

Erasing Armenia: Source Manipulation in a Recent Study of the Gandzasar Catholicosate

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Abstract

Taking as a case study Andrey V. Nikonorov’s paper ‘Monasteries, Sketes, and Monastic Traditions of the Gandzasar Catholicosate Leading up to the 17th Century’ (in Russian), this article examines the techniques by which the Armenian ecclesiastical heritage of the South Caucasus is reattributed in recent historiography to a purported ‘Caucasian Albanian’ tradition. Drawing on medieval sources and scholarly works, Nikonorov seeks to reconstruct the history of the emergence and development of the monasteries that were under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Gandzasar Catholicosate in the South Caucasus, particularly in the territory of Artsakh (Karabakh). The study places particular emphasis on ecclesiastical activity, monastic life, liturgical practices, internal regulations and other aspects of monastic tradition in the region. The subject is both significant and comprehensive, and the issues raised in the article are of considerable scholarly interest.

At the same time, Nikonorov’s study contains a number of methodological approaches that raise questions regarding its scholarly impartiality. In particular, although the author relies predominantly on Armenian primary sources and the works of Armenian scholars, he consistently avoids identifying their ethnic affiliation. Furthermore, the Gandzasar Catholicosate, which historically formed part of the Armenian Apostolic Church, is presented as an exclusively Albanian ecclesiastical institution. Not only the monasteries and churches of Artsakh, but also those located within the present-day Republic of Armenia, the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic and modern-day Turkey, together with the clergy who served there, are described as belonging to the Albanian Church. In several instances, when quoting or referring to historical sources, Nikonorov omits the words Armenian and Armenia from the cited passages.

The analysis is organised as a typology of four techniques of source manipulation: omission of ethnonyms, selective quotation, substitution of names and toponyms, and reattribution of authors and institutions. By addressing these and other issues, the present article seeks to provide a more comprehensive, evidence-based and objective reconstruction of the historical realities of the period under consideration.

Keywords: *Andrey Nikonorov, Gandzasar Catholicosate, monasteries, South Caucasus, Armenia, Caucasian Albania, Christianity*

Introduction¹

Numerous works have been published on the history of the Gandzasar Catholicosate.² The article by Andrey Nikonorov is one of the latest additions to this body of scholarship. In 2026 he published, in the journal *Theology: Theory and Practice* (2026, vol. 5, no. 1, 26–52), a paper entitled ‘Monasteries, Sketes, and Monastic Traditions of the Gandzasar Catholicosate Leading up to the 17th Century’.

At first sight it would appear that the author has undertaken a valuable task, attempting to present anew the history of the Gandzasar Catholicosate of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) and of monastic life in the region. On closer acquaintance with the material of the article, however, a number of questions and concerns arise, and it is around these that the present article is constructed.

The analysis below is organised not as a page-by-page commentary but as a typology of the techniques of manipulation employed in the study under review. Four recurrent techniques may be distinguished: (1) the omission of the ethnonyms *Armenian* and *Armenia*, both in the Author’s own exposition and within quoted passages; (2) the selective quotation of primary sources, whereby sentences or clauses identifying the subject as Armenian are silently dropped; (3) the substitution or distortion of proper names and toponyms; and (4) the reattribution of Armenian authors, institutions and church councils to a purported ‘Albanian’ tradition. Each documented instance is assigned below to the technique it exemplifies; the techniques frequently co-occur, and taken together they demonstrate the scale of the falsification and manipulation present in the work. While the immediate object of analysis is a single publication, the typology is offered as an analytical instrument applicable to the wider corpus of revisionist writing on the region.

Type 1. Omission of the Ethnonyms *Armenian* and *Armenia*

From the very first page of the article, A. Nikonorov (hereafter: the Author) avoids, as far as possible, using the words *Armenian* and *Armenia*. When citing the sources used in the article, the Author simply omits the words *Armenian* or *Armenia* even within individual sentences, while Armenian figures and authors are presented simply as non-Armenians.

The very first example is found in the annotation to the article (p. 26), where, having set out the scholarly novelty and importance of his article, the Author goes on to note that he has made use of the map compiled by the Constantinopolitan intellectual Eremia Chelebi. It should be noted that the map of which the Author speaks was compiled in 1691 by the Armenian intellectual and diplomat Eremia Chelebi Keomurjian (1637–1695),³ at the commission of the Italian envoy Ludovico

¹ Armenian and Russian names, terms and titles are transliterated according to the Library of Congress romanisation system, in simplified form without diacritical marks.

² On the history of Gandzasar see Danielyan, E., *Gandzasari patmutiwn* [History of Gandzasar], Yerevan, 2005, 460 p. (in Armenian).

³ On Eremia Chelebi see Yilmazer, Z., ‘Eremya Celebi’. TDV Encyclopedia of Islam, Vol. 11 (Elbistan – Eymir) (in Turkish). Istanbul, 1995, Presidency of Religious Affairs, Centre for Islamic Studies, 293–294.

Fernando Marsili.⁴ The Author attempts to present this important document as though it had no connection whatsoever with the Armenian Church. The reality is that the map was created by an Armenian author and depicts the Armenian churches and monasteries. Gandzasar monastery is likewise among them.

Moreover, the same section of the Author's text contains the following thought: 'It should be noted that the questions of the origin, spread and functioning of monastic institutions in the South Caucasus have not yet been addressed by a single study, and the present article may therefore be considered the first attempt to present the history of the monastic movement in the region, ...'.⁵

The Author is evidently unaware that published works do exist on monastic life in the South Caucasus — a region that includes Armenia and Georgia and, naturally, the Armenian and Georgian Churches as well.⁶

The same technique appears in the section presenting the activities of Gregory the Illuminator and his grandson Grigoris, where the Author once again avoids mentioning that they had come from Armenia. Grigoris is presented in the article as 'Grigoris of Aluank'.⁷ It should be recalled that Gregory the Illuminator is recognised by all the canonical churches of the world as Gregory the Armenian, the saint who raised Christianity to the level of the state religion in Greater Armenia — a recognition likewise extended to him by the Russian Orthodox Church.⁸ Great renown also attaches to his grandson Grigoris, who preached and spread Christianity in the eastern parts of Greater Armenia (Artsakh and Utik') and in Aluank' (Caucasian Albania). The Author, while mentioning the fact that Gregory the Illuminator lived as a hermit in a cave on Mount Sepuh in the district of Daranaghi, forgets to mention that the district of Daranaghi lay in the province of Bardzr Hayk (Upper

⁴ See Uluhogian, G., *Un'antica mappa dell'Armenia: Monasteri e santuari dal I al XVII secolo*, Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2000, 200 p.

