

DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION AND TOPONYMY IN YEREVAN, NAKHIJEVAN AND ARTSAKH REGIONS OF EASTERN ARMENIA IN THE FIRST DECADES OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND THEIR MISREPRESENTATION BY THE PRESENT-DAY AZERBAIJANI FALSIFIERS

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The alleged “argument” of the Azerbaijan’s territorial claims to the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh (NKR) (Artsakh Republic) and the Republic of Armenia (RA) is as if the Armenian population always constituted minority in the khanates of *Erivan* (Yerevan) and *Nakhichevan* (Nakhijevan) before their joining to Russia and increased only in the 1828 - 1830s resulting from the resettlement of the Armenians from Persia and the Ottoman Empire. The President of Azerbaijan, gambling upon the fact that on the 19th century maps compiled by the Russian authorities there are many Turkic-language toponyms in Eastern Armenia (in the territory of the Armenian Oblast and Artsakh¹), declares Armenia part of a fictitious “Western Azerbaijan”². Thus, artificially formed (from mid-1918 with the Pan-Turkic purposes) “Azerbaijan” [with the stolen name from Iranian Azerbaijan (known since ancient times as *Atropatene* in Greek, *Atrpatakan* in Armenian and *Āturpātākān* in Middle Persian) has deployed a widespread aggressive propaganda campaign in this direction.

Making use of documentary sources, it is seen that prior to the Russo-Persian war of 1804-1813, the indigenous Armenian population constituted the majority both in the khanate of Yerevan and in Artsakh³. That is confirmed by well-informed officials P. Kovalensky⁴ and P. Tsitsianov⁵. The mandatory resettlement of the groups of Armenians from the *khanate* of Yerevan to Georgia had been effected on the initiative of Tsitsianov. During the first Yerevan Expedition of the Russian Army (1804) 11.100 households of the Armenian population along with the Armenian administration [the

¹ Чобанян П., Демографические перемещения и топонимия Восточной Армении в первой трети XIX века, *Բնիւթիւր հայագիտութիւն*, 2015, 3, с. 212-220.

² See: «Ильхам Алиев выступил на сессии Парламентской Ассамблеи Совета Европы», 24.06.2014 (<http://ru.president.az/articles/12149/images#.U611A2nRrUU>. google); «Выступление президента Азербайджана И. Алиева во время летней сессии ПАСЕ», 24 июня 2014 г. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywWAgqq5i7g>).

³ Չոբանյան Պ.Ա., Հայ-ռուս-վրացական հարաբերությունները ԺԸ դարի երկրորդ կեսին, Էջմիածին, 2006, էջ 198-202:

⁴ «Акты, собранные Кавказской археографической комиссией» («АКАК»), т. 1, Тифлис, 1866, с. 118.

⁵ According to his report (December 30, 1804) to the Tsar about the population of Artsakh (Karabakh) before the invasion by Aga Mamed Khan (i.e. 1795) there were up to 40 thousand households of Armenians only. P. Tsitsianov notified that he intended “to take away from Mustafa, the Khan of Shirvan all Karabakh residents escaped there from the advancing Aga Mamed Khan whose number reaches 8000 households” (see: «Всепоподданнейший рапорт князя Цицианова Его Императорскому Величеству от 22 мая 1805 года за № 19». «АКАК», т. II. Тифлис, 1868, с. 703 (<http://www.runivers.ru/bookreader/book9487/#page/1/mode/1up>)).

Melik and the *Haryurapet* (*Sotnik*) of Yerevan] were removed from the Ararat Valley with the purpose of weakening the *khanate* of Yerevan. At the time when Persia sent a large army there, which also resettled a part of Armenian population to Persia under the pretext of the pro-Russian position of Armenians. Thus, the number of the Armenian population in the territory of the *khanate* of Yerevan appeared to be in a decline, because of the aggressive demographic policy of conquering states.

The foreign domination left its distortive traces also in the original system of Armenian toponyms. During the Persian domination along with continued use of the Armenian proper toponyms, in relation to Armenian settlements, with some exception, were also artificially applied alien forms of the names which were borrowed by the Russian military and civilian administration in conditions of the Russian-Persian wars in the first half of the 19th century. Such an approach was demonstrated also during the registration of the Artsakh (historically the 10th province of Great Armenia) population for taxation in 1823.

