of Pari? | 8. Manuchehr, his son |
| 4. Isakhan, his brother | 9. Avag, son of Serdar |
| 5. Sarun, son of Kursab? | |

Krzen is situated in the vicinity of the Kura River.³²³ The taxpayers of the village paid 1,080 akches in *ispenje*, at a rate of 120 akches per capita. From the two watermills located there, 240 akches were levied. Within the list of Armenian-populated villages of the *nahiye*, this settlement, alongside the village of Tavush, was also

³²² COA, No. 903, pp. 256–257.

³²³ For a detailed account of this village with a rich historical past, see **Karapetyan S.**, *op. cit.*, pp. 286–297. The village was completely depopulated of Armenians in 1988. For a long time, it retained its historical name; however, in 2012, the Azerbaijani authorities officially renamed it Hunanlar. For further details, see *Point 5 of the Official Decision of the Milli Mejlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated 7 March 2012 on the Partial Amendments to the Administrative-Territorial Division of Tovuz District (Tovuz rayonunun inzibati ərazi bölgüsündə qismən dəyişikliklər edilməsi haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Milli Məclisinin 7 mart 2012-ci il tarixli, 310–IVQ sayılı Qərarı*; <https://e-qanun.az/framework/23284>, retrieved on 10/09/2025).

subject to taxes on cotton and silk. The total taxes collected from the settlement amounted to 26,000 akches.³²⁴

c) The Muslim Population and Settlements of the Tavus (Tavush) Nahiye

An examination of the tax register's data reveals that the lowland areas of the Tavush nahiye were primarily inhabited by Muslim tribes. This shift in the demographic profile, as previously noted, commenced in preceding centuries and continued under the Safavid Shahs, when several Turkic Qizilbash tribes were granted estates and established themselves within the region. For the purpose of elucidating various socio-economic issues concerning the history and general environment of the Tavush district during the period under examination, it proves useful to address the Muslim settlements and nomadic tribes recorded in the register, without presenting the specific lists of taxpayers. This analysis will further assist in identifying the principal tribes that, by settling in the proximity of Armenian localities over the years, gradually appropriated a number of formerly Armenian-populated villages, Turkifying their original names.

Among the settlements with a Muslim population, the village of Khalifalu is the first mentioned. The village was likely situated in the lower reaches of the Tavush River, in the vicinity of the present-day town of Tovuz in Azerbaijan. According to the defter, it possessed nine taxpayers.³²⁵ The villages of Sharphashalu and Kacharali (Ghacharali, Gacharali) are also mentioned as being subordinate to this village, with

³²⁴ COA, No. 903, p. 263.

³²⁵ COA, No. 903, p. 251.

one and ten taxpayers respectively. The tax register notes that the inhabitants of this village utilised the pastures of the Miapor Mountains as their *yayla* (summer mountain pasture). Together, these three settlements rendered 20,000 akches.³²⁶ Notably, the Muslim equivalent to the *ispenje* – the *bennak*, amounted to 40 akches. If we compare this to the rate of *bennak* levied in other regions of the Ottoman Empire, it is evident that here, too, the figure is slightly elevated. Nevertheless, the discrepancy compared to the *ispenje* collected from the Armenians is striking, being three times lower.

Not far from Tavush village, the village of Alibeylu is mentioned, which was inhabited by the Tatlu tribe. Fifteen taxpayers were registered here, who paid 9,000 akches.³²⁷ Representatives of this same tribe, fourteen taxpayers in number, also lived in the village of Imamqulibek and paid 12,000 akches in tax.³²⁸

Durakhan village was populated by the Oksuzlu tribe and had twenty-five taxpayers. Representatives of this tribe would sometimes visit the uninhabited abandoned settlements of Saatlu(?) and Kyosalar and Chinar, which were near Tavush. The latter would migrate from these specified locations in December towards Buzik(?) and Chenirak(?) (which likely correspond to the Kura-adjacent regions, where the winters are comparatively milder).³²⁹ Their less-frequently used migratory grounds included the village of Farzali (Gharsali), located within the Akhnja nahiye, where five taxpayers were registered, and Kalichali village, which had one taxpayer. The person registered in the

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 241. In the tax register, the village of Imamqulibek is listed under the subdivision of the Hasansu nahiye; however, it is explicitly indicated that it belongs to Tavush.

³²⁹ See COA, No. 903, pp. 253–254.

village was Kalichali, son of Kalichali, and the village likewise bore the name Kalichali. This reality, which is also encountered in the case of other nahiyes, is noteworthy from the perspective of the formation of new place names and Turkification. The emptied village of Vahidlu, in the Akhnja nahiye, also belonged to the Oksuzlu tribe. This specified tribe paid 25,000 akches to the Ottoman treasury.³³⁰

The Hajiali tribe registered in the Tavush nahiye had thirty-nine taxpayers. According to the document, they did not occupy any permanent settlements. Leading a nomadic lifestyle, they would ascend the Miapor Mountains in the summer. The taxes they paid to the Ottoman treasury amounted to 25,000 akches.³³¹

Among the tribes without permanent settlements was also the Bayahmadlu tribe, with eighteen taxpayers, who paid 6,000 akches. They were primarily engaged in animal husbandry, periodically changing their place of residence. A similar lifestyle was led by the Binaqli tribe, which had twenty-seven taxpayers and paid 9,000 akches to the Ottoman treasury.³³²

The largest of the Muslim nomadic tribes in the Tavush nahiye was the Karakoyunlu tribe, with 171 taxpayers. Don Juan of Persia³³³ also speaks of an eponymous tribe, considering them one of the foundational units of the Safavid state. The likelihood that we are dealing with the same tribe is high. It is difficult to say precisely when they appeared in the lower regions of the Tavush river basin. According to the tax register, they wintered in the vicinity of the

³³⁰ **Ibid.**, pp. 254–255.

³³¹ **Ibid.**, p. 258.

³³² **Ibid.**, pp. 258–259.

³³³ See **Don Juan of Persia**, *A shi'ah catholic, 1560–1604*, Translated and Edited with an Introduction by G. Le Strange, London, 1926, p. 46.

Kura, and ascended the Miapor Mountains in the summer. This rather numerous tribe paid merely 14,000 akches to the treasury.³³⁴

The village of Arablu, inhabited by the Amirlu tribe, had twenty-two taxpayers. According to the tax register, the settlement was situated in the vicinity of the Kura River, while the inhabitants migrated to the Miapor district in the Gharaghaya nahiye during the summer months. This tribe also resided in the adjacent settlement of Karakhanlu, where seventeen taxpayers were registered. The nearby depopulated village of Kulaja also belonged to the Amirlu tribe, where they were engaged in agriculture.³³⁵ This evidence is noteworthy as it demonstrates that the various Muslim tribes that had established themselves in the region over the centuries possessed distinct differences in their modes of existence. By the 18th century, a portion of these tribes had effectively transitioned to a sedentary lifestyle, while others continued to lead a nomadic way of life. The Amirlu tribe paid 110,000 akches to the treasury.³³⁶ It appears that, owing to their sedentary nature, this tribe paid significantly higher taxes compared to others, despite being relatively small in number. In total, the Muslim villages and tribes of the Tavush nahiye rendered 230,000 akches in tax to the Ottoman treasury.

Thus, according to the document, seven tribes were registered in the Tavush nahiye: the Amirlu, Oksuzlu, Hajiali, Bayahmadlu, Binaqli, Karakoyunlu, and Tatlu. Some of these tribes had no permanent settlements. The Karakoyunlu, Binaqli, Bayahmadlu, and Hajiali tribes, being the most numerous in the nahiye, led a nomadic lifestyle. During the summer months, they would ascend the Miapor Mountains,

³³⁴ COA, No. 903, pp. 259–261.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 261–262.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

wintering in the regions adjacent to the Kura. The Oksuzlu tribe occupied one settlement, the village of Durakhan.

As a result of an oversight by the compilers of the defter, the villages of Farzali (Gharsali) and Kalichali, which belonged to the Akhnja nahiye and were inhabited by the Oksuzlus, were included in the subsection of the Tavush nahiye. Within the nahiye, the Tatlu tribe occupied two villages: Alibeylu and Imamqulibek. The Amirlu tribe was registered in the villages of Arablu and Karakhanlu, near the Kura.

The compilers left no mention regarding the tribal affiliation of the inhabitants of the Muslim-populated villages of Khalifalu, Sharshapalu, and Kacharali (or Gharachali). The settlements inhabited by Muslims numbered ten in total, where 119 taxpayers were registered. Among the tribes without permanent settlements, 255 individuals were registered.