⁵ Nikonorov, A. V., 'Monastyri, skity i monasheskie traditsii Giandzhasarskogo katolikosata k XVII veku' [Monasteries, Sketes, and Monastic Traditions of the Ganjasar Catholicosate Leading up to the 17th Century], *Teologiya: teoriia i praktika*, 2026, vol. 5, no. 1, 26 (hereafter: Nikonorov, 2026). The original reads: «Следует отметить, что вопросы зарождения, распространения и функционирования монашеских институтов на Южном Кавказе еще не освещались ни одним исследованием, а потому настоящую статью можно считать первой попыткой представить историю монашеского движения в регионе, ...».

⁶ Garsoïan, N. G., 'Introduction to the Problem of Early Armenian Monasticism', *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, n.s., 30 (2005–2007), 177–236; *Monastic Life in the Armenian Church: Glorious Past — Ecumenical Reconsideration*, edited by Jasmine Dum-Tragut and Dietmar W. Winkler, Vienna–Münster, 2018, 224 p.; *Davit Gareji: International Conference. Multidisciplinary Study and Development Strategy, April 18–20, 2019. Proceedings*, Tbilisi, 2020; Matitashvili, Sh., 'The Monasteries Founded by the Thirteen Syrian Fathers in Iberia: The Rise of Monasticism in Sixth-Century Georgia', *Studies in Late Antiquity*, Spring 2018, vol. 2, no. 1, 4–39 and so on.

⁷ Nikonorov, 2026, 29, 31.

⁸ *Zhitie i stradanie sviatogo sviashchennomuchenika Grigoriia, episkopa velikoi Armenii, i s nim tridsati semi dev* [Life and Passion of the Holy Hieromartyr Gregory, Bishop of Great Armenia, and with Him Thirty-Seven Virgins], in *Zhitiia sviatykh na russkom iazyke, izlozhennye po rukovodstvu Chetikh-Minei svt. Dimitriia Rostovskogo*, 12 vols and 2 supplementary vols, Moscow: Synodal Press, 1903–1916, vol. I: September, Day 30; 'Grigorii Prosvetitel' [Gregory the Illuminator], in *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia*, Moscow, 2006, vol. XIII, 41–47, <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/168061.html>.

Armenia) of Greater Armenia.⁹ Moreover, Gregory the Illuminator's activity in that period served as a stimulus to the emergence and development of eremitic traditions in Armenia. Yet here the reference can only be to Armenia, and not to Aluank', as the Author indirectly attempts to mislead his readers into believing. In the same spirit, the Author deliberately omits to state to which country Gregory the Illuminator returned after receiving episcopal consecration in Caesarea, and where he became spiritual leader. One has the impression that the Author is attempting to sever the biography of Gregory the Illuminator from the history of Armenia and in some manner to attach it to the history of Aluank'.

It should also be noted that a particular tendency runs through the Author's works: on the one hand, he relies chiefly on the works of Armenian historians and quotes from them; yet he stubbornly avoids stating their nationality, and wherever possible he endeavours to present them under some other ethnic veil. Thus, Movses Khorenatsi and Agathangelos figure in his works merely as 'medieval historians'.¹⁰

Type 2. Selective Quotation of Primary Sources

On page 33 of the article the Author, quoting from the work of the Armenian historian Stepanos Taronetsi (Asoghik) (tenth–eleventh centuries), once again does not mention that he was Armenian. Quoting from his book on the life of churchmen, the Author does not state that they were Armenians (for instance, Catholicos Mashtots, who was Catholicos of Armenia and reigned in 897–898). Then, on the same page, quoting a further passage from Asoghik, he leaves out the sentence in which the name of Armenia is given, so as to create the impression among readers that Asoghik is speaking not of Armenia but of Aluank'. That passage is quoted here so that the point at issue becomes clear. In the Author's article it is given in this form: 'At that very time monastic life was flourishing... in many places brotherhoods were established, where those wishing to live in concord, imbued with Christian love, gathered... /Father John/ introduced the rule of the great patriarch St Basil, /established/ on an apostolic foundation, according to which everything was held in common'.¹¹ In Asoghik's work, however, the passage is given as follows: 'At that very time monastic life was flourishing **in Armenia**: in many places brotherhoods were established, where those wishing to live in concord, imbued with Christian love, gathered... /Father John/ introduced the rule of the great patriarch St Basil, /established/ on an apostolic foundation, according to which everything was held in common'.

⁹ *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarhac 'oyc')*: *The Long and the Short Recensions*, introduction, translation and commentary by R. H. Hewsen, Wiesbaden, 1992, 151.

¹⁰ Nikonorov, 2026, 29.

¹¹ In the article: «В то же самое время монашеская жизнь процветала... во многих местах были учреждены братства, куда собирались желающие жить в согласии, проникнутые христианской любовью... /Отец Иоанн/ ввел устав великого патриарха св. Василия, /утвержденный/ на апостольском основании, по которому все было общее».

In Asoghik's original version this paragraph is written like this: «В то же самое время монашеская жизнь процветала **в Армении**: во многих местах были учреждены братства, куда собирались желающие жить в согласии, проникнутые христианской любовью... /Отец Иоанн/ ввел устав великого патриарха св. Василия, /утвержденный/ на апостольском основании, по которому все было общее». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 33; Asoghik, 1864, III, 7, 118–119.

Evidently, the only thing that troubled the Author in that entire sentence was the word *Armenia*.

On pages 33–34 of the article the Author, once again describing monastic life with reference to Asoghik's work, again leaves out the passage in which the historian writes that Armenia is meant. In the Author's article the passage appears as follows: '...there gathered many righteous ascetics, adorned with humility, who had committed themselves to dry fare, tasting food once a day in the days of Great Lent and quenching their thirst with plain water only on Saturdays and Sundays. It happened that I stayed with these men during Great Lent, and it was there that I wrote these few lines'. He also writes that 'all /those living in these monasteries/, and their followers after them, /devoted themselves/ to asceticism with one accord, taking not the slightest care for themselves; none of them possessed even a belt; they all shared a common table and no one partook of fruit or vegetables: they fulfilled only what was prescribed by the commandment of the Lord, day and night /abiding/ in unceasing doxology, singing the psalms of David. Such were the labours of them all'.¹²

For it to become clear which monasteries are in question, one need only go a few sentences higher, where the historian (Asoghik) writes as follows: 'At the same time, in the country of Likantion, in the locality of Nakhriar in the district of Kharberd (Tsopk, territory of Byzantine Fourth Armenia – R.G.), Father Movses built a monastery named after him: a well-ordered monastery with numerous brethren, men adorned with wisdom. This Movses was a native of the district of Taron; in western Armenia he did much good in spreading monasticism, being a guardian of our faith. He lived in our own time'. 'By the same rules were governed the monastery of Hndzuts, in the district of Karin (in Upper Armenia – R.G.), under Father Sargis; the well-ordered abode called Kaputakar, in the district of Arsharunik (in the province of Ayrarat – R.G.); Dprevank, in the district of Shirak (Shirak district in Armenia – R.G.); and Tsakhats-Kar, in Vayots Dzor (Vayots Dzor district in Armenia), under Father Stepanos'.¹³

Only after all this comes the passage quoted by the Author. As can be seen, the passage demonstrating that Armenian monastic complexes are in question, and that

¹² In the article: «...собралось много подвижников праведных, украшенных смирением, обречших себя на сухоядение, во дни Великого поста раз в день вкушавших пищу и утолявших жажду простою водою только в субботние и воскресные дни. Случилось мне быть у этих мужей во время Великого поста, где я и написал эти немногие строки». «все /живущие в этих монастырях/, а потом и последователи их, /предавались/ подвижничеству единодушно, ни мало не занимаясь заботами о самих себе; никто из них не имел даже пояса; у всех у них была общая трапеза и никто не употреблял ни плодов, ни овощей: они исполняли только предписанное заповедью Господней, день и ночь /пребывали/ в непрерывном славословии, воспевая псалмы Давида. Таковы были подвиги их всех». Nikonorov, 2026, 33–34; Asoghik, 1864, III, 7, 121.