Study of the initial Armenian layer of toponyms, scrutiny of the original sources and documents, including the descriptions of 1823 and 1832-1833, revealing the causes of toponymic changes, their registration at the time of the domination of the Russian Empire, expose the present-day Azerbaijani falsifications thus removing their alleged, so-called “arguments” for historical and political speculations.

The “Description” of 1823, hastily compiled after the escape of Mekhti Guli Khan, was the first extended registration of Artsakh’s towns and villages⁶ and has become a benchmark for further mapping of the territory. The “Description” also reflects the situation which shortly emerged in 1804-1822, i.e. a vigorous unlawful redistribution by Mekhti Guli Khan of the lands belonging to the Armenian Meliks (hereditary Princes) of Artsakh among the alien Muslim beks.

A study of the “Description” reveals a number of essential circumstances:

1. The “Description” was compiled without visiting Artsakh’s towns and villages and making lists *in situ*, but on the basis of the data presented by the Khan’s officials, beks and village seniors. That was all mentioned in the “Description” itself, in the Introductory Word addressed to the Shushi City Court: “In our lists the *maafs* (in Persian free of taxes-P.Ch.) are marked only on the basis of the data provided by the *mahalbeks* and *kendhuds*, the village seniors, of which not all can be considered valid”⁷.
2. Some settlements were registered in the “Description” as estates of Muslim beks⁸, contrary to the fact that a decade earlier and, generally, for centuries they had been in the possession of the Armenian Meliks and monastic complexes.

⁶ Evidence on preceding censuses (1805, 1812) see: “AKAK”, VI, p. I. Tiflis, 1874, p. 836 (<http://goo.gl/JSrLnD>). Work on compiling “Description» were carried on after the escape of Mekhti Guli-Khan to the territory of Persia (November 1822), and lasted to early April 1823, i.e. were mainly conducted in winter months, a very short period, which had crucial negative consequences.

⁷ See.: «Описание Карабагской провинции, ...», p. 3.

⁸ E.g., the center of the Armenia’s liberation struggle, the famed village of Angekhakot (where in 1698 took place the meeting of the Armenian Meliks with the aim of discussion of the liberation of Armenia) in Syunik (in the

3. Extremely distorted Turkic and Persian translations of the Armenian root toponyms contained in the “Description” create a false impression about the ethnic composition of Artsakh/Karabakh of that period thus having a negative influence on the number of Armenian toponyms in maps. E.g. the proper Armenian toponym Berdadzor (Berdzor), which is well known from the Armenian “Geography” - “Ashkharhatsuyts” (the 5th-7th centuries), in a distorted translation is presented in the “Description” as *Kaladarasi*.

It is common knowledge that the Treaty of Turkmenchai allowed passage from one side to the other, however it was not the principle of forming the Armenian Province (Oblast) which was really created on the basis of the regions (khanates) of Yerevan and Nakhijevan⁹, as well as the Ordubad (Vorduat) district by the decree of Tsar Nickolas I on March 21 1828, i.e. the Armenian ethnic name had been used as the name of the province prior to the repatriation and resettlement of a part of the Armenian population. It means that the Russian government had known quite well that it was a part of Armenia with its indigenous Armenian population.

The 1832/33 census is very important for the study of history, and of the demographic picture of Artsakh in particular. Examining the census data reveals the following facts:

1. The influx of Muslim population was distributed in the plain part of the Karabakh Gubernia, where the alien nomads pitched their tents. In the mountainous parts of Artsakh, i.e. on the territory of the Armenian Melikdoms (Princelands of Dizak, Varanda, Khachen, Jraberd, Gyulistan) the absolute majority of the population liable to pay taxes to the treasury, were Armenians (90 – 95%).
2. In many proper Armenian settlements mentioned with the names in Turkic and Persian versions, lived only Armenians, and not a single Muslim.¹⁰
3. According to the 1832 - 1833 census, the number of the Talish district population paying taxes to the state treasury constituted 657 of male Armenians; not a single Muslim was registered. In the province of Jraberd there were 572 Armenians and 5 Muslims in all¹¹. The number of population paying the state taxes in the province of Khachen was 1095 male Armenians and 42 Muslims. In the province of Varanda, one of the largest, the correlation of tax payers was as follows: 5351 Armenians and 543 Muslims. Evidently, the increase of Muslims in the province of Varanda took place within the period of 1823 – 1833.

neighbourhood of Artsakh) with overwhelming indigenous Armenian population, because there were only 12 households of Muslim outsiders, was wrongly presented as “a Tartar village...” (see: «Описание Карабаской провинции, ...», p. 88).