Identification of the Muslim tribes registered in the low-lying and Kura-adjacent regions of the Tavush nahiye indicates that these were, as a rule, various branches of the Zulkadar and Otuz-iki. As previously noted, Tavush and Zakam were granted as a hereditary *olkā* (domain) specifically to the Zulkadars; thus, it is no coincidence that their sub-branches already occupied the plains of Tavush. The tribal name of the Tatlus is preserved within the names mentioned by Iskandar Monshi: Ali Sultan Tati-oglu Zulkadar,³³⁷ Aslams Khan Tati-oglu Zulkadar,³³⁸ Shahvali Sultan Tati-oglu Zulkadar,³³⁹ and Shahrokh Beg Tati-oglu Zulkadar.³⁴⁰ By placing the lineage names Tati-oglu and Zulkadar side

³³⁷ See **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. I, pp. 121, 154, 179.

³³⁸ See **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. II, p. 915.

³³⁹ See **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. I, p. 216.

³⁴⁰ **Ibid.**, p. 333.

by side, Monshi implies that the Tatlus were a branch or clan of the Zulkadars. The function of Tati-oglu as a tribal or clan name is suggested by the meaning of the word *oghul* (son), which in this instance serves as a specific ethnonymic or patronymic suffix.

We observe the same principle applied to the Hajiali tribe established in Tavush, as Monshi speaks of Muhammad Khan Hajilar Zulkadar.³⁴¹ In another instance, while addressing the Zulkadar tribe, he mentions Mostadam Sultan Hajilar as one of its prominent representatives.³⁴² In this case, the use of the plural form Hajilar within the personal name testifies to their status as a Zulkadar branch.³⁴³ Muhammad Khalifa Hajilar Zulkadar served as the governor of Astarabad and, subsequently, of Shirvan. The Amirlus are likewise known as a branch of the Zulkadars.³⁴⁴

The Bayahmadlus and Karakoyunlus registered in the Tavush nahiye were among the tribes included within the Otuz-iki. Monshi refers to this tribal confederation as the Otuz-iki or the Otuz-iki Turkmens.³⁴⁵ According to the author, it was a union of thirty-two tribes from the environs of Karabakh (likely the lowland regions of the Kura and Araks valleys), and for this reason, it received the name Otuz-iki, which translates from Turkish as “thirty-two”.

Based on the information provided by the author, who was well-acquainted with the affairs of the Safavid court, it may be conjectured

³⁴¹ **Ibid.**, p. 339.

³⁴² **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. II, p. 1310.

³⁴³ On another occasion, Monshi places the names of the Shamsaddinlu and Hajilar side by side. According to Roger Savory, these are the two branches of the Zu'l-Qadar; see **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. 2, p. 839, including the footnote on the same page.

³⁴⁴ *Şamşəddil nahiyəsinin kameral təsviri. 1860-ci il* (Tərcümə, tərtib, ön söz və qeydlərin müəllifi Nazir Əhmədli), s. 10.

³⁴⁵ See **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. II, p. 848.

that the Javanshirs were the most influential within this tribal union and perhaps rallied the others around them.³⁴⁶ At the end of the 16th century, Shirvan became a new theatre of conflict between Safavid Iran and the Ottoman Empire; consequently, to protect the city and its environs and to forestall a potential Ottoman advance, the decision was made to dispatch the Qajars, the Otuz-iki, and the tribes of the Karabakh vicinity to Shirvan.³⁴⁷ From this, we may surmise that the Bayahmadlus, who were part of the Otuz-iki, subsequently moved into Tavush. Interestingly, according to the Ottoman defter of 1727, a portion of the Bayahmadlus was registered in the lowland regions of Karabakh and wintered on the banks of the Kura.³⁴⁸ In all likelihood, the Karakoyunlus, as part of the tribal union, also approached the borders of Armenia alongside them. Regarding the Oksuzlus, Azerbaijani researchers consider them a branch of the Shamshaddinlus.³⁴⁹

d) Abandoned Villages

The deserted settlements of the nahiye number ten in total: Saatlu, Kyosalar, Kulaja, Ghamishlu,³⁵⁰ Kyzyl Bulak,³⁵¹ Kamal,³⁵² Girzantala, Karachlu, Yanykchinar, and Chinar.³⁵³ The abandoned state of these villages may be attributed to several factors: 1. internal migration of the

³⁴⁶ **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. II, p. 1068.

³⁴⁷ See **Eskandar Beg Monshi**, vol. I, p. 389.

³⁴⁸ COA, No. 903, p. 511.

³⁴⁹ See *Şəmşəddil nahiyəsinin Kameral təsviri*, pp. 10–11.

³⁵⁰ COA, No. 903, p. 255.

³⁵¹ **Ibid.**

³⁵² COA, No. 903, p. 256.

³⁵³ **Ibid.**

population; 2. Lezgin incursions; 3. Perso-Ottoman wars; 4. natural disasters, famines, and epidemics that afflicted the region during various historical cycles. The document also contains indirect information regarding the uninhabited nature of certain locales. The settlement of Karachlu is mentioned as having been deserted for a long time.³⁵⁴ In the case of Ghamishlu, situated near the Armenian-populated village of Movses, it is noted that it was destroyed by the Gharachorlus.³⁵⁵ This testimony is noteworthy, as reports of Gharachorlu incursions into north-eastern Armenia are not confirmed by other sources. Given that the habitat of this Kurdish tribe was located quite far from Tavush and its adjacent districts,³⁵⁶ it may be assumed that the compilers of the register intended to refer to the Lezgins who had devastated and plundered the region in preceding years. In all probability, they referred to the Lezgins as Gharachorlus. In this instance, it is possible that the term “*Gharachorlu*” was employed not as an ethnonym, but as a socionym – that is, a generic name for a marauding and predatory tribe.

The mention of the adjacent and abandoned villages of Kamal and Kyzyl Bulak (Karmiraghbyur³⁵⁷) among the deserted settlements may likewise be attributed to the Lezgin incursions. The fact remains that approximately twenty-six years prior to the compilation of the tax register, there was a functioning church in the village of Kamal, the

³⁵⁴ This settlement was most likely located in the vicinity of the present-day town of Tovuz in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

³⁵⁵ COA, No. 903, p. 255.

³⁵⁶ According to the data provided by the compilers of the *defter*, the Qarachorlu were a disobedient and predatory tribe of approximately 400 households, inhabiting the regions extending from the Araks River to Kashatagh; see COA, No. 903, p. 519.

³⁵⁷ Balabek Melyan expresses the view that the village's name may date back approximately 400–500 years. See **Melyan B.**, *Karmiraghbyur*, Yerevan, 2001, p. 7.

existence of which inherently suggests that it was then inhabited. Prior to the Perso-Ottoman military operations, the Lezgins had raided the region on several occasions. Consequently, it may be inferred that the two aforementioned villages shared the fate of Ghamishli, having been destroyed and depopulated by the highlanders.

Among the deserted settlements in the lowland and Kura-adjacent areas are the village of Kulaja, situated near the village of Krzen, as well as the villages of Saatlu and Kyosalar,³⁵⁸ located in the middle reaches of the Tavush River. According to the authors of the tax register, the latter two villages were occasionally occupied by members of the Oksuzlu tribe.³⁵⁹ The uninhabited villages in the higher-altitude regions are Girzan, Yanykchinar, and Chinar.

A portion of the destroyed settlements was utilised by nomadic Muslims. For instance, the territory of the destroyed Armenian village of Kamal was used by the nomadic Oksuzlu tribe.³⁶⁰ Similarly, the Amirlu tribe occasionally occupied the village of Kulaja. Therefore, we may state that the abandoned Armenian villages were gradually appropriated by the Muslim population, which naturally altered the ethnic character of the region.

In summary, a total of twenty-seven villages are mentioned within the Tavush nahiye. Ten of these villages were abandoned and uninhabited. Of the remaining seventeen villages, seven possessed an Armenian population consisting of 225 taxpayers. In the ten villages occupied by Muslims, the number of taxpayers stood at 119. Additionally, 255 individuals were registered among various nomadic

³⁵⁸ It most probably corresponds to the village of Nerkin Karmiraghbyur.

³⁵⁹ COA, No. 903, p. 255.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

tribes in the nahiye. Collectively, the Armenian villages paid 171,000 akches in tax, while the Muslims rendered 230,000 akches.

Even a cursory examination of the document's data reveals that the taxes paid by the Armenian population were more substantial. Conversely, the case of the Muslim Karakoyunlu tribe is quite telling: despite being the most numerous, they paid a mere 14,000 akches to the Ottoman treasury.

By taking the number of Armenian taxpayers, let us attempt to derive an approximate figure for the Armenian population of the Tavush nahiye.³⁶¹ Assuming an average family size of seven,³⁶² the total would amount to 1,575 individuals.

e) Akhnja (Akhnji) Nahiye

The first village of the nahiye was Chinar, which had 5 taxpayers:

1. Manuchehr, son of Nazar
2. Arutin, his brother
3. Nazar, son of Manuchehr
4. Manuel, son of Baghi
5. Arutin, son of Alikhan

This settlement corresponds to the village of Chinari within the consolidated community of Berd, in the present-day Tavush

³⁶¹ No information concerning unmarried individuals is recorded in the tax register; therefore, it may be assumed that the number of taxpayers corresponds to the number of households.