¹³ The original reads: «В то же время в стране Ликантионе в местечке Нахриаре, в харбердском округе, отец Моисей построил монастырь, названный по его имени: монастырь благоустроенный, с многочисленной братьей из мужей, украшенных мудростью. Этот Моисей был родом из таронского округа; в западной Армении распространением монашества он сделал много добра, являясь хранителем нашей веры. Он жил в наше время». The original reads: «Таковыми же правилами управлялись монастырь Хендцуц, в каринском округе, отцом Сергием; благоустроенная обитель, называемая Капутак'ар'ом, что в аршаруник'ском округе; Девре-ванк', в ширакском округе и Цахац-К'ар, в Вайоц-дзоре, отцом Степ'аносом». See: Asoghik, 1864, III, 7, 120–121.

the life of Armenian monks is being described, has once again been left out. All the monasteries mentioned were situated in the western and eastern parts of historical Armenia.

The same tendency continues on page 34 of the article. Here the following sentence appears: 'Recounting the reign of Ashot III, the historian (the Author means Asoghik – R.G.) reports that "in his time monasteries were built, abodes of ascetics... cenobitic, on the basis of the rules of the above-mentioned rule of St Basil"'. The Author omits the clarification that Ashot III is the Armenian king Ashot III Bagratuni (953–978), in whose reign (961) Ani, in the district of Shirak, became the capital of the Armenian kingdom. Here is how the passage is given in Asoghik: 'After Abas his son Ashot, surnamed Shahanshah, came to the throne and [ruled] for twenty-five years. In his time, Mushegh, his brother, became king in Kars. — Ashot's governance of Armenia was peaceful; he surpassed all in gentleness and mercy, for he gathered around himself the crippled, the lame and the blind, making them his companions at his feasts and calling some of them princes, others princes of princes, and others kuropalates: thus he amused himself with them! In his time monasteries were built, abodes of ascetics, in the land of Sevordik (in the Lori region of Armenia), cenobitic [monasteries] on the basis of the rules of the above-mentioned rule of St. Basil. These are Haghpata and Sanahin, erected facing one another and housing five hundred men'.¹⁴

In reading the article, one is also struck by the fact that A. Nikonorov cites Armenian authors in order to create the impression that he has been impartial and objective in setting out the history. Yet an examination of the works of those Armenian authors and historians makes clear that the Author has presented the material contained in their works wrongly or selectively, as has already been shown above. For example, the Author makes the following quotation from the work of the seventeenth-century historian Arakel Davrizhetsi: 'Sarukhan-bek and his brother Nazar from the village of Voskanapat'. In reality this passage is presented in Arakel Davrizhetsi's work as follows: '**And from the country of Aghvank, from among the Armenians,** there travelled: Sarukhan bek and his brother Nazar from the village of Voskanapat ...'.¹⁵

¹⁴ In the article: «Рассказывая о царствовании Ашота III, историк сообщает, что «в его время были построены монастыри, обители подвижников... общежительные на основании правил вышеупомянутого устава св. Василия».

In the original version: «После Абаса воцарился сын его Ашот, прозванный Шахан-шах'ом и [управлял] 25 лет. В его время Мушег, брат его, воцарился в Карсе.— Управление Ашота Арменией было мирное; он превзошел всех своей кротостью и милосердием, ибо собирал около себя калек, хромых и слепых, делая их собеседниками на своих пиршествах и называя одних князьями, других князьями князей, третьих куropалатами: так он потешался ими! В его время были построены монастыри, обители подвижников в земле Сев-ордик'ской, [монастыри] общежительские на основании правил вышеупомянутого устава святого Василия. Это — Хах'пат и Санахин, воздвигнутые один против другого, заключающие в себе 500 человек». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 34; Asoghik, 1864, III, 8, 125–126.

¹⁵ In the article: «Сарухан-бек и его брат Назар из села Воскананат». In the original version: «**А из страны Агванк от армян** поехали: Сарухан бек и брат его Назар из селения Воскананат ...». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 39; for comparison see Arakel Davrizhetsi, *Kniga istorii* [Book of Histories],

On page 49 of the article, quoting the passage of Arakel Davrizhetsi's work in which the historian notes that Shah Abbas I of Iran was benevolently disposed towards the Christians, the Author gives that passage in the following form: 'he lightened, as the Christians desired, the royal tax paid by the Christians... if any quarrels or disputes arose between Christians and Mohammedans, or any other matter for judgement — great or small — he found for the Christians and against the Mohammedans... of his own good will he ordered churches to be built... in the villages... he was well-disposed towards the Christians and himself urged them to build churches...' ¹⁶.

In reality, the Author has once again left out of that passage the word Armenia:¹⁷ 'he lightened, as the Christians desired, the royal tax paid by the Christians... if any quarrels or disputes arose between Christians and Mohammedans, or any other matter for judgement — great or small — he found for the Christians and against the Mohammedans. **In the fourth place, when he expelled the Christians [from Armenia] and resettled them in Isfahan and the surrounding villages, a multitude of Mohammedans were removed from their places of residence, and their houses and fields were given to the Christians.** ... of his own good will he ordered churches to be built... in the villages... he was well-disposed towards the Christians and himself urged them to build churches. ...' ¹⁸.

Moreover, immediately before this passage Arakel Davrizhetsi wrote the following: 'Shah Abbas the king, being judicious, wise and solicitous, sought out various means of retaining the Armenian population in the country of the Persians, for had he not taken such pains, [the Armenians] would not have remained there. In the first place, Shah Abbas himself was friendly with the Armenians and honoured them, especially the people of Jugha ...' ¹⁹.

It is from these lines, too, that it becomes clear that the Armenians are meant. Then, describing the complaint of the Muslims regarding the shah's benevolent attitude towards the Armenians, the historian quotes the shah's reassuring words

Moscow, 1973, ch. III, 46; for the standard English translation see *Arak'el of Tabriz: Book of History*, trans. G. A. Bournoutian, Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2010.