⁹ Agop Jack Hacikyan (Coordinating editor), Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, Nourhan Ouzunian, The Heritage of Armenian Literature, vol. III: From the eighteenth century to modern times, Detroit, 2005, p. 10.

¹⁰ E.g.: Khankend (Arm. Vararakn), Mamad Azar, Gzlgshlakh, Hasankaia, Dashbulakh, Karaia Khan, Hajhikend, Aligulikend, etc. There were cases when Armenian *-shen* or *-kert* were distorted in falsely invented toponyms by invaders.

¹¹ See: The national archives of the Republic of Armenia, Collection 93, List of Documents 1, case 50, pp. 454-455.

4. The absolute majority of the Armenians were registered also among those who paid taxes to the landowners. E.g., within the district of Talish there was not a single Muslim paying taxes to landowners. In the district of Khachen were 540 Armenian males and 71 Muslims, while in the district of Varanda 870 Armenians and 68 Muslims.
5. The analysis of the census materials shows that in 1823 - 1832 there took place essential demographic changes. In Karabakh province, including a considerable part of the Kura-Arax (Eraskh) interfluvium (except Gandzak and the areas to the west of it), the number of the new Turkic dwellers increased at the expense of more than 50 temporary nomads' camps which had been exempt from state taxes and populated by Muslim settlers subordinated to the family of Mekhti Guli Khan who had brought them to those territories.
6. In the 1832 - 1833 census materials also a note is made about the year of population migration to this territory, thus showing the primary time of Muslim migration (mostly in 1827).
7. In 1867 - 1868, at the time of another administrative division of Transcaucasia (when the new Elizabetpol province had been formed) Karabakh was included into a new province, with its former interior districts which were extended and renamed¹². As a result of toponymic changes the number of Armenian district names (at the beginning of the 19th century there were registered the city of Shushi, Dizak, Varanda, Khachen, Gyulistan, Jraberd, Jevanshir and Jebrail) had diminished. The whole territory of Artsakh was presented within the provinces of Shushi, Jevanshir and Jebrail¹³. While in the "Description" of 1823 the toponym "Jevanshir" spread only within the limits of a territory to the north-east of Dizak, where of 32 settlements pointed out, only 3 were villages, and 29 were temporary nomadic camps, after the expansion it included all northern provinces of Artsakh. Shushi mainly included provinces of Varanda and Khachen, while "Jebrail" - the southern part of Artsakh.

Although from the mid-17th century Armenia was divided by the Ottoman and Persian Empires, the main population in Western Armenia and Eastern Armenia remained indigenous Armenian people until the Armenian Genocide (1915). Alien administrations used Armenian toponyms either translating or distorting them. The reason of the survival for the millennia-old Armenian toponyms was viability of the princely system and spiritual authority, as well as Armenian cultural and historical heritage.

A wide use of the Turkic-language distorted forms of toponyms in the official documents of the Russian Empire, in the 19th century was conditioned by the military-political situation and compilation of descriptions on the basis of the data provided by

¹² See: Առաքելյան Գ., Գանձակ-Ելիզավետպոլի ժառանգությունը 19-րդ դարում, Երևան, 2003, էջ 10:

¹³ Makar Barkhudariants noted that *Jabrael* and *Jevanshir* were the names of Armenian Princes (see: Մակար եպս. Բարխուդարեանց, Աղուանից երկիր եւ դրացիք: Արցախ, Երևան, 1999, էջ 374).

the representatives of the newly invaded nomadic tribes while often disregarding the original Armenian toponyms. That is why ascribing of the invented and distorted Turkic-language “toponyms” to preceding historical periods by the present-day Azerbaijani falsifiers is unscientific and unacceptable.