³⁶² Latest research estimates the average household size for the period under consideration in the range of five to ten persons. For the purposes of this study, an average of seven persons per Armenian household has been adopted, which appears to be the most reasonable figure. See **Melkonyan A., Yeranyan G., Malkhasyan M.**, *opp. cit.*

Province.³⁶³ No testimonies regarding the village are extant in written sources. Nevertheless, given its proximity to Khoranashat, the renowned spiritual centre of Tavush, it is certain that this locale has been inhabited since antiquity. The *ispenje* collected from the village of Chinar amounted to 600 akches, at a rate of 120 akches per capita. Together with the remaining taxes, a total of 9,000 akches was rendered.³⁶⁴

The village of Dabghadis (?) (Dighedis?) had 26 taxpayers:³⁶⁵

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Ghazar, son of Toros | 15. Nuri, son of Khachatur |
| 2. Sargis, his son | 16. Banu, his son |
| 3. Matos, son of Arakel | 17. Arutin, son of Sargis |
| 4. Isakhan, son of Sargis | 18. Avag, his brother |
| 5. Giorgi?, his son | 19. Ghazar, son of Vardan |
| 6. Mkrtich, son of Martiros | 20. Meli, son of Maramza? |
| 7. Sargis, his brother | 21. Hovhannes, son of Martiros |
| 8. Hakob, son of Marat | 22. Petros, his son |
| 9. Manuel, son of Mkhitar | 23. Atom, son of Sargis |
| 10. Avanes, son of Mkhitar | 24....., son of Margare |
| 11. Nazar, son of Baghdasar | 25. Pap, son of Gaspar |
| 12. Mkhitar, son of Sargis | 26. Sargis, son of Gaspar |
| 13. Hovhannes, his son | |
| 14. Mkhitar, son of Nazar | |

The peculiar orthography and phonetics of the village name initially appear difficult to decipher. However, an oral tradition aids in the localisation of the settlement. The inhabitants of the present-day

³⁶³ The mention of the village of Chinar in the document is important for clarifying certain misinterpretations associated with the village's name. See **Gharakhanyan G.**, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³⁶⁴ COA, No. 903, p. 264.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 264–265.

village of Artsvaberd, within the consolidated community of Berd in the Tavush Province, frequently refer to it as “Tghates”. According to the elders,³⁶⁶ the residents of Artsvaberd formerly dwelt in a location not far from the current village. Due to inexplicable circumstances, newborn boys began to perish, causing panic within the community. One villager moved with his family and established a residence on the site of the present village. Soon after, boys were born into his family who did not perish. To confirm this, some of his former fellow villagers came to visit him. When asked by those they encountered on the road where they were going, they replied, “*tghates*” – that is, to see the boy. Before long, many moved from the old village to this new site, and the settlement came to be called Tghates. Thus, the rendering of the Ottoman document as Dighedis or Dabghadis, alongside the precise localisation of adjacent villages, leaves no doubt that it is Artsvaberd.

The *ispenje* collected from the village of Tghates amounted to 3,120 akches, at a rate of 120 akches per capita. There were also two functioning watermills, from which 120 akches were levied. The total taxes together amounted to 26,000 akches.³⁶⁷

The village of Choratan had 27 taxpayers:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Isakhan, son of Hakob | 15. Khachatur, son of |
| 2. Yeghia, his son | Karakhan |
| 3. Karapet, son of Hovsep | 16. Mkhitar, his son |
| 4. Mirza, his son | 17. Manuel, son of Avag |
| 5. Vardan, son of Vardan | 18. Badal, his son |
| 6. Mkhitar, son of Nazar | 19. Mkhitar, son of Khachagur |
| 7. Sarukhan, his son | 20. Sahak, his son |

³⁶⁶ This oral account was recorded from local residents in the autumn of 2019 during field research conducted in the consolidated community of Berd.

³⁶⁷ COA, No. 903, p. 265.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 8. Kurghamar, son of
Karakhan | 21. Sargis, son of Anton |
| 9. Avag, his son | 22. Sargis, son of Mrav |
| 10. Alikhan, son of Sargis | 23. Baghi, son of Karagyozy |
| 11. Arutin, his son | 24. Priest Nerses, son of
Mkhitar |
| 12. Melikset, son of Babakhan | 25. Mkrtych, his brother |
| 13. Sarukhan, son of Nazar | 26. Sargis, son of Margare |
| 14. Hovhannes, his son | 27. Makhnam?, son of Varda |

The village of Choratan was among the relatively large settlements of this nahiye. As previously noted, a new church had been constructed here in the preceding century, in 1682. There is no further information regarding this settlement in Armenian sources. The village of Choratan paid 3,240 akches in *ispenje*, at a rate of 120 akches per capita. There was also one watermill in the village, from which 120 akches were levied. The total taxes collected from the village amounted to 30,000 akches.³⁶⁸

Among the non-Armenian villages of the Akhnja nahiye, the settlement of Ghushchu (Ghushanje, Kushanje) is mentioned. The inhabitants of the village irrigated their fields from the localities of Asrik and Ghajab. The village consisted of 26 taxpayers and two watermills, with the taxes collected amounting to 26,000 akches.³⁶⁹ The next and final settlement with a Muslim population was the village of Ghushchu Ojaklu, with eight taxpayers, who rendered 21,000 akches in tax.³⁷⁰ There is no data available in the tax register regarding the tribal affiliation of the inhabitants of these villages. Within the Akhnja nahiye, there were ten deserted and uninhabited villages:

³⁶⁸ COA, No. 903, p. 265.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

Alijalu,³⁷¹ Zoghalu, Ahmadluban,³⁷² Mehrab, Goshideyirman, Chift, Almalik, Bichanak, Mets Akhnja, and Pokr Akhnja.³⁷³ Locating some of these villages remains difficult. The latter two correspond to abandoned village sites situated five to six kilometres east of the village of Aygedzor, within the consolidated community of Berd.³⁷⁴ Regarding the village of Mehrab, the locality situated approximately 1.5 kilometres north-east of the reservoir along the course of the Khndzorut – a tributary of the Akhnji River, is still known as Mehrab to this day. The toponym Almalik (derived from the Turkish “*alma*”, meaning “apple”) suggests that this settlement must likewise have been located within the Khndzorut river basin.

In summary, there were fifteen settlements in total within the Akhnja nahiye. The majority of these settlements – ten villages, were abandoned and uninhabited. Of the remaining five villages, three were Armenian-populated, while two were inhabited by Muslims. In the three Armenian villages, the combined number of taxpayers stood at 58 individuals. The two villages with a Muslim population together possessed 34 taxpayers. Collectively, the three Armenian-populated villages rendered 65,000 akches to the Ottoman treasury, while the Muslim population paid 47,000 akches. Assuming an average family size of seven, the approximate number of Armenians in this group of villages would amount to 406 individuals.

³⁷¹ **Ibid.**, p. 263.

³⁷² **Ibid.**, p. 266.

³⁷³ **Ibid.**, p. 267.

³⁷⁴ See **Changlyan I.**, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

f) Hasansu Nahiye

One of the densely populated settlements of this region is the village of Ballughaya (Ballukia, Ballughaya, Ballukia), which had 29 taxpayers:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Avag, son of Sahak | 16. Hovhannes, son of Alikhan |
| 2. Sargis, son of Asatur | 17. Isakhan, son of Hakob |
| 3. Hovsep, his son | 18. Azat, son of Nazar |
| 4. Oshin, son of Nerses | 19. Mkrtych, son of Sarkhan |
| 5. Mkhitar, son of Tanan? | 20. Sarkhan, his son |
| 6. Baba, son of Sargis | 21. Vardan, son of Hovhannes |
| 7. Kirakos, his brother | 22. Melkom, son of Malam? |
| 8. Isakhan, son of Danabek | 23. Alikhan, son of Sargis |
| 9. Melik, son of Sarkhan | 24. Hakob, his son |
| 10. Avag, son of David | 25. Hovhannes, son of Mkhitar |
| 11. Abraham, his son | 26. Hovhannes, son of Mkhitar |
| 12. Baghi, son of Grigor | 27. Andon, son of Grigor |
| 13. Midich, his brother | 28. Sargis, son of Sarkhan |
| 14. Grigor, son of Ovanes | 29. Hovhannes, son of Grigor |
| 15. Mkhitar, his son | |

The localisation of this settlement is challenging due to the absence of sources. The types of crops taxed in the village suggest that it was situated in a high-altitude region. We can only surmise that it was located in the upper reaches of the Varagajur River – above the village of Verin Tsaghkavan within the consolidated community of Berd in the present-day Tavush Province, where several abandoned village sites remain preserved. The *ispenje* collected from the village amounted to 3,480 akches, at a rate

of 120 akches per capita. In total, all taxes combined amounted to 27,000 akches.³⁷⁵