¹⁶ In the article: «он облегчил, как того хотели христиане, царскую подать, платимую христианами... если случались какие-либо ссоры и распри христиан с магометанами либо другое подсудное дело — большое или маленькое, христиан он оправдывал, магометан — осуждал... он по доброй воле своей приказал построить... в селениях церкви... он благоволил к христианам и сам увещевал их строить церкви...».

¹⁷ As in the preceding passage, the portions omitted by the Author are marked here in bold.

¹⁸ The original reads: «он облегчил, как того хотели христиане, царскую подать, платимую христианами... если случались какие-либо ссоры и распри христиан с магометанами либо другое подсудное дело — большое или маленькое, христиан он оправдывал, магометан — осуждал. **В четвертых, когда он изгнал христиан [из Армении] и переселил их в Исфахан и окрестные селения, множество магометан было выселено с места их жительства, а дома и поля их были отданы христианам.** ... он по доброй воле своей приказал построить... в селениях церкви... он благоволил к христианам и сам увещевал их строить церкви. ...». See: Arakel Davrizhetsi, *Kniga istorii* [Book of Histories], Moscow, 1973, ch. V, 79.

¹⁹ Ibid. The original reads: «**Царь шах Аббас, будучи рассудителен, мудр и попечителен, изыскивал различные способы, чтобы удержать армянское население в стране персов, ибо, если бы он так не старался, [армяне] там не остались бы. Во-первых, сам шах Аббас дружил с армянами и почитал их, особенно джугинцев ...**».

addressed to the Muslims: **‘The old men who were born in Armenia and resettled here will all die, while [the generations] born of them in our country — these, without our invitation and without our efforts, will of their own free will pass over to our faith. ...’**²⁰

It is clear that the reference is to the Armenians forcibly deported from Armenia by Shah Abbas I in 1604, and not simply to Christians. These events, incidentally, are described in the historian’s work.²¹

On page 39 of the article, describing the hermitage of Banants, the Author, citing the work of the Armenian clergyman and historian Makar Barkhudaryan (1823–1906), writes: ‘It is also known that in the days of its prosperity the abode of Banants owned a hundred hectares of arable land, a vineyard, an orchard, forest lands, domestic animals and springs’.²² The Author mentions the property belonging to that monastic complex, yet consigns to oblivion the fact that Barkhudaryan’s work also records the Armenian inscriptions on the walls of the monastery.²³

On page 40 of the article the Author, once again citing Makar Barkhudaryan’s work, makes the following quotation: ‘On the road, near the right bank of the river Shamkir, this small cruciform church was founded. The high walls of the church are built of finely hewn red stones, for which reason it is called Red. It has a handsome dome crowned with a pointed tent-roof, and an altar apse, in the southern corner of which there is a further small dark apse. The building resembles a monastery rather than a church. There is a narthex, where many have found their eternal rest, whose gravestones bear no inscriptions. There are cells sufficient for the monks, a cemetery, and a wall built of stones set in lime mortar... **A few years ago, a certain dishonourable Armenian from Ganja destroyed the stones on which an inscription had been carved and treacherously appropriated the possessions’**.²⁴

As always, in this passage too, the Author has not mentioned that in Makar Barkhudaryan’s work the name of the monastery is given as Karmir Vank (from the Armenian word *karmir*, ‘red’). Yet what matters in this quotation is not that, but the

²⁰ The original reads: «Старики, родившиеся в Армении и переселившиеся сюда, все умрут, а [поколения], родившиеся от них в нашей стране, - эти уже без нашего приглашения и без наших стараний сами добровольно перейдут в веру нашу. ...». See: Arakel Davrizhetsi, *Kniga istorii* [Book of Histories], Moscow, 1973, ch. V, 80.

²¹ Arakel Davrizhetsi, *Kniga istorii*, Moscow, 1973, ch. IV, 60–74.

²² The original reads: «Известно также, что во времена своего процветания обитель Бананц владела сотней гектаров пахотных земель, виноградником, фруктовым садом, лесными угодьями, домашними животными, родниками». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 39.

²³ Makar Barkhudareants, *Artsakh*, Baku, 1895, 285–286 (in Armenian).

²⁴ The original reads: «На дороге, близ правого берега реки Шамкир, основан этот маленький крестообразный храм. Высокие стены храма выложены из чисто тесаных красных камней, почему он и называется Красный. У него есть красивый купол, увенчанный остроконечным шатром, алтарная апсида, в южном углу которой есть еще одна маленькая темная апсида. Храм больше напоминает монастырь, нежели церковь. Имеется притвор, где нашли вечный покой многие, чьи надгробные камни не имеют надписей. Имеется достаточное количество келий для монахов, кладбище и ограда, построенная из камней на известковом растворе... **Несколько лет назад некий бесчестный армянин из Гянджи разрушил камни, на которых была высечена надпись, и вероломно присвоил владения**». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 40; Makar Barkhudareants, *Artsakh*, Baku, 1895, 295–296.

fact that the Author quotes a report concerning an Armenian who had seized the monastery's lands and smashed the inscription-bearing stones. Naturally, that act of vandalism deserves nothing but condemnation, whatever the nationality of the person who committed it. This instance might, however, have been assessed as an impartial approach on the Author's part to the event in question, had Nikonorov likewise mentioned the references, described in Barkhudaryan's work, to the damaging of Christian structures by the Caucasian Tatars, or Turkic peoples. The Author appears to have deliberately singled out this passage alone — an approach that is difficult to reconcile with scholarly impartiality.

Type 3. Substitution and Distortion of Proper Names and Toponyms

Also, an emblematic instance is the title of the article itself. A. Nikonorov gives the name of the monastic complex and of the catholicosate only in the form accepted in Azerbaijani historiography,²⁵ consigning to oblivion its Armenian name, Gandzasar (composed of the Armenian words *gandz*, 'treasure', and *sar*, 'mountain'). Several explanations of the origin of the name exist. According to tradition, the head of John the Baptist is buried here.²⁶ There is also a view that the mountain on which the monastic complex was built once contained a silver mine. All of this is known to A. Nikonorov, since at the end of his article he presents a rather respectable list of works consulted (in which Armenian sources likewise figure in large numbers), where the name of the monastery and of the catholicosate is given in its undistorted form.