The village of Mukharakhach (Mokharakhach) had 12 taxpayers:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Ulukhan, son of Mkrtych | 7. Isakhan, son of Karapet |
| 2. Shmavon, his brother | 8. Sarukhan, his brother |
| 3. Mkrtych, son of Ulukhan | 9. Mkhitar, son of |
| 4. Hakob, son of Baba | 10. Hakob, son of Sarukhan |
| 5. Sahak, son of Sargis | 11. Baghi, son of Melkon |
| 6. Karapet, his son | 12. Khachatur, son of Balasan |

We are likewise unable to establish the precise localisation of this settlement. Judging again by the types of crops, we believe it to have been a high-altitude settlement. It may be surmised that it corresponds to the abandoned village site of Bakhrikhach, situated approximately one kilometre south of the village of Verin Tsaghkavan. The *ispenje* collected from the village amounted to 1,440 akches, at a rate of approximately 120 akches per capita. Two watermills were also taxed in the settlement, rendered at 240 akches. All taxes combined amounted to 30,000 akches.³⁷⁶

The village of Matos had 11 taxpayers:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Hakob, son of Ohan | 6. Zakare, his son |
| 2. Karapet, son of Ohan | 7. Melkom, son of Matevos |
| 3. Petros, son of Vardevan | 8. Khachatur, son of Mkhitar |
| 4. Hovhannes, son of
Amirkhan | 9. Ohan, son of Vardan |
| 5. Sargis, son of Velikhan | 10. Mkhitar, his son |
| | 11. Tahrán, son of Baghdasar |

³⁷⁵ COA, No. 903, pp. 242–243.

³⁷⁶ COA, No. 903, p. 243.

The location of the settlement is not clear. The taxpayers paid 1,080 akches in *ispenje*, at a rate of approximately 98 akches per capita. All taxes combined amounted to 15,000 akches.³⁷⁷

The village of Khachbulagh (Khachaghbyur) had 13 taxpayers:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Janik, son of Alikhan | 7. Hovhannes, son of Mkhitar |
| 2. Avag, his brother | 8. Hovhannes, son of Sarukhan |
| 3. Isakhan, son of Karakhan | 9. Manuel, his son |
| 4. Bedi, son of Hovhannes | 10. Baghi, son of Hakob |
| 5. Hovsep, son of Hovhannes | 11. Ohan, son of Melkom |
| 6. Arakel, son of David | 12. Mirza, son of Kuli |
| | 13. Ghazar, son of Hovhannes |

In determining the topography of this settlement, a reference by Makar Barkhudaryants proves instructive. Describing the Shkhmurat Monastery, he wrote: *“Considerably above this monastery, on the left side of the valley stream, lie the abandoned village sites named Karagegh, Aghsu, and Khachbulagh, with their cemeteries and semi-effaced or ruined churches”*.³⁷⁸

Consequently, we may record that the village was situated in the upper basin of the Varagajur River, at a certain distance from the Shkhmurat Monastery. It is probable that the village acquired its name due to its proximity to the monastery. The taxpayers of the village paid 1,560 akches in *ispenje*, at a rate of 120 per capita. There was also one watermill in Khachbulagh, from which a tax of 120 akches was collected. The total taxes together amounted to 12,000 akches.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ **Ibid.**, p. 244.

³⁷⁸ **Barkhutariants**, p. 331.

³⁷⁹ COA, No. 903, pp. 244–245.

g) The Muslim Population of the Hasansu Nahiye

The lowland regions of the Hasansuu nahiye were inhabited by Muslims, a significant portion of whom belonged to the Gyojali tribe. According to the brief defter of 1593, representatives of this tribe resided in the environs of Barda. However, over time, they appeared in the region of the lower reaches of the Varagajur River and gradually established firm roots there.³⁸⁰ Faruk Sumer, a scholar renowned for his studies on Turkic tribes, considers the Gyojalis to be one of the clans of the Otuz-iki.³⁸¹ Among the villages they occupied, the first mentioned is the village of Gyojalu, with 69 taxpayers. Interestingly, these inhabitants were sedentary, and the list of the village crops also included cotton. Members of the same tribe were also registered in the neighbouring village of Ughurlu, which had 13 taxpayers. The village of Molla was likewise inhabited by the Gyojalis and had two taxpayers. Next is the village of Mahmedghulu, with 15 taxpayers. The village of Ghayib, which had one taxpayer, also belonged to the Gyojali tribe. The name of this sole taxpayer's father was Ghayib, which further corroborates our assumption that the incoming Turkic population consistently Turkified local settlements by devising new names. The use of Turkic names was naturally more familiar to the tax collectors and was undoubtedly encouraged by Ottoman officials.

The villages of Valirza, with three taxpayers, and Pirmahammad, with five taxpayers, were also inhabited by the Gyojalis. Together, the villages belonging to the Gyojalis rendered 135,000 akches to the

³⁸⁰ See *Gəncə-Qarabağ əyalətinin icmal dəftəri*, p. 11.

³⁸¹ Faruk Sumer, *Safevi Devletinin kuruluşu ve gelişmesinde Anadolu Türklerin rolü (Şah İsmail ile Halifeleri ve Anadolu Türkleri)*, Ankara, 1976, s. 198.

treasury.³⁸² The tax register contains noteworthy data regarding the territory occupied by the representatives of this tribe. They effectively resided in the region of the lower reaches of the Varagajur River and bordered the Qazakh sanjak. In addition to the Qazakh sanjak, mention is also made here of Shamshadin, situated near the Kasamal River, where the Gyojalis also resided.³⁸³

The other Muslim tribe of the Hasansu nahiye was the Tatlu, which, as previously noted, was a branch of the Zulkadar tribe and was also registered in the Tavus nahiye. They primarily occupied the areas above the settlements of the Gyojali tribe, situated below the village of Paravakar within the consolidated community of Berd in the present-day Tavush Province. The villages inhabited by the Tatlu tribe included Tatlu with 24 taxpayers, Ashatan with 1 taxpayer, Amirghulu with 23 taxpayers, and the settlements of Mikayeli and Yarbadali with 40 taxpayers. These five villages populated by the Tatlu tribe collectively rendered 68,000 akches in tax.³⁸⁴

Among the villages with a Muslim population in Hasansu was the settlement of Bayazedlu. The 32 taxpayers registered here belonged to the Bayazidlu tribe. A tax of 52,000 akches was levied from the village.³⁸⁵

Forty individuals were registered from the Kyzyl-Hajilu tribe, which possessed no permanent settlements within the nahiye. They spent the winter in wintering stations named Kulaghaj and Karichlu, while in the summer months, they ascended to the environs of Mount

³⁸² COA, No. 903, pp. 233–237.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

³⁸⁴ COA, No. 903, pp. 237–241.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

Hamza³⁸⁶. There is no data available regarding the taxes paid by this tribe.³⁸⁷

h) Abandoned Villages

The number of abandoned villages in the Hasansu nahiye reached twenty-five. These were: Aghunak, Mets (Great) Gyunash, Pokr (Small) Gyunash, Kulijan, Kilichshah, Gyokkilisa, Kulkendi, Kuzlu, Haram (long since in ruins), Alikhankendi, Ghuzan, Barsum, Hamzakend,³⁸⁸ Gharamkend, Sheykhmurad (long since in ruins), Matos (near Mokhrakhach), Salkid, Molla Naghdali, Tagh, Boyalji, Saklashen, Bishak, Toros, Alpalid, Hakhumkendi, and Konakh Gyormez.³⁸⁹ The localisation of a portion of these settlements is impossible with the sources at hand. The settlements of Mets and Pokr Gyunash were likely situated to the north-east of the present-day village of Paravakar, not far from the road leading to Nerkin Karmiraghbyur. The document notes that these villages were destroyed by the Gharachorlus (possibly Lezgins).³⁹⁰ The abandoned village site of Haram is located approximately 3 kilometres west³⁹¹ of the village of Tavush, on the

³⁸⁶ The mountain is located in Tavush Province and constitutes one of the peaks of the Varag (Hakhum, Paytapar) mountain range, which forms the watershed between the Aghstev and Varagajur rivers.

³⁸⁷ COA, No. 903, p. 248.

³⁸⁸ This village is also mentioned in the 1728 *Defter* of the Tiflis Vilayet, where the compilers included it within the boundaries of a different nahiye. See *Тифлис ауалэтинин муфэссэл дэфтэри*, Борчалы вэ Газах (1728–чи ил), Кириш, тэрчумэ вэ гејдлэрин муэллифи тарих елмлэри намизэди Шаһин Мустафајев, Бакы, 2001, p. 241.

³⁸⁹ COA, No. 903, pp. 243–248.

³⁹⁰ COA, No. 903, p. 243.

³⁹¹ See **Ghafadaryan K.**, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

road leading from Verin Tsaghkavan to Tavush. To this day, the locals refer to this place as Haram.