On page 38 of the article the Author talked about one of the monasteries and the following passage appears: 'The skete of Ktashin (Getashen) — in all likelihood one of the small male monastic complexes of the village of Chaikend in the Geygel district of Azerbaijan is meant. Here, on the left bank of the river Kiurekchai, there formerly lay one of the largest settlements of the historical province of Gardman,

²⁵ In the 1970s, several Soviet Azerbaijani historians proposed an interpretation identifying Gandzasar as a monument of Caucasian Albanian heritage. This interpretation was based primarily on the monastery's historical role as the seat of the Albanian Catholicosate. In subsequent decades, the argument was further developed in Azerbaijani historiography and later became part of Azerbaijan's official historical discourse. For example, in 2017, Hikmet Hajiyeu, spokesperson for the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs, described Gandzasar as an 'Albanian Christian temple', stating that its proper name was 'Ganjasar' and asserting that it had no connection with the Armenian Apostolic Church. This interpretation has been challenged by numerous scholars, who emphasise that Gandzasar displays the defining features of Armenian ecclesiastical architecture of the tenth to thirteenth centuries and preserves a substantial corpus of Armenian inscriptions on its walls. Commenting on the presentation of the monastery in Azerbaijani scholarship, Thomas de Waal noted that the 1997 pamphlet *The Albanian Monuments of Karabakh*, authored by Igrar Aliyev and Kamil Mamedzade, reproduced an image of the Gandzasar façade on its cover while omitting the Armenian inscriptions visible on the monument. See de Waal, T., *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War*, New York University Press, 2003, 154–155. For Hajiyeu's statement see 'Appropriation of Armenian Cultural Heritage of Artsakh', EVN Report, <https://evnreport.com/spotlight-karabakh/appropriation-of-armenian-cultural-heritage-of-artsakh/> (accessed 14 July 2026).

²⁶ Movses Kalankatuatsi, *Istoriia strany Aluank* [History of the Country of Aluank'], Yerevan, 1984, 175. For the standard English translation see *The History of the Caucasian Albanians* by Movsēs Daxsurançi, trans. C. J. F. Dowsett, London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

already in existence in the early Middle Ages; the objects discovered by archaeologists date to the pre-Christian period'.²⁷

The Author has preferred not to mention that the village of Ktashin, or Getashen, to which he refers was one of the largest Armenian villages of Northern Artsakh, and that the religious structures which existed there belonged to the Armenians, and not to the 'Albanians' invented for those territories.

On pages 42–43 of the article there is a further quotation from Makar Barkhudaryan's work: 'By the grace of Almighty God I, the humble Iohann, an infirm priest, together with my spiritual son, the priest Iohann, renewed this holy church in the name of St Elisaeus the virgin, in the pontificate of Jeremiah, Catholicos of the Albanian principality, whose see is at **Gyanjasar**. We pray that we be remembered together with our parents. Year 1125 (1675)'.²⁸ Quoting here the inscription of a gravestone of the hermitage of Yeghishe (in the village of Ghuze-Chartar in the Martuni district of Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh – R.G.), the Author once again does not mention that it is in Armenian; moreover, distorting the text of the inscription, he again gives the word Gandzasar in the form 'Gyanjasar'.

Original (Armenian)	Transliteration	English translation
«Այս է տապան Մելիք Շահնազարին (Գ-ին)	«Ays e tapan Melik Shahnazarin (G-in)	'This is the tomb of Melik Shahnazar (III),
Որ է որդի Մելիք Յիւսէյինին,	Vor e vordi Melik Yius- eyinin,	Son of Melik Husein,

²⁷ In the article: «Կտաշինի անապատ» / «Скит Кташин (Геташен)» — по всей видимости, имеется ввиду один из небольших мужских монастырских комплексов с. Чайкенд Гейгельского района Азербайджана. Здесь, на левом берегу реки Кюрекчай, прежде находилось одно из крупнейших поселений исторической провинции Гардман, существовавшее уже в раннем средневековье, а обнаруженные археологами предметы датируются дохристианским периодом». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 38.

²⁸ In the article: «По милости Всемогущего Бога я, смиренный Иоанн, немощной священник, вместе со своим духовным сыном, иереем Иоанном, возобновил эту святую церковь во имя святого Елисея девственника, при святительстве католикоса княжества албанского Иеремии, чья кафедра находится в **Гянджасаре**. Мы молим поминать нас вместе с нашими родителями. Год 1125 (1675)». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 42–43; Makar Barkhudareants, *Artsakh*, Baku, 1895, 116–117.

Արցախ գաւառաց իշխանին	Artsakh gavarats ish- khanin	Prince of the districts of Artsakh,
Վարանդու տիրապետողին,	Varandu tirapetoghin,	Ruler of Varanda.
Սա էր հայր Մելիք Ջիւմշիտին,	Sa er hayr Melik Jium- shitin,	He was father to Melik Jum- shid,
Ըստ Ռուսաց պլկովնիկին,	Est Rusats plkovnikin,	A colonel in the Russian ser- vice,
Ազնիւ ոմն Հայոց ազգին,	Azniv vomn Hayots az- gin,	A noble man of the Arme- nian nation,
Արի և քաջ զորավարին	Ari yev kaj zoravarin	A valiant and brave com- mander.
Ինդրեմ առնել զայս արժանին	Khndrem arnel zays arzhanin	I beg you to render what is fitting:
Միոյ բերան Հայր մեղային	Mioy beran Hayr me- ghayin	With one mouth, a “Father, I have sinned”.
ՌՄԽ. թվին»: (1792)	RMKh. tvin» (1792)	In the year 1240 [of the Ar- menian era] (1792).’

It is also of interest that on page 43 of the article, giving information about the Kusanats (Virgins’) monastery of the village of Avetaranots in Artsakh, the Author mentions that the settlement belonged to the Melik-Shahnazarovs, once again citing Makar Barkhudaryan’s work.²⁹ By the Author’s logic, the village, the monastery and the princely house are all Albanian. Yet when one opens the relevant pages of Makar Barkhudaryan’s work, it turns out that Barkhudaryan wrote no such thing. Barkhudaryan states that the village was Armenian, as was the monastery, and likewise the house of the Melik-Shahnazaryans. Indeed, in his work the family’s surname ends precisely in *-yan* — not Shahnazarov, a form encountered only later, in the years of Russian rule. This, too, is no mere slip, but a deliberate distortion, designed to conceal their Armenian identity.

In Makar Barkhudaryan’s work there is also a gravestone inscription which shows clearly to which nation the Melik-Shahnazaryans belonged.³⁰

There is one further curious feature in the Author’s article: the names of the monasteries listed in it are given in Armenian, in Armenian script; yet, consistent with

²⁹ Nikonorov, 2026, 43; Makar Barkhutareants, *Artsakh*, Baku, 1895, 94–98. On the melikdoms of Artsakh and the Melik-Shahnazaryan house see Maghalyan, A., *Artsakhi melik’ut’yunnere ev melik’akan tner XVIII–XIX dd.* [The Melikdoms of Artsakh and the Melik Houses in the 17th–19th Centuries], Yerevan: Gitutyun, 2007 (in Armenian); on the principality of Khachen see Ulubabyan, B., *Khacheni ishkhanut’yune X–XVI darderum* [The Principality of Khachen in the 10th–16th Centuries], Yerevan, 1975 (in Armenian). On the history of Karabakh in the late Mongol period see Vardanyan, A., and Margaryan, G., ‘Some Remarks on the History of Qarābāgh in the Late Mongol Period (XIVth–XVth Centuries)’, *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 37, 2016–2017, 155–172.