Hakhumkendi corresponds to the abandoned village site of Old Hakhum, situated slightly to the east of the village of Varagavan within the consolidated community of Berd.³⁹² The abandoned village site of Ghuzan is located in the area called “Ghuzani Kar” (Rock of Ghuzan) within the administrative boundaries of the present-day village of Chinchin. As recently as the 1930s, the remains of church walls were still visible there.³⁹³

The authors of the tax register place the settlement of Gyokkilisa in the vicinity of the village of Ghuzan. The name Gyokkilisa translates from Turkish as Blue Church. Approximately 3 kilometres south-west of Ghuzan in a straight line, on the right bank of the Varagajur River, there stands to this day a 12th-century church built of bluish basalt, which bears the name Kaptavank. Taking all this into account, we can assert that the settlement bearing the name Gyokkilisa was located in the immediate vicinity of Kaptavank. Below these abandoned sites, there likely lay another settlement destroyed by the Gharachorlus ((Lezgins(?)), namely Ghozlu or Kuzlu.³⁹⁴ The abandoned village site of Hamzakend must have been situated in the environs of the eponymous mountain.

The abandoned village site of Sheykhmurad was undoubtedly situated in the vicinity of the monastic complex known as the Shkhmurat Monastery, located approximately 6 to 7 kilometres from the village of Verin Tsaghkavan in the Tavush Province. Makar Barkhudaryants also mentioned this site, writing: *“To the east of this*

³⁹² **ibid.**, p. 306.

³⁹³ **ibid.**, p. 237.

³⁹⁴ COA, No. 903, p. 245.

monastery, not far distant, lies an abandoned village site and a cemetery named Shkhmurat". ³⁹⁵ Evidence of the site, including traces of houses, tonirs (tandoors), and a cemetery dating from the 12th to the 17th centuries, was still visible as recently as the 1930s. The mention of the ruined village of Sheykhmurad in the tax register corroborates the scholarly view that the monastery acquired its present name from the former settlement. ³⁹⁶

The abandoned village site of Konakh Gyormez corresponds to the area adjacent to the Paravakar reservoir, which locals still refer to as Ghonagh Gyormaz. Remains of a chapel and graves have been preserved there to this day. This village was likely also destroyed by the Lezgins.

In summary, there were forty-two settlements in total within the Hasansu nahiye. Of these, four villages were registered with an Armenian population, comprising sixty-five taxpayers who rendered a total of 84,000 akches in tax. Thirteen villages had a Muslim population, with 228 taxpayers. Additionally, twenty taxpayers were registered from the nomadic Kyzyl-Hajilu tribe. The Muslim population rendered 255,000 akches to the Ottoman treasury. The list of deserted settlements is extensive, numbering twenty-five villages. The majority of these were Armenian-populated in the recent past; their depopulation is primarily attributed to the devastating Lezgin incursions and the Perso-Ottoman wars.

³⁹⁵ **Barkhutariants**, p. 331.

³⁹⁶ See **Sargsyan G.**, *The Monastery of Shkhmurat*, "Etchmiadzin", 1956, no. 3, p. 22. The author further records the presence of nearly twenty former village sites located upstream along the Varagajur River from the village of Verin Tsaghkavan. The majority of these sites are no longer visible; nevertheless, narratives concerning them have been preserved in the collective memory of elderly local inhabitants.

The lowland regions of the Hasansu nahiye, which border the Qazakh sanjak, correspond to the route connecting Tiflis with Gandzak and Artsakh. Being situated periodically along the military transit routes of various armies, these regions had become depopulated. The majority of the Armenian settlements were located in the upper reaches of the Varagajur River. In comparison with other nahiyes, the number of abandoned villages is conspicuous. It may be inferred that, owing to their geographical position, these settlements invariably bore the initial brunt of the assaults by the Lezgins, as well as the Ottoman, Iranian, and Georgian forces.

i) The Asrik and Yal Nahiyes

The majority of the settlements of this nahiye were situated a short distance from the Khoranashat monastic complex. The scarcity of sources does not allow for a definitive answer as to whether this group of villages existed as a separate administrative unit during the Safavid era or not. Apart from the Ottoman defter, it is also attested as a sub-district in an Armenian primary source pertaining to a later period.³⁹⁷ The territory of this nahiye currently lies entirely within the Republic of Azerbaijan. Due to the silence of the sources and the fact that these settlements were depopulated of Armenians and subsequently inhabited by Muslims in the following decades, it is difficult to localise most of the villages of Asrik.

In the subsequent sections, the compilers of the tax register preferred to refer to the nahiye simply as Asrik, omitting the “Yal”

³⁹⁷ MM, № 7501, 231 b.

component. Consequently, we may record that the district possessed two names. According to the document, the villages of Asrik were:

The village of Keshishkend had 5 taxpayers:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Priest Sargis, son of Melkom | 3. Tahmaz, his brother |
| 2. Sarkis, son of Marghos | 4. Gaspar, son of Marghos |
| | 5. Ohan, his brother |

It likely corresponds to the ruined abandoned village site of Iritshen mentioned by Barkhudaryants, which was located not far from Khoranashat.³⁹⁸ Two circumstances support this assumption. Firstly, the nahiye is situated in the vicinity of Khoranashat; secondly, the toponym Keshishkend, when translated literally from Turkish, signifies "Priest's Village". Consequently, the identification of Iritshen with Keshishkend is beyond doubt. It may also be inferred that Priest Sargis, mentioned in the village's list of taxpayers, was one of the clerics of Khoranashat. The *ispenje* collected from the village amounted to 600 akches, at a rate of 120 akches per capita.³⁹⁹ All taxes combined totalled 9,000 akches.⁴⁰⁰

The village of Ghslamakhendi (Ghslamakhendi, Ghshlamakhendi, Kyshlamakhendi, Ghalakhendi?) had 14 taxpayers:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Mirza, son of Gaspar | 8. Kirakos, his brother |
| 2. Avag, his son | 9. Hovhannes, son of Kirakos |
| 3. Chalus?, son of Baghi | 10. Kiki?, son of Chalus? |
| 4. Voskan, his brother | 11. Baghi, son of Sukias |
| 5. Chalus?, son of Melkom | 12. Martiros, his son |

³⁹⁸ **Barkhutariants**, p. 326.

³⁹⁹ COA, No. 903, p. 268.

⁴⁰⁰ **Ibid.**, p. 269.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 6. Nazar, his son | 13. Sarukhan, son of Azaria |
| 7. Sargis, son of Bakos | 14. Ghazar, son of Khacham |

There is no information regarding the settlement in the sources, and its decipherment provides no further clues. We can only surmise that it was situated on the left bank of the Asrik River and must have been located not far from the village of Chinari, within the consolidated community of Berd in the present-day Tavush Province. The *ispenje* collected from the settlement amounted to 1,680 akches, at a rate of 120 per capita. All taxes combined totalled 13,000 akches.⁴⁰¹

The village of Sharkendi, also known as Koshaja (Ghushaja), had 7 taxpayers:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Voskan, son of Khachatur | 5. Avag, his brother |
| 2. Bekri, son of Vardan | 6. Jugha, son of Ghazar |
| 3. Avag, son of Hovhannes | 7. Ghazar, son of Vardan |
| 4. Zal, son of Barembek | |

The approximate location of this settlement is suggested by Barkhudaryants. While enumerating the abandoned village sites near Khoranashat, he mentions a village named Ghoshaji,⁴⁰² which corresponds to the alternative name of the settlement recorded in the tax register. The *ispenje* collected from the village amounted to 840 akches, at a rate of 120 per capita. In total, the settlement rendered 12,000 akches in tax to the Ottoman treasury.⁴⁰³

The village of Chamurtulu? had 21 taxpayer:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Kiki?, son of Matos | 12. Manur, his son |
| 2. Baghi, his brother | 13. Babakhan, son of Gagik |

⁴⁰¹ COA, No. 903, p. 269.

⁴⁰² **Barkhutariants**, p. 326.

⁴⁰³ COA, No. 903, pp. 269–270.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3. Matos, son of Kiki? | 14. Gagik, his son |
| 4. Sargis, son of Sahak | 15. Baba, son of Shmavon |
| 5. Marut, his brother | 16. Sarukhan, his brother |
| 6. Hovhannes, son of Sarkis | 17. Ghazar, son of Mkhitar |
| 7. Badal, son of Sakhur | 18. Mkrtich, son of Saribek |
| 8. Melikset, his son | 19. Serdar, his brother |
| 9. Avan, son of Marghos | 20. Manur, son of Hakhnazar |
| 10. Sargis, his son | 21. Balasan, son of Avag |
| 11. Hakhnazar, son of Ghazar | |

The localisation of this village, which possessed a fairly substantial population, is difficult. The problematic reading of the Ottoman text allows only for a cautious assumption that the settlement corresponds to the abandoned village site of Chilkinlu⁴⁰⁴ mentioned by Barkhudaryants. The *ispenje* collected from this village amounted to 2,520 akches, at a rate of 120 akches per taxpayer. All taxes combined totalled 13,000 akches.⁴⁰⁵

The village of Akbulak (Aghbulagh) had 19 taxpayers:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Sargis, son of Kirakos | 10. Sargis, son of Minas |
| 2. Khachatur, son of Ghazar | 11. Vardan, son of Melikkhan |
| 3. Avag, son of | 12. Kirakos, son of Avan |
| 4. Hovannes, son of Turjan | 13. Nazar, son of Baghi |
| 5. Ghazarhamza?, his son | 14. Azaria, his brother |
| 6. Kirakos, son of Hovannes | 15. Sargis, son of Ghazar |
| 7. Beknazar, his son | 16. Barjam?, his brother |
| 8. Minas, son of Abraham | 17. Arutin, son of Mkhitar |
| 9. Azaria, his brother | 18. Kirakos, son of Sargis |
| | 19. Hovannes, son of Yaghub |

⁴⁰⁴ **Barkhudariants**, p. 326.

⁴⁰⁵ COA, No. 903, p. 270.

The settlement of Aghbulagh most likely corresponds to the present-day village of Aghbulagh in the Tovuz district of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It is situated approximately 1.2 kilometres from the state border of the Republic of Armenia. Barkhudaryants also mentions Aghbulagh among the abandoned village sites in the vicinity of Khoranashat.⁴⁰⁶ It is probable that the village was depopulated of Armenians towards the end of the 18th century, after which the territory was appropriated and inhabited by Muslims. The *ispenje* collected from the village amounted to 2,280 akches, at a rate of 120 per capita. There were also two functioning watermills⁴⁰⁷ in the village of Aghbulagh, from which a tax of 200 akches was collected. All taxes combined totalled 13,000 akches.⁴⁰⁸

The Lak tribe, which comprised 39 taxpayers, is also mentioned as part of the Asrik nahiye. Specifically, the document states: *“The Lak community winters in the Akhnja and Asrik nahiyes, and for the yayla (summer pasture), they go to the Gharaghaya nahiye. Furthermore, they also winter in Dumaqlu and near the Kura, as well as going to Nerkin and Verin Zakam for the yayla”*.⁴⁰⁹ Effectively, they possessed two locations each for wintering and summer pasturing. The presence of the Laks in these specified territories is noteworthy in itself, considering that they are regarded as one of the Dagestani ethnic groups. Judging by their wintering sites, we may assume that, having initially occupied the coastal regions of the Kura, they appeared on the slopes of Miapor in search of more comfortable pastures, subsequently appropriating a portion of the pastures in the neighbouring Zakam and

⁴⁰⁶ **Barkhudariants**, p. 326.

⁴⁰⁷ The ruins of one of the aforementioned watermills are also mentioned by Samvel Karapetyan. See **Karapetyan S.**, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁴⁰⁸ COA, No. 903, p. 271.

⁴⁰⁹ COA, No. 903, p. 272.

Gharaghaya (Miapor district, Getik river valley) nahiyes. The Laks rendered 7,000 akches in tax to the Ottoman treasury.⁴¹⁰

The deserted and abandoned villages of the Asrik nahiye were: Munla Arij (?) (Mola Arij), Asrik, Chighurtala,⁴¹¹ Qolakir, Aghtash (White Rock), Karatash (Gharatash / Black Rock), Kirani, Boylulag (?),⁴¹² Chatakh, and Kul.⁴¹³ The locality of Qolakir corresponds to the section situated approximately 2 kilometres south of the reservoir on the Khndzorut River. This ruined village was likely located nearby, and the name has remained preserved in the collective memory of the people. Kiran is, in all probability, the present-day settlement of Kiran in the Republic of Azerbaijan, situated on the right bank of the Asrik. The village of Gharadash was presumably located in the vicinity of the eponymous mountain situated in the border zone between the village of Chinari in the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan. The village of Asrik likely corresponds to the settlement of Asrik Jirdakhan in the Republic of Azerbaijan, located 2.5 kilometres from the village of Chinari in the Republic of Armenia. Until the end of the last century, traces of a church, khachkars, and a cemetery were preserved there.⁴¹⁴ The village of Chatakh is undoubtedly the Armenian-populated village abandoned at the beginning of the 17th century, whose inhabitants, due to unknown circumstances, moved to the village of Mets Gharamurat in the Zakam district.⁴¹⁵ The localisation of the remaining settlements is impossible with the sources at hand.

⁴¹⁰ COA, No. 903, pp. 272–273.

⁴¹¹ **Ibid.**, p. 271.

⁴¹² **Ibid.**, p. 272. The name of the village is probably connected with the Lak tribe.

⁴¹³ **Ibid.**, p. 273.

⁴¹⁴ **Kartashyan A.**, *Karhat–Gulali–Aygedzor*, Yerevan, 1999, p. 315.

⁴¹⁵ *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts of the 17th Century (1601–1620)*, vol. I, p. 367.

Thus, according to the tax register, there were fifteen settlements in total within the Asrik nahiye. Of these, five villages were inhabited, possessing a combined total of 66 taxpayers – all of whom were Armenians. The number of Laks wintering there stood at 39. There were ten deserted and uninhabited settlements within the Asrik nahiye. The Armenian population rendered 60,000 akches in tax to the Ottoman treasury, while the Laks paid 7,000 akches. Assuming an average of seven members per Armenian family, we derive an approximate Armenian population of 462 individuals for the nahiye.

j) Summary

In summary, there were a total of 99 settlements within the nahiyes of Tavush, Hasansu, Akhnji, and Asrik, which constitute the Tavush district. The majority of these – 55 villages, lay in ruins and were abandoned. Of the remaining 44 villages, 19 possessed an Armenian population, while 25 were inhabited by Muslims. The total number of taxpayers in the Armenian villages amounted to 414 individuals. In the 25 Muslim villages, 381 taxpayers were registered, with an additional 334 individuals recorded from various nomadic tribes. Collectively, the Armenian settlements rendered 380,000 akches in tax to the Ottoman treasury, while the taxes paid by the Muslim population amounted to 539,000 akches. By assuming an average family size of seven, we derive an approximate figure of 2,898 individuals for the Armenian population of these nahiyes.

Although the data from the tax register regarding population numbers provide a general understanding of the region's demographic profile, it is presumed that the actual population must have been higher. Undeniably, a segment of the population evaded the tax collectors. It may be inferred that some fled to inaccessible locations, while others

escaped registration through bribery. Furthermore, military operations in the region had only recently concluded, and the populace had not yet fully returned to a peaceful way of life. In this context, the presence of the nomadic population registered in the nahiye must also be considered; it is probable that, given the conditions of warfare and their migratory lifestyle, they had entered the territory of the Tavush nahiye from other regions.

The data from the tax register also provide a specific insight into the economic activities of the Armenian population. The primary occupation of the inhabitants was agriculture, with the cultivation of wheat, barley, millet, and oats being predominant. The residents of the lower-altitude villages of Tavush and Krzen were also engaged in sericulture and the cultivation of cotton. It may be surmised that these products were subsequently sold in the city of Gandzak, considered the centre of the region.

Horticulture and animal husbandry were also widespread occupations, and in certain settlements, apiculture was practised. The Muslim population, occupying the lowland areas, primarily engaged in the more profitable sectors of sericulture and cotton cultivation.

A substantial number of watermills operated within the settlements of the Tavush district, which were likewise subject to taxation. An examination of the data from the tax register reveals that there were twenty-four watermills in total across the Armenian-populated villages of the four nahiyes.⁴¹⁶ The primary harvest of the local population consisted of cereal crops, the subsequent consumption of which generated a demand for milling services. The region's dense river system allowed this demand to be met. It is also worth noting that

⁴¹⁶ On the watermills of the Tavush River, see **Melyan A.**, *Notebook of Historical and Ethnographic Materials of Shamshadin*, Yerevan, 2018, p. 83.

the taxes levied upon these watermills were considerably higher compared to similar taxes in other parts of the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹⁷ With few exceptions, the Ottoman authorities taxed each watermill in the region at a rate of 120 akches.

The territories occupied by the Armenian population were more unfavourable (a fact also recorded by the compilers of the defter⁴¹⁸), while the scarcity of land and the rigid Ottoman fiscal policy created increasingly intolerable conditions. This circumstance may also account for the abandonment of several settlements in subsequent years and the migration of the population to other regions.

The villages with a Muslim population and the nomadic tribes primarily occupied the lowland areas of the lower reaches of the Varagajur and Tavush rivers, extending towards the Kura. These were chiefly various branches of the Zulkadar and Otuz-iki tribal confederations. The high-altitude zones of the four mentioned nahiyes remained entirely Armenian-populated. In terms of the population registered in the villages, Armenians constituted the majority, with 414 Armenian taxpayers compared to 381 Muslim taxpayers.