³⁰ Makar Barkhutareants, *Artsakh*, Baku, 1895, 98–99.

the pattern documented above, the Author once again does not state that they are written in Armenian.³¹ Among those readers who have no notion of the Armenian script, the impression may arise (given the Author's aspiration to 'Albanianise' everything) that they are not Armenian at all. This, too, is a subtle form of manipulation.

Type 4. Reattribution of Authors, Institutions and Church Councils

On page 29 of the article the medieval historian Movses Kalankatuatsi is referred to as an Albanian historian, and his work as part of an Albanian historiography.³² The basis adduced for this is that Kalankatuatsi's work is entitled *History of the Country of Aluank*.³³

It should be noted that the *History of the Country of Aluank*, in the form in which it has reached us, consists of three books. It incorporates a variety of materials, most of which relate to Aluank — the Eastern Edges of Armenia (*Hayots Arevelits Kogh-mants*). In this work, as well as in the writings of other Armenian historians, the name Aluank denotes the Marzpanate of Aluank, an administrative unit established following the partition of Armenia in 387. This administrative entity included the provinces of Utik, Artsakh and part of Paytakaran from Greater Armenia, together with Bun Aghuank (Caucasian Albania), that is, the Albania of Classical authors and the adjacent territories extending to the Caucasus Mountains and the Caspian Sea. The natural boundary between Albania and Greater Armenia was the Kura River. According to Pliny the Elder, 'the Albanians inhabit the Caucasus Mountains, and their territory extends as far as the River Cyrus, which forms the boundary between Armenia and Iberia' (*Naturalis Historia*, VI.39).³⁴ The testimony of Classical authors concerning the location of Aluank is corroborated by Armenian primary sources, including the *History of Armenia* of Faustus of Byzantium (P'awstos

³¹ Nikonorov, 2026, 34–46.

³² On Movses Kalankatuatsi and his work see Gippert, J., and Dum-Tragut, J., 'Caucasian Albania in Medieval Armenian Sources', in *Caucasian Albania*, De Gruyter, 2023, 48–54.

³³ Both Movses Kalankatuatsi's *History of the Country of Aluank* and the 'Lament' by Davtak Kertogh incorporated into it, composed as an acrostic following the sequence of the thirty-six letters of the Armenian alphabet, were written by Armenian authors in Classical Armenian (Grabar). This is further confirmed by the fact that virtually all geographical names, as well as many personal names and epithets recorded in the *History of the Country of Aluank*, can be explained exclusively through the evidence of the Classical Armenian language and contain no discernible traces of any alleged 'Albanian' linguistic element. Examples of geographical names include Astghablur ('Hill of Stars'), Dizapayt ('Pile of Logs'), Yeghhyor Khoy ('Ram's Horn'), Zknavachar ('Fish Market'), Sahmanakhach ('Boundary Cross'), Nakhkorzan ('First to be Liberated'), Mews Haband ('Another Haband'), Midjn Artsakh ('Central Artsakh'), Shikakar ('Yellow Stone') and Katarovank ('Monastery on the Summit'). Personal names and epithets include Vachagan Barepasht ('Vachagan the Pious'), Taguhi ('Queen'), Mankik ('Youth'), Nersheh-Dzhndak ('Nersheh the Fierce'), Davtak Kertogh ('Davitak the Poet') and Hyusn Pokrik ('Pokrik the Carpenter [the Young]'), among others. Attempts by some proponents of the 'Albanianist' school to dissociate prominent figures of Armenian culture — including Movses Kalankatuatsi, Davtak Kertogh, Mkhitar Gosh, Kirakos Gandzaketsi and others — from the Armenian literary tradition and to attribute them to a purported 'Albanian' literature are not supported by the available historical and linguistic evidence. See Movses Kalankatuatsi, *Istoriia strany Aluank*, translated from Classical Armenian, with introduction and commentary, by Sh. V. Smbatian, Yerevan, 1984, 208–210.

³⁴ See also Akopian, A., *Albaniia-Aluank v greko-latinskikh i drevnearmianskikh istochnikakh* [Albania-Aluank in Graeco-Latin and Old Armenian Sources], Yerevan, 2022, 135–246.

Buzand) and the seventh-century *Ashkharhats'oyts'* (Geography), in which this land is explicitly designated as Bun Aghuank' ('Albania Proper'). Thus, the *Ashkharhats'oyts'* states: 'The country of Albania, that is, Aluank', begins east of Iberia and from the Caucasus Mountains bordering Sarmatia, extending to the Caspian Sea and to the frontiers of Armenia along the Kura River. Although all the territory up to the River Kura has been detached from Armenia, we shall speak of the country of Albania Proper, which stretched between the great River Kura and the Caucasus Mountains.'³⁵

Following the partition of Greater Armenia in 387 between the Eastern Roman Empire and Sasanian Iran, profound changes occurred in the political geography of historical Armenia. The Sasanian authorities detached the north-eastern Armenian provinces of Utik' and Artsakh, together with the northern part of Paytakaran, and united them with the territories situated on the left bank of the Kura River, including Bun Aghuank', to form the new administrative and political unit known as the Marzpanate of Aluank'. Since the designation Albania was an administrative-geographical rather than an ethnonymic term, during the marzpanate period it came to encompass the north-eastern provinces of Armenia as well. Consequently, medieval Armenian narrative sources continued to refer to this region not only as Aluank' but also as the Eastern (or North-Eastern) Edges of Armenia. The population of the newly established marzpanate consisted predominantly of Armenians, while, according to Classical authors, various tribes inhabited the territories north of the Kura River. The incorporation of the north-eastern Armenian provinces into the Marzpanate of Aluank' did not weaken their ties with Armenia. The ecclesiastical and cultural life of the marzpanate remained under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Catholicos. Throughout the medieval period, common political, national and religious interests continued to bind the Marzpanate of Aluank' closely to Armenia. It is the history of this political and ecclesiastical entity that Movses Kalankatuatsi recounts in his *History of the Country of Aluank'*, placing it within the broader context of political developments from antiquity through the tenth century.³⁶

It should be noted, incidentally, that the Caucasian Albanian ethnos — attested by the Sinai palimpsests, which preserve a written Caucasian Albanian language related to Udi — was confined to the left bank of the Kura: the historical sources indicate that numerous peoples lived within the territory covered by the historico-geographical concept of Aluank', whereas the right-bank provinces of Artsakh and Utik' remained Armenian in population, church and culture. Today, the Udis and the Lezgins living in Azerbaijan and elsewhere may lay claim to the 'Albanian heritage'.³⁷ Of these, the Udis are Christians and find themselves in the position of

³⁵ *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut' iwnk')*, trans. and comm. N. G. Garsoïan, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, V.xiii; *The Geography of Ananias of Širak (Ašxarhac' oyc')*: *The Long and the Short Recensions*, introduction, translation and commentary by R. H. Hewsen, Wiesbaden, 1992, 141–146.

³⁶ See Movses Kalankatuatsi, *Istoriia strany Aluank*, translated from Classical Armenian, with introduction and commentary, by Sh. V. Smbatian, Yerevan, 1984, 5–6.

³⁷ Schulze, W., and Gippert, J., 'The Udis and Their Language', in *Caucasian Albania* (Gippert, J., and Dum-Tragut, J., eds.), De Gruyter, 2023, 234–235. On the Caucasian Albanian written language and

‘hostages’ in Azerbaijan. The problem is that, from the very first days of the creation of the first Republic of Azerbaijan, they were massacred, expelled or assimilated as followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church. In present-day realities, the Azerbaijani authorities compel them to take part in the process of appropriating the Armenian historical and cultural heritage.³⁸

Not content with misappropriating the Armenian historical and cultural heritage of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Author also ‘invades’ the territory of the present-day Republic of Armenia: for example, he attempts, without any foundation, to ‘place’ Mkhitaravank, Getik, Khoranashat and Varagavank, in the Tavush region of the Republic of Armenia, among the Albanian monastic complexes.³⁹

On page 30 of the article the Author, following the approach of Z. Bunyatov and F. Mamedova, whose treatment of the sources has been extensively criticised,⁴⁰ presents the thirteenth-century historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi as an Albanian historian. This is a groundless assertion, resting solely on the fact that the historian was born in the district of Gandzak, which today lies within the territory of Azerbaijan.⁴¹ In

the Sinai palimpsests see Gippert, J., Schulze, W., Aleksidze, Z., and Mahé, J.-P., *The Caucasian Albanian Palimpsests of Mt. Sinai*, 2 vols, Turnhout: Brepols, 2008.

³⁸ Back in 2018, in a report on Azerbaijan, Forum 18, a Norwegian–Danish–Swedish NGO for freedom of thought, conscience and religion, expressed concern about the continued utilisation of religion in state affairs: ‘The regime [in Azerbaijan], foreign apologists, and religious leaders coerced or co-opted by the [authorities], use claims of what the regime calls “tolerance”, “dialogue”, “multiculturalism” and similar terms to deny the reality of the regime’s serious human rights violations. For instance, delegations of religious leaders are used for propaganda when the regime seeks international trade agreements.’ See Tchilingirian, H., ‘Selective Multiculturalism and Controlled Religious Tolerance’, in *Caucasian Albania* (Gippert, J., and Dum-Tragut, J., eds.), De Gruyter, 2023, 588–590.

³⁹ Nikonorov, 2026, 30.

⁴⁰ The works criticised here are Buniatov, Z. M., *Azerbaidzhan v VII–IX vv.*, Baku: Izdatelstvo AN AzSSR, 1965, and Mamedova, F. Dzh., *Politicheskaya istoriya i istoricheskaya geografiya Kavkazskoi Albanii (III v. do n.e. – VIII v. n.e.)*, Baku: Elm, 1986. On the genesis and evolution of the ‘Albanian thesis’ in Azerbaijani historiography see Shnirelman, V. A., *Voiny pamiati: mify, identichnost’ i politika v Zakavkaz’e*, Moscow: Akademkniga, 2003; the classic critique of its ethnohistorical claims is Hewsen, R. H., ‘Ethno-History and the Armenian Influence upon the Caucasian Albanians’, in *Classical Armenian Culture: Influences and Creativity*, ed. T. J. Samuelian, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982, 27–40. On the activities of Ziya Bunyatov see Melik-Ohanjanyan, Karapet, ‘Z. Buniatovi grakan-patmakan hayetsakarge’ [Z. Bunyatov’s Literary-Historical Conception], in *Albania-Aghuanki hetazotutean ardi khndirner ev ‘buniatovshchinan’* [Current Issues in the Study of Albania-Aghuank and ‘Buniatovism’], edited by A. Hakobyan, Yerevan, 2025, 48–70 (in Armenian). Of interest in this connection, there are the memoirs of the eminent Soviet orientalist Igor Mikhailovich Diakonov, in which he recalls Ziya Bunyatov as follows: «... один герой Советского Союза, арабист, прославившийся впоследствии строго научным изданием одного исторического средневекового, не то арабо-, не то ирано-язычного исторического источника, из которого, однако, **были тщательно устранены все упоминания об армянах**» (‘... a certain Hero of the Soviet Union, an Arabist, who later gained renown for a strictly scholarly edition of a certain medieval historical source, in either Arabic or Persian, from which, however, every mention of the Armenians had been carefully removed’). See Diakonov, I. M., *Kniga vospominanii* [Book of Memoirs], St Petersburg, 1995, 730–731.

⁴¹ ‘Kirakos is one of the most important Armenian historians of the 13th century. He was born in the region of Ganja and received his early formation at the monastic school of Nor Getik under the eminent savant Vanakan Vardapet.’ Cowe, S. Peter, ‘Kirakos Ganjakec’i or Arewelc’i’, in *Christian–Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, edited by David Thomas and Alex Mallett, Brill, 2012, vol. IV, 438. On Kirakos Gandzaketsi see also Gippert, J., and Dum-Tragut, J., ‘Caucasian Albania in Medieval

reality the historian considered himself an Armenian and wrote chiefly about the history of Armenia.

The following sentence of Kirakos Gandzaketsi may be quoted concerning the relations between Armenia and Aluank⁴², between the Armenians and the Albanians, and between the two churches: ‘... And in the second part we shall place a chapter on the enlighteners of the country of Aghvank as our kinsmen and co-religionists, the more so as their leaders were Armenian-speaking, many of them spoke Armenian, their kings were subject to the Armenian kings and stood under their authority, their bishops were ordained by St Gregory and his locum tenentes, and their people lived together with us in the Orthodox faith — and from all this it follows that both peoples should be spoken of together’.⁴²

The Author adopts a similar approach with regard to the councils convened by the Armenian Apostolic Church. In relation both to the Council of Ashtishat (353) and to that of Shahapivan (444), the Author, although he draws on Armenian sources, forgets to mention that these were councils of the Armenian Church.

In similar fashion, on page 34 of the article, citing an article by Michael Stone, he once again attempts to lead his readers astray by presenting the Council of Partav of 768 as a council of the Church of Aluank⁴³ at which a book of canons was adopted. This is how the Author refers to that council: ‘The Council of Partav of the Caucasian Albanian Church of 768, by its fifteenth canon, forbade monks to leave the monastery in which they had taken their monastic vows at tonsure ...’⁴³, and, to lend his statement greater authority, he cites the work of the renowned Israeli Armenologist Michael Stone [Stone, 1973, 479–486]. In reality, the church council of Partav was convened on the initiative of the Armenian Catholicos Sion I Bavonetsi (767–775), in the town of Partav, which at that time was the see of the Catholicosate of Aluank⁴⁴. It was attended by Armenian bishops and presbyters, as well as by *azats* and *nakharars* headed by the Armenian *sparapet* Sahak Bagratuni. Also present were David, Catholicos of Aluank⁴⁵, and the princes and *azats* of the land of Aluank⁴⁶. The council adopted twenty-four canons, known in the *Kanonagirk Hayots* (Armenian Book of Canons) as the canon-group of Catholicos Sion. In other words, this was a council

Armenian Sources’, in *Caucasian Albania*, De Gruyter, 2023, 72–75. On the Armenian Church and Christians under Mongol rule see also Margaryan, G., ‘The “Christian” Ilkhans: Myths and Reality’, *Aramazd: Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XIV/1–2, 2020, 228–245.