Throughout various historical cycles, the lowland regions were entirely appropriated by nomadic populations. Furthermore, under the Safavid Shahs, the Muslim populace of this area received a “new influx”. Consequently, the population of the lower reaches of the Tavush and Varagajur rivers, which, with minor exceptions, was

⁴¹⁷ In the 16th–17th centuries, this category of tax generally amounted to 60 akche; see **Mehdi İlhan M.**, *Amid (Diyarbakir) 1518 Tarihli Defter-I Mufassal*, Ankara, 2000, p. 31, **Ahmet Köç**, *Mülkiyet Bakimından Silistre Sancağı'nda Değirmenler (XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllar)*, Vakıflar Dergisi, Ankara, Yıl: Haziran 2020, Sayı: 53, p. 35.

⁴¹⁸ *Ottoman Laws in Western Armenia (16th–17th-century kanunnames)*, p. 120.

already entirely Muslim,⁴¹⁹ fundamentally altered the demographic profile of the region.

Armenian-populated areas, in contrast to the nomadic tribes, suffered more severely from the Lezgin incursions. The Muslim nomadic tribes were in a more advantageous position, as their periodic mobility allowed them to withdraw swiftly in times of peril. According to our approximate calculations, the Muslim population of the region was distributed across an area of 980 square kilometres, while Armenian villages occupied approximately 400 square kilometres. According to the Ottoman defter, the territory of the Tavush district currently comprising the consolidated community of Berd in the Republic of Armenia was entirely Armenian-populated.

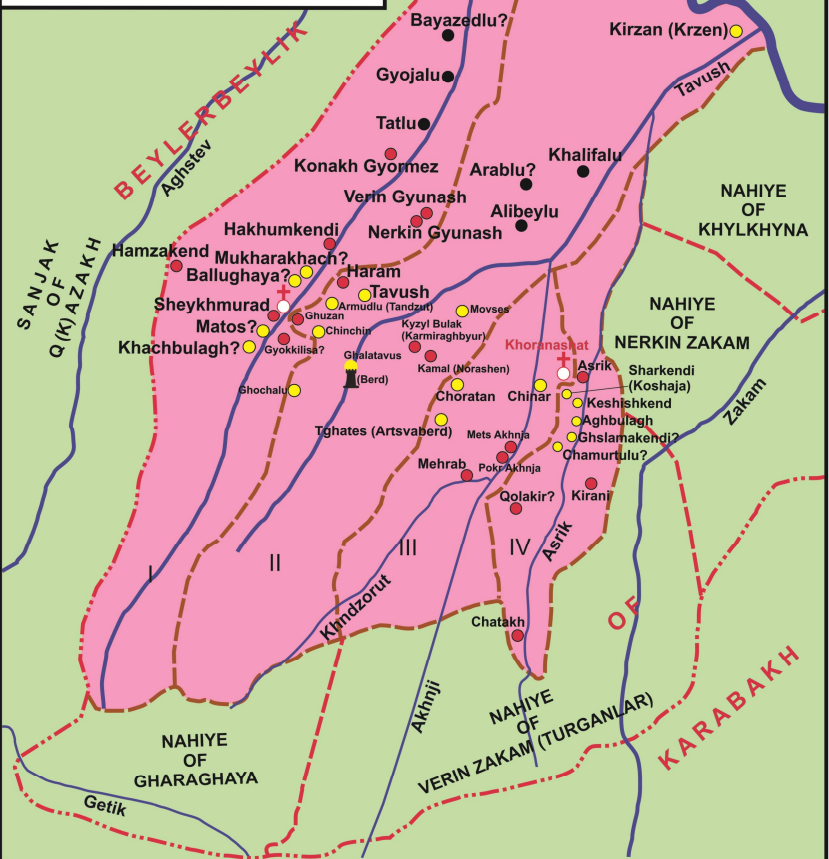
The amount of tax levied per capita from the Armenian population exceeded that of the Muslims. As noted, the primary tax – the *ispenje*, accounted for a substantial figure here. Conversely, for the Muslim population, the equivalent *bennak* tax was three times lower, amounting to 40 akches.⁴²⁰ Regarding the taxes paid by tribes leading a nomadic existence, these constituted an insignificant sum, incomparable to the taxes rendered by the Armenian populace. The lull following prolonged wars, which seemingly ought to have stabilised the dire economic state of the population, had the opposite effect. The burdensome fiscal policy implemented by the Ottoman Empire was to further exacerbate economic hardships, leaving a direct impact upon the socio-economic and demographic landscape of the region.

⁴¹⁹ An exception is the village of Krzen.

⁴²⁰ *Ottoman Laws in Western Armenia (16th–17th-century kanunnames)*, p. 121.

- Boundary of the Khikhna liva
- Boundaries of the nahiyehs of Tavush District
- Boundaries of the neighboring nahiyehs
- Armenian populated villages
- Abandoned villages
- Muslim populated villages
- I Nahiyeh of Hasansu
- II Nahiyeh of Tavus (Tavush)
- III Nahiyeh of Akhnja
- IV Nahiyehs of Asrik and Yal

Author: ©Andranik Yesayan
 Cartographer: ©Henrik Khachatryan



CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the 17th century, Tavush came under Safavid Iranian rule. Unlike many other regions of Armenia, Tavush did not experience large-scale deportations. Following a reconnaissance expedition conducted by Amir Guna Khan, a portion of the Armenian population in the vicinity of Gandzak was captured and deported from north-eastern Armenia. Overall, however, the Tavush district remained largely unaffected by systematic deportation policies.

The district and its surroundings suffered considerably from recurrent tensions in Georgian–Iranian relations. As a result, several settlements in Tavush were destroyed and plundered. Shah Abbas, wary of unrest in Georgia, sought to strengthen the position of Turkic tribes along the Armenian–Georgian frontier. Granted hereditary domains in the region, these tribes gradually appropriated the lands of the lowlands, displacing the Armenian population toward the mountainous zones. Moreover, these mountainous areas also served as summer pastures for the tribes.

The prolonged period of peace that followed had a favourable impact on the region. A number of Armenian-populated villages were incorporated into the Tavush melikdom. Some degree of activity was also evident in the spiritual and cultural spheres. The functioning of the Tavush diocese, centred at Khoranashat, was regulated. Over time, as the Armenian population grew, new churches became necessary.

From the second half of the 17th century, under the active efforts of Bishop Hovhannes, head of Khoranashat, church construction commenced across various settlements.

Soon thereafter, Safavid Iran entered a period of political and economic crisis. Heavy taxation under Sultan Hosayn further accelerated the state's decline. The Ottoman Empire and Russia, both with territorial ambitions, sought to exploit this situation. Prior to direct confrontation, the Ottomans encouraged the Lezgins to conduct plundering raids in Georgia and north-eastern Armenia. These incursions led to the destruction of a significant number of Tavush settlements, with inhabitants either massacred or taken captive. Religious institutions and their clergy likewise suffered severe losses. In 1725, with Russia's consent, the Ottoman Empire conquered the region, its expansion accompanied by widespread plunder and the taking of captives.

The geographical records compiled by the Ottomans provide an important source for studying the history, demography, and economy of Tavush. They indicate that the highland areas of the historical Tavush canton – corresponding to the present consolidated community of Berd and the Asrik river basin, now within the Republic of Azerbaijan, were inhabited exclusively by Armenians. In contrast, the lowlands were predominantly populated by Muslims, nevertheless, Armenians remained the majority of the settled population overall. The names of abandoned villages recorded in the document suggest that most had previously been inhabited by Armenians.

The Ottoman authorities imposed an exceptionally heavy taxation regime, further undermining socio-economic conditions. In contrast to the Armenians, Muslim settlers enjoyed comparatively favourable circumstances. The tax categories recorded for some Muslim

settlements in the tax register indicate that they had already begun to adopt a sedentary lifestyle.

The arrival of nomadic tribes in Tavush district had a profound impact on demographic processes in the subsequent decades. In the following years, Muslim settlers progressively occupied villages abandoned by Armenians, gradually acquiring increasingly extensive tracts of land and laying the foundations for permanent settlement. The Armenian territories thus occupied later became part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Consequently, it is not coincidental that many Azerbaijani settlements bordering Tavush Province in the Republic of Armenia bear the names of tribes recorded in the 1727 *Extensive Defter of the Gandzak-Karabakh Eyalet*, such as Tatlu, Gyojali, Oksuzlu, Hajjalu, and others.