⁴² The original reads: «... А во второй части мы поместим главу о просветителях страны Агванк как сородичах и единоверцах наших, наипаче что предводители их были армяноязычны, многие из них говорили по армянски, цари их подчинялись армянским царям, находились под их властью, а епископы рукополагались святым Григором и местоблюстителями его, народ жил вместе с нами в православной вере, и из всего этого следует говорить об обоих народах вместе». See: Kirakos Gandzaketsi, *Istoriia Armenii* [History of Armenia], 132.

It is telling that, while citing Kirakos Gandzaketsi’s work (published in Moscow in 1976 by Nauka) and including it in his list of references (p. 49), the Author deliberately omits to mention that the book is entitled *Istoriia Armenii* (History of Armenia), giving it simply as: Gandzaketsi, K., *Istoriia* [History], translated from Classical Armenian by L. A. Khanlarian, Moscow, 1976, 312 p.

⁴³ In the article: «Партавский собор Кавказской Албанской церкви 768 г. своим 15-м правилом запрещал монахам покидать монастырь, в котором они приносили монашеские обеты при принятии пострига ...».

of the Armenian Church.⁴⁴ Incidentally, so that it may become clear to readers that an Armenian book of canons was indeed at issue, the title of Stone's work should be given in full: Stone, M. E., 'Armenian Canon Lists I: The Council of Partaw (768 C.E.)', *Harvard Theological Review*, 1973, vol. 66, no. 4, 479–486 (which, moreover, appears in the list of references at the end of the Author's own article).

In footnote 6 on page 36 of the article the Author states that 'Simeon Yerevantsi, who ardently defended the primacy of Etchmiadzin, says in chapter 3 of his work, concerning Catholicos Mikael, that he "was the first to tame the Aluank and Agh-tamar catholicoi, who encroached upon the rights of the See of Ejmiatsin; for the Aluank catholicoi wished to subject to themselves Nakhichevan, Gegharkuni, Kap-an, Akstafa and Lori". From this report it follows that the said regions of Nakh-chivan, Syunik, the eastern shore of Lake Sevan and up to the borders of the Georgian kingdom were objects of the claims of the Albanian Catholicosate. At the same time, Etchmiadzin attempted to wrest Ganja, Barda and the Zakam lands from the Gyanjasar Catholicosate'.⁴⁵

In reality, what is at issue is that in that period, and before it, the Armenian Apostolic Church had several centres and catholicoi: besides the catholicos residing at Etchmiadzin (in this instance Simeon Yerevantsi, who reigned in 1763–1780), there were also the Armenian catholicoi of Aghtamar, Sis (in Cilicia) and Gandzasar. The Author, once again standing the facts on their head, attempts to present the intra-church struggle taking place within the Armenian Church as a struggle between churches belonging to separate ethnic groups and countries.

Conclusion

The four techniques documented above — omission of ethnonyms, selective quotation, substitution of names and toponyms, and reattribution — are applied in the article under review systematically rather than sporadically. Summing up, several points may be recorded to which attention should be drawn:

the publication of an article so replete with falsifications and manipulations in a scholarly theological journal (Теология: теория и практика) raises questions about the peer-review procedures applied;

⁴⁴ See also: Dum-Tragut, J., 'The (Second) Council of Partaw (768)', in *Caucasian Albania* (Gippert, J., and Dum-Tragut, J., eds.), De Gruyter, 2023, 315–317.

⁴⁵ In the article: «Симеон Ереванци, горячо отстаивавший первенство Эчмиадзина, в 3 главе своего труда о католикосе Микаэле говорит, что он «первый укротил агванских и ахтамарских католикосов, которые покушались на права Эчмиадзинского престола; ибо агванские католикосы хотели подчинить себе Нахичеван, Гегаркуни, Капан, Акстафу и Лори». Из этого сообщения следует, что упомянутые области Нахчывана, Сюника, восточного побережья озера Севан и до границ Грузинского царства были предметом притязаний Албанского католикосата. В то же время, Эчмиадзин пытался отторгнуть от Гянджасарского католикосата Гянджу, Барду и Закамы». See: Nikonorov, 2026, 36; Simeon Yerevantsi, *Dzhambr: Pamiatnaia kniga, zertsalo i sbornik vsekh obstoiatelstv Sviatogo prestola Echmiadzina i okrestnykh monastyrei* [Jambr: Memorial Book, Mirror and Compendium of All the Circumstances of the Holy See of Ejmiatsin and the Surrounding Monasteries], Moscow: Izdatelstvo vostochnoi literatury, 1958, 88–89.

It should also be noted that this is not the first such instance in the Author's record. His methods and worldview may also be studied in other similar works he has published in the same journal and elsewhere.⁴⁶

In those articles, as well as in his public statements, A. Nikonorov, falsifying or distorting the facts, continues to repeat the same theses, at the core of which lie essentially the following propositions: that the Armenians played no substantial role in the Christian life of the region, still less in its monastic and ecclesiastical life; and that the greater part of the Armenian spiritual and material heritage is, in his view, non-Armenian — for which he adduces no factual evidence whatsoever. The irony is that A. Nikonorov, relying chiefly on Armenian material while setting aside the methods of historical scholarship, attempts to construct a new, anti-Armenian history for the region, in which the Armenians have no place, or in which their role is reduced to a minimum. The documented pattern of omissions, selective quotation and reattribution speaks for itself. Beyond the case examined here, the four-part typology — omission of ethnonyms, selective quotation, substitution of names and toponyms, and reattribution — may serve as a framework for the systematic analysis of revisionist historiography of the South Caucasus and of contested cultural heritage more broadly.

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⁴⁶ See, for example, Nikonorov, A. V., *Istoriia khristianstva v Kavkazskoi Albanii* [History of Christianity in Caucasian Albania], Baku, 2005 (in Russian); idem, *Istoriia Tserkvi Kavkazskoi Albanii po Moiseiu Kalankatuiskomu* [History of the Church of Caucasian Albania according to Movses Kalankatuatsi], Moscow: Institut vostokovedeniia RAN, 2021 (in Russian). For a broader survey of Azerbaijani falsifications concerning the ancient history of the region see Ghazaryan, R., 'Azerbaijani Falsifications concerning the Ancient History of Atropatene, Caucasian Albania and Iran', in *Modern Transformations in the Middle Eastern Region: History and Geopolitics*, Yerevan: Antares, 2025, 9–18.

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