APPENDIX

a) Tables

Tavush nahiye			
Inhabited villages	Christians (Armenians)	Muslims	Abandoned villages
Ghochalu	41		Saatlu
Armudlu (Tandzut)	17		Kyosalar
Chinchin	32		Kulaja
Tavush	41		Gamishlu
Movses	11		KyzyI Bulak
Ghalatavus	74		Kamal
Kirzan (Krzen)	9		Girzantala
Khalifalu		9	Karachlu
Sharshapalu		1	Yanykchinar
Kacharali		10	Chinar
Alibeylu		15 (Tatlu)	
Imamqulibek		14 (Tatlu)	
Durakhan		25 (Oksuzlu)	
Farzali		5	
Kalichali		1	
Arablu		22 (Amirlu)	
Karakhanlu		17 (Amirlu)	

Number of inhabited villages	17	Number of abandoned villages	10
Total number of taxpayers			344
Armenians	225	Muslim	119
Akhnja (Akhnji) nahiye			
Inhabited villages	Christians (Armenians)	Muslims	Abandoned villages
Chinar	5		Alijalu
Dighedis (Tghates)	26		Zoghalu
Choratan	27		Ahmadluban
Ghushchu		26	Mehrab
Ghushchu Ojaklu		8	Goshideyirman
			Chift
			Almalyk
			Bichanak
			Mets Akhnja (Great Akhnja)
			Pokr Akhnja (Small Akhnja)
Number of inhabited villages	5	Number of abandoned villages	10
Total number of taxpayers			92
Armenians	58	Muslim	34

Hasansu nahiye			
Inhabited villages	Christians (Armenians)	Muslims	Abandoned villages
Ballughaya	29		Aghunak
Mukharakhach (Mokharakhach)	12		Mets Gyunash (Great Gyunash)
Matos	11		Pokr Gyunash (Small Gyunash)
Khachbulagh	13		Kulijan
Gyojali		69 (Gyojali)	Kilychshah
Ughurlu		13 (Gyojali)	Gyokkilisa
Mahmedghulu		15 (Gyojali)	Kulkendi
Ghayib		1 (Gyojali)	Kuzlu
Valirza		3 (Gyojali)	Haram
Pirmahammad		5 (Gyojali)	Alikhankendi
Tatli		24 (Tatlu)	Barsum
Ashatan		1 (Tatlu)	Hamzakend
Amirghulu		23 (Tatlu)	Gharamkend
Mikayeli and Yarbadali		40 (Tatlu)	Sheikhmurad
Bayazedlu		32 (Bayazidlu)	Salkid
Molla		2 (Gyojali)	Molla Naghdali
			Tagh
			Boyalji
			Saklashin
			Bishak

			Toros
			Alpalid
			Hakhumkendi
			Konakh Gyormez
			Ghuzan
Number of inhabited villages	17	Number of abandoned villages	25
Total number of taxpayers			293
Armenian	65	Muslim	228

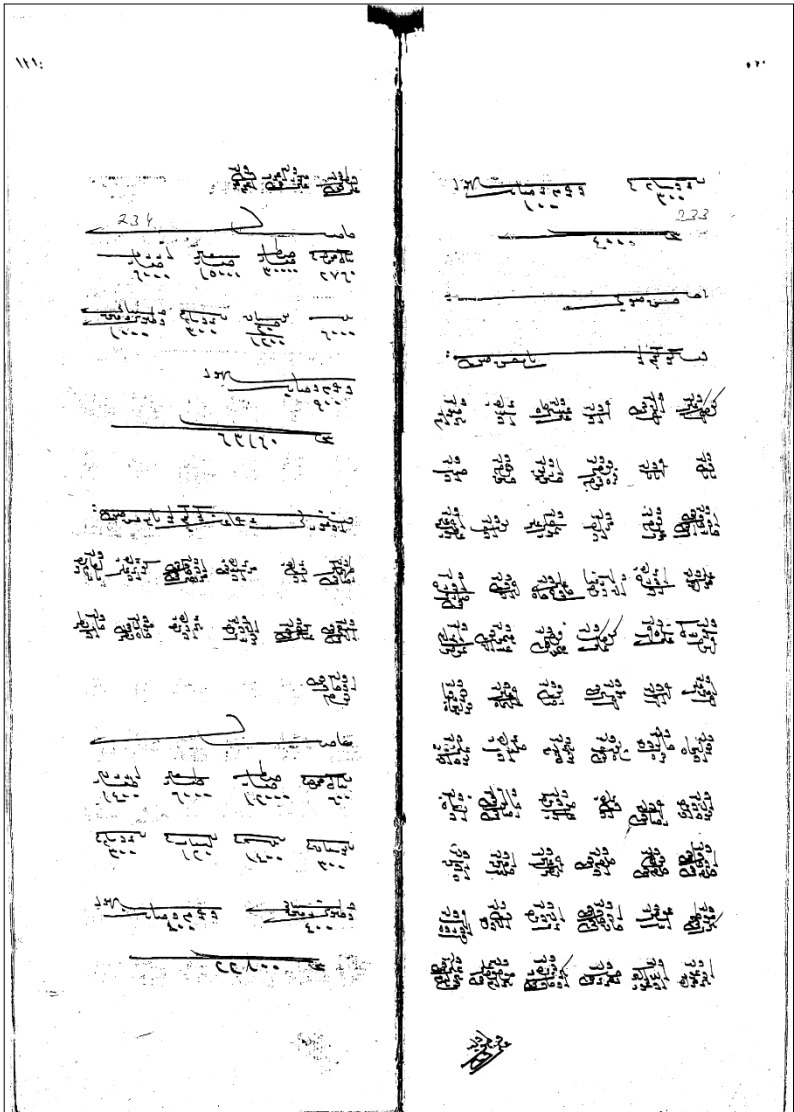
Asrik and Yal nahiye			
Inhabited villages	Christians (Armenians)	Muslims	Abandoned villages
Keshishkend	5		Munla Arij? (Molla Arij)
Gslamakhendi (Keslamakhendi)	14		Asrik
Sharkendi	7		Chighurtala
Chamurtulu?	21		Kolakir
Akbulak (Aghbulagh)	19		Aghtash
			Gharatash
			Kirani
			Boyluluk
			Chatakh
			Kul
Inhabited	5	Abandoned,	10

villages		emptied villages	
Total number of taxpayers			107
Armenians	68	Muslim	39 (Lak)

Nomadic tribes of Tavush district	
Tavus (Tavush) nahiye	
Hajjali	39
Bayahmadlu	18
Karakoyunlu	171
Binakly	27
Hasansu nahiye	
Kyzylhajlu	40
Asrik and Yal nahiye	
Laks	39
Total	334

Mazrans of Armenian-populated villages in Tavush district	
Tavus (Tavush) nahiye	
Village	Mazra
Tavus (Tavush)	Sokut?
Movses	Movses
Ghalatavus (Berd)	Aytalasin
	Chanak
Total	4

b) Original Text



تغلب باد و باران و ماه و خورشید

236

رنگ

Handwritten musical notation for the first system on page 112, featuring a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes several measures with notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

تغلب باد و باران و ماه و خورشید

رنگ

Handwritten musical notation for the second system on page 112, continuing the piece with similar notation and dynamics.

تغلب باد و باران و ماه و خورشید

رنگ

Handwritten musical notation for the third system on page 112, concluding the piece with a final cadence.

تغلب باد و باران و ماه و خورشید

235

رنگ

Handwritten musical notation for the first system on page 111, featuring a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The notation includes several measures with notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

تغلب باد و باران و ماه و خورشید

رنگ

Handwritten musical notation for the second system on page 111, continuing the piece with similar notation and dynamics.

تغلب باد و باران و ماه و خورشید

رنگ

Handwritten musical notation for the third system on page 111, concluding the piece with a final cadence.

رنگ

221 ~~Handwritten musical notation~~

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Handwritten musical notation on a staff with the number 256 written below it.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff.

A large block of handwritten musical notation consisting of multiple staves.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff.

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Handwritten musical notation on page 267, featuring a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various rhythmic values and melodic lines. The page number '267' is written in the upper left corner.

Handwritten musical notation on page 268, featuring a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various rhythmic values and melodic lines. The page number '268' is written in the upper left corner.

265

Handwritten musical notation on page 265. The page contains a single staff with a treble clef. The notation includes various note values, rests, and bar lines. There are several measures of music, with some notes beamed together. The handwriting is in black ink on aged paper.

266

Handwritten musical notation on page 266. The page contains a single staff with a treble clef. The notation includes various note values, rests, and bar lines. There are several measures of music, with some notes beamed together. The handwriting is in black ink on aged paper.

Handwritten musical notation on the right page, featuring a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various rhythmic values and melodic lines. Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text in a cursive script, likely lyrics or performance instructions. A large, stylized flourish is present in the middle of the page.

Handwritten musical notation on the left page, featuring a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The notation includes various rhythmic values and melodic lines. Below the staff, there are several lines of handwritten text in a cursive script, likely lyrics or performance instructions. A large, stylized flourish is present at the top of the page.

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ANDRANIK YESAYAN

**TAVUSH DISTRICT FROM THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY
TO THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE 18TH CENTURY**

A Study of the Demographic History of Armenia

ԱՆԴՐԱՆԻԿ ԵՍԱՅԱՆ

ՏԱՎՈՒՇ ԳԱՎԱՌԸ

XVII Դ. – XVIII Դ. ԱՌԱՋԻՆ ՔԱՌՈՐԴԻՆ